

“Being a Researcher is complicated, but I hope it will be my future job” | A Researcher’s Story

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Gunel Jahangirova comes from Baku (Azerbaijan) and worked in a private company before entering the research world. She's encountered some difficulties in changing, but she's also found many positive aspects

What is the life of a researcher's like?

Before doing research myself I would think that research was just sitting and writing, thinking, doing experiments. But when you start a PhD, you see there are a lot of skills that are required: you have to travel, you have to see a lot of people and it requires a number of social skills, otherwise you are going to hang around alone in the conference. Then you have to be able to sort of promote yourself, talk about your work, you have to speak in public... so being a researcher is hard, – Gunel laughs – I'm telling you!

From Baku to Trento. Was it a cultural shock?

Not really, even though Baku is a big city with a lot of people, very crowded, very noisy and here in Trento it's quite the opposite. Here I found mountains, while I come from a flat area, so I've experienced a lot of new things like going hiking and in the winter you can do winter stuff like skiing, sledging...

You are in your fourth year of PhD here at FBK, what do you deal with?

I work in the software engineering unit and my area of research is software testing and in particular the oracle problem in software testing. Basically, an oracle is a mechanism that determines whether the output of your system is right or wrong so most of the time now, when testing systems, oracles are created by humans, and an

approach to research now is to make tests as automated as possible, and these oracle problem is the biggest obstacle, because it always requires some input from a human so the goal of our research is to come up with a way to create automated oracles or to support people in creating these automated oracles.

How do you explain not having female colleagues?

That's my life experience, working only with guys. I actually never got why that is because I don't see any reason why. It's not like doing heavy lifting. If you had to lift heavy things, I would understand why a woman wouldn't want to do that. In our field though I don't get it, but that's the truth.

Are there big differences between working in research and working in a company?

In my previous job, I had to do something each day and there was a sense of accomplishment every day: I solved that, I solved this... With PhD, you sometimes work for a long time and your results are not good and then you are like a bit sad. You have to try a lot of different things and only part of that will work but it's a more creative mindset I guess, because you are trying to come up with something new and that's where you are trying to do good research. You have to come up with something new that no one have ever thought about.

Homesick?

I obviously do miss my family and friends. I try to visit them as often as possible and, yeah, it helps, but that's not always possible, when you are busy and you come from very far away it's a long flight, it's expensive, etc...

What about your future?

You have to make a lot of decisions on what you are gonna do next but I'll just see what is available yeah... I... hope to do research, yes to keep doing research

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