

Petr Torak 0:05

Good morning Erika, Thank you so much for participating to this video that aims to motivate and inspire young Roma people.

Erika Orackova 0:15

Good morning

Petr Torak 0:17

Good morning, how are you?

Erika Orackova 0:19

Fine thanks. How about yourself?

Petr Torak 0:21

I'm good, thank you. Right. So let's, let's start with our first question. Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself? Your place of origin so where you are from and your background.

Erika Orackova 0:38

So I came from Slovakia. And I'm came to UK in 2006. I was 19 years old when I came to the UK.

Petr Torak 0:48

Okay. And whereabouts in Slovakia are you from?

Erika Orackova 0:51

It's a small city called Sabinov, near Presov.

Petr Torak 0:55

Oh, lovely. Okay. And what was your experience in living in your home country in Slovakia.

Erika Orackova 1:02

Um, so I come from a from a small city. Let's call it town. So people knew us, me and my sister. We used to go to a musical school we used to play piano. So we were quite well known. So between the group of people that knew us, I would say there was no racism because they knew who we were me and my sister.

Petr Torak 1:28

So what was you said you came to the UK when you were 19? Did you come on your own or with your family? And what was the reason for you coming into the UK?

Erika Orackova 1:38

So I came in to my sister. And we came to stay with our family friends. It was more like a summer holiday. But then me and my sister we decided to stay and I knew that I wanted to study in the UK.

Petr Torak 1:53

And what did you decide to study?

Erika Orackova 1:55

So I decided to study law um so I have done a business and law degree it was in Cambridge University Anglia Ruskin. That will, I finished that one in 2011. And then I had a two gap years. Basically, I needed a time to save money for the last year, we just call legal practice course. And that is one year course. And I finished that one in 2014. And that one was in Leicester De Montfort University. So it was four years all together the study, the university

Petr Torak 2:37

What was it like to study at university for you?

Erika Orackova 2:39

Uhh, the beginning part, obviously, because I studied English in Slovakia, only Slovakia. And then I started business and law obviously, it's very different English. So, the first year was very difficult. I had to learn the dictionary, but then it was getting better.

Petr Torak 2:59

Okay, and what about your fellow students? How they were kind of uh seeing you as a Roma female, did they actually understand what Roma means and what they accept accepting you?

Erika Orackova 3:11

Obviously, we are in the UK, there are many different nationalities. So, you know, they didn't really consider who is all. Basically, always just students here.

Petr Torak 3:22

And what about your family? How did they react to the fact that you are studying at university?

Erika Orackova 3:27

So my parents are they wanted, they were always supporting me. They wanted me to study. And they always supportive and they are always helping me to study when I was in primary school, they've been doing homeworks with me. And obviously they were the ones that wanted me to study and they were pushing me as well. Like, they wanted me to go to university. So I would say this was really helpful because I had a family they were supporting me all the time.

Petr Torak 3:52

That's, that's very important. Okay, and what do you like about UK? You've obviously mentioned you had the opportunity to study what is there anything else you would mentioned that you like?

Erika Orackova 4:04

So I would say the UK is a country, which allows you to do whatever you want. So, everyone's got the same opportunity. So, I would say this is the main benefit when you come to the UK. And I was also working and studying at the same time. I don't think this will be I will be able to do this in Slovakia to work and study at the same time.

Petr Torak 4:28

Okay, and what does it mean to be Roma?

Erika Orackova 4:33

Um, I would say to be Roma and if you want to achieve something, you will need to do more than 100% this is always the case whatever you do, you need to show more. And I think this is what is expected whether you're in Slovakia or in the UK. You always need to do more than 100% this is what is expected.

Petr Torak 4:56

I completely agree with you. And last question on the topic of Roma Would you say that the role of Roma women in the society is changing? And if yes, is it for good or what's opening on the role of women, Roma women?

Erika Orackova 5:13

So I'm slowly getting to know more Roma women all over the UK. And I can see they are studying and they are studying politics, they are studying, they want to become social workers. So, I can see the change, they want to do different jobs. And they are willing to spend that extra time studying and they are juggling between the family and the children so they're able to do it I know one friend she's at a university she wants to become a teacher she's got two small kids and she's still able to do it.

Petr Torak 5:49

that's amazing. And that's very often the worry of many Roma women you know, girls people's

thinking how can I achieve for my career, if I will have to be housewife I will have to look after my children, my husband, the community and the family expectations of Roma women is slightly different to the men you know, so would you say it is possible to achieve it?

Erika Orackova 6:13

Yes, obviously, but when you are woman it is difficult, you need to prioritise so I had two gap years after I got married I had a child My son is going to be five now so yes, I had two gap years and then I found a job because when you want to become a solicitor you need to do two years of practice you need to get a training contract. So I waited this for two years and I just got qualified last month so yes, it takes some time and I think the main point is not to stop because you can take a break but it will be easy just to say it's too late now I just leave it but no the main point is just to carry on and you can always you can take a break but you have to finish what you started.

Petr Torak 7:04

And, last question Okay, so you mentioned that you studied a law university so what job do you do now?

Erika Orackova 7:15

So the training contract I was doing in a small family firm it was Family Law and the main cases that I was dealing with it was care proceedings so they are cases when the social workers take the children from the family because there's some kind of neglect or some other family issues so and then other cases like abduction for example when the father takes the child away to different country and then we want the child to be returned back to mother for example so yeah mainly family cases I was dealing with.

Petr Torak 7:50

That's ,that's very interesting area of the law. I would say you must come across too many Roma families and also it must be very important for the Roma families, I think when they are able in such a tragic situation to speak to in their native language and see Roma female you know in the situation must be absolutely amazing to them.

Erika Orackova 8:11

Yes, I had a client that couldn't actually explain everything in Slovak so she had to use Roma language. So I found it like something new, like some people can't explain everything in Slovak or Czech language, so they prefer in Roma.

Petr Torak 8:30

And 10 years from today, where do you see yourself?

Erika Orackova 8:35

So obviously I want to be experienced solicitor. I might do some different law as well and maybe a little bit of criminal in the future. But firstly, I want to get very confident and experienced in family law.

Petr Torak 8:50

Okay. And lastly, what would be your message to all the young Roma people that are listening to this video?

Erika Orackova 8:59

So maybe your main thing is just to study when you are young. No one, no one will take away this from you when I mean the knowledge that you learn. This is the most important to study when you are young and never give up. Even when you become older, you can always start when you are older, to study.

Petr Torak 9:20

Absolutely, yeah, education is the key. It's a phrase that we hear all the time but I think is absolutely the key. And as you said to your parents, you know, supporting you was the key for you to see the

importance of education and then follow the way through so yeah, absolutely. Okay. polygraph okay. And yeah, thank you very much, Erica. And obviously we'll stay in touch and all the best to your work and family and everything else and looking forward to see you again.

Erika Orackova 9:52

Thank you, same to you.