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**I used to be on Erasmus in Prague, now I am a tutor of the Erasmus Club...**

Mari Jannetäinen (a graduate from the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi) is, similarly to Tanja Amtmann and Daniel Kortschak, a former Erasmus student of Charles University. She studied at the Faculty of Education in winter semester 2009/10, and on her return to Prague in the beginning of the year 2012, she decided to join the Erasmus Club at Faculty of Arts as a tutor after her return to Prague for work, after having spent several months in Leipzig as Comenius assistant. Also during her own Erasmus stay at Charles University, Mari attended the Erasmus Club events very often – she participated in the trips as well as [Europe Meets School programme](#) .

Mari...

**What has motivated you to become tutor of the Erasmus Club?**

This spring I had some extra time so when it was suggested I do Erasmus tutoring, of course I was interested. I always find participating in the trips and events with people from different countries fun and interesting. I remember my own experience as an Erasmus student in Prague and how it was so great with all these activities the Erasmus Club organized. I wanted to help make sure that the new students would get to experience all that as well.

**How does it feel to stand „on the other side“? Do you feel rather as Erasmus student still or as a local person helping foreigners arriving to your country?**

Actually I feel like something between those two. I feel like I am still foreign and learning new things about the Czech culture, but on the other hand I feel partly integrated as well. Through my own experience I know a lot about the things Erasmus students deal with and it's easy for me to help them with questions.

**What do you like about being Erasmus Club tutor? Have you ever done something similar at your home university? Is there any similar institution as Erasmus or International Club there? If yes, do you know how they recruit their new tutors?**

Preparing the trips and organizing activities is fun in general, and every time I learn something new. Being the helpful person I am, I also enjoy being able to give some advice and I of course enjoy meeting all the people and learning more about their cultures.

Back home, in the University of Lapland, there is a similar programme. I didn't participate in tutoring there, although after my own Erasmus year I was inspired to do so. However, when I returned to Finland, I was no longer living in the same city my university was in.

The way it works in Rovaniemi, is that the local students can apply for the tutoring and then the most motivated ones with international experience and good English skills are chosen. The tutors need to participate in a short training every year and they get a small salary for the job at the end of the year. All the tutors have a small group of students (8-10) that they help through the year with practical things as well as integration in the local life. The tutors keep in contact with the Erasmus students already before they arrive to Finland and they help also with all the matters after arrival. Organizing events and trips is more the responsibility of the individual tutors.

**In Prague, we usually approach the last year's Czech Erasmus students – and international students who we know that had returned to Prague - with the question if they would like to become Erasmus Club tutors. Since you, as a former Erasmus student in Prague, have known how the Erasmus Club worked from the time of your own stay at Charles University and the Czech tutors usually only realize that there is any association like this once they have participated in Erasmus exchange themselves – how is the cooperation with the Czech, especially younger, tutors for you? Is it (a) strange (idea) to have to assist to the local student tutors who are completely new to the Erasmus Club?**

I remember my tutor (at Faculty of Education) also having done exchange abroad himself so he had the similar experience. I met my personal tutor in the beginning of my stay; he helped us with getting a Czech phone number and gave us (I came with two friends of mine) some basic tips. In the end we spent a lot of time with the tutor though, he was a great help for us and he is still a good friend to us. He was really wonderful, showing us around the city and introducing us to the culture. We even got to visit his family for a traditional Czech meal one Sunday and he would take us on short one-day-trips around Czech Republic.

**What have you yourself expected from the Erasmus / International Clubs at Charles University as a student? Which activities of the Erasmus / International Clubs have you liked the best then and now?**

When I came here as an Erasmus student, I didn't expect the International and Erasmus clubs to be working so actively and it was a nice surprise to me. All in all, the trips, the Czech film evenings, ballets, operas, theaters, parties and other events made sure that the Erasmus students always had something to do and see and there was always some place to go and meet new friends. Being introduced to the other cities in the Czech Republic, to the Czech movies and traditions is very easy through such activities.

**You are finished with your studies now. Is it very different to live in Prague as an employed person? Is there any difference in the approach of the local people to you as a student and a working person?**

The one thing that very commonly happens during Erasmus studies is that you meet so many other Erasmus people, that you spend most of your time in multi-cultural groups. Now that I'm working here, I'm meeting more Czech people. People I've met now have been very welcoming, especially after learning that I come from Finland. Many seem interested in hearing more about my home country.

**Why have you decided to come back to Prague after your studies? Would you like to live here long-term? Do you think that your Erasmus stay in Prague has influenced you in this area?**

I have come back to Prague because I want to get more international experience and to practice different languages. Prague is an amazing city and I know my way around quite well already. I have some friends here and I feel quite at home somehow. I'm planning on staying for a longer time now, the Czech culture and people are very interesting and I felt one year wasn't enough to getting know this place.

**What is your occupation in Prague?**

I'm an art teacher by education and this year I have also taken a Teaching English as a Foreign Language course here in Prague. Currently I'm working as a hostel receptionist and enjoying that a lot as well. After the summer I'm hoping to find a job in teaching or something else interesting in an international environment.

Thank you for the interview.