

NIA LETTER

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Niigata International Association (NIA)



International Understanding
Presentation Contest 2022



At a Yasashii Nihongo Seminar
(Kashiwazaki City)



Exchange Student Representatives
introduce their home countries to junior
high school students (Tainai City)



Discover the World from Asia!
(Niigata City)

Feature

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Building Niigata for Everyone, by Everyone

— The Future of Industry —

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Building Niigata for Everyone, by Everyone

— The Future of Industry —



Tokita Miwa

Global Support Cooperative Representative Director

Sano Yukari

SHINSEN HOLDINGS INC. President and Representative Director

LE HONG PHU

JV COFFEE CO. CEO



While Niigata Prefecture continues to experience a declining birthrate and aging society, the number of foreign workers living in the prefecture and the companies that are hiring them have been increasing year by year, with 2022 marking the highest number of foreign-hiring businesses on record. In order to learn more about how prefectural citizens and foreign residents can open the door to a bright future for communities and industries under such conditions, we talked with 3 people making strides in the world of industry here in Niigata.

#of Foreign Workers
10,705 people

#of Companies Hiring Foreign Workers
2,237 places

Foreign Workers by Nationality		Foreign Workers by Status of Residence	
#1 Viet Nam	3,286	#1 Technical Intern Trainee	3,647
#2 China	2,029	#2 Status based (Permanent Resident, etc.)	2,958
#3 Philippines	1,878	#3 Specialty/technical field	2,252

*According to data from the Niigata Labor Bureau, "Status of Notification of Employment of Foreign Nationals in Niigata Prefecture" (As of October 2022)

Please tell us about yourself and your job!

Tokita My job is to introduce foreign Technical Intern Trainees and Technical Engineers to companies in Niigata Prefecture, as well as providing support thereafter. Currently, we have introduced about 400 foreign workers to companies, mainly within Niigata Prefecture, with 90% of them being Vietnamese. Last year, there was a problem with Technical Intern Trainees in the prefecture not being paid, so we created a Facebook page where foreign workers could easily consult with us.

Sano At my group company, we handle events, construction and renovations, and as of January 2020, we created a company to support events in Hanoi. Although business is very tough right now due to COVID-19, I believe things will turn around soon. Also, in April 2022, we hired a full-time Vietnamese employee. Her Japanese level is the same as native speakers, and even when interviewed alongside Japanese university students, she left the best impression. She is now not only working hard in the business, but also fostering international awareness among our employees, planning things such as an in-company seminar on Viet Nam.

Phu In 2020, we opened JV COFFEE CO. in Niigata City, a Vietnamese café that sells wholesale coffee

from Viet Nam on the south side of Niigata Station. The café is not only a place to drink coffee, but we have many Vietnamese people who come to me and the store manager to ask questions. Recently, we have also been providing support to Japanese companies that are considering expanding into Viet Nam.

My background is a bit different: after studying architecture and civil engineering at university in Viet Nam, I went to a Japanese language school in Tokyo for 2 years. After that, I decided to study economics, and a teacher told me that there were only two schools where one can change their academic track from sciences to liberal arts: Kobe or Niigata. That teacher happened to be from Niigata, and recommended the Graduate Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies. This was truly "fate"! Considering finances and other factors, I decided to start my own business in Niigata after completing graduate school because I wanted to become number one in Niigata and then expand nationwide. Besides that, the people of Niigata are very kind, and even if I expand all over Japan, it's the kind of place you feel you want to return to. From the very first time I stepped out of Niigata Station, I have had help from so many people. Now, Niigata has become my "second hometown."

What challenges do you face in advancing your business?



Tokita Miwa

Global Support Cooperative
Representative Director

Tokita Along with a weak yen, I think the appeal of working in Japan is starting to fade for many foreigners, and even more so, the attractiveness of working in Niigata Prefecture is thought to be lacking in terms of wages and living environment. It is crucial that companies in the prefecture hiring foreign employees think seriously about how to overcome these issues. There is also not enough information for prefectural citizens about working and living with foreign residents, so everyone only gets the negative sides and have the impression that “foreigners are scary.” So I would really like for the government to take an active role in communicating the attitude and information that “we are going to build Niigata Prefecture in cooperation with foreign workers.”

Sano If the government really feels that Niigata wants to be able to accept foreign employees, then it also brings up the issue of Japanese language education. It seems that there is a lot of trouble caused when people cannot convey what they are thinking. I sometimes wonder if some of the incidents that appear in the media would not have happened if people had some understanding of the language, so I think another key point is whether the government can properly cover the cost of Japanese language education.

Tokita I agree. Niigata Prefecture is large, so there are also foreign residents who are unable to join in-person Japanese classes. I think it's very important to increase options for alternative learning environments, such as online courses or using social media. It's also critical for companies to create frameworks for providing incentives like wage increases or one-time payments for employees who improve their Japanese level. Another important thing besides Japanese language education is, there are a lot of problems that arise because many technical intern trainees and other foreign workers are coming to Japan from countries with an entirely different environment, with totally different customs. It's important to properly teach them about life and basic rules in Japan.



Sano Yukari

SHINSEN HOLDINGS INC.
President and
Representative Director

Phu As Ms. Tokita said, because of the weak yen, real wages have dropped, and with cuts from the COVID-19 pandemic in the background, the number of technical intern trainees coming to Japan has also decreased, so there is a fear they will go to other countries with better wages. Also, there are trainees that say “life in Niigata is not convenient, I'm going to Tokyo,” so I would like Niigata to improve its appeal by creating fun places like an outlet mall. Also, it's very difficult for people who can't speak Japanese well to get around the country, so I think it would be beneficial if there were a direct flight connecting Niigata and Viet Nam.

Sano As a company with overseas offices, it's expensive to transfer through Narita Airport, so it would be a huge advantage if we could use Niigata Airport. We really want Niigata Prefecture to restart and improve international flights!

Tokita Me too, I'm waiting for Niigata Airport to restart international routes. If our technical intern trainees transfer through Seoul (Incheon Airport) to Niigata Airport, they can get to our training center in just 30 minutes. It's really tough to have to come from Narita. And, since technical trainees finish in 3 years and then can change jobs, type of work, or become Specified Skilled Workers, there are many people who work for 3 years in the prefecture and then move to big cities. Highly capable employees are hired by companies with great benefits, so it's really regrettable that we are steadily losing employees that we did our best to support, and it's also a huge loss for Niigata Prefecture.



LE HONG PHU

JV COFFEE CO.
CEO

Phu The manager at my café is uploading videos on social media that show the appeal of Niigata. Some of the people that have seen them become customers at our store, and some become fans of Niigata. I feel that it's important to get information out using social media.

Tokita I'm really grateful you're introducing Niigata through social media, Mr. Phu. It would be great if the government had some kind of initiative that collaborated with influential stores and individuals to introduce Niigata Prefecture and businesses in multiple languages using videos on social media. I think it would be most effective if we could have the information come from the point of view of foreigners living in Niigata Prefecture.

Phu As for my company, we post things related to Niigata as much as possible, but I think it would be even more effective if we worked together with the government, schools and local people.

(Continued on next page)

Sano If we shift our focus to the nearly 2,000 foreign exchange students in Niigata Prefecture, I feel bad for the students that know nothing at all about job hunting in Japan. They don't know that job hunting starts from the summer of their 3rd year. I believe that universities and others are providing guidance, but I think we need to ensure that information about job hunting in Japan is properly shared.

Phu Extremely, in Viet Nam we start looking for a job after graduating college, but in Japan, you need to go to a company's information session early on. There's a lot that foreign exchange students are unprepared for, including mentally readying themselves. Universities teach them how to write resumes, but it seems the staff are having a hard time with it.

Tokita The number of exchange students is only going to increase from here, so while of course teachers should follow-up with their students to help them find jobs at companies in the prefecture, we must also improve consultation services and do a better job of matching students to companies in the prefecture.

Phu It's necessary for companies to raise the motivation of foreigners. It is also important to clearly state the career plan, as foreigner workers improve when they understand each step of their career progression.

Tokita I feel the same way. As half of our employees are foreigners, we have a personnel evaluation system in place to explain what is being evaluated and how salaries are increased. I advise companies that are hiring foreigners to put in place initiatives that show clear reflections on salaries when targets are met. Foreign employees are highly motivated, so they improve if you just evaluate them.

Please tell us your dreams and views from now on!

Tokita We are in the unique position to be able to provide safety, security and stability to those such as technical intern trainees. As such, I want to firmly establish an "extra environment" such as a system for immediate consultation and insurance support in case of emergencies. At the same time, we must take on the role of reducing friction between local citizens and foreigners. Recently, we have been inviting elementary school students in Seiro Town to a monthlong "post-entry training course for technical interns," where we have them interact with Vietnamese and Filipino trainees. One student that heard a Filipino person's story was inspired, saying "I want to do my best to study English so I can go abroad." In the future, we would like to make a system to invite people from the local community and businesses to come and see these training courses, like an open school. And, I believe the number of Specified Skilled Workers coming to Japan for the first time will increase from now on, so I think it would be good to have a one-day training course for Specified Skills Workers. Therefore, we would like to increase the number of variations we offer so that

companies can use our facilities when they want to do long-term training.

Sano We would like to assist companies in Niigata that want to expand overseas with their sales promotions. Although we established a company in Viet Nam, using that as a hub, we want to expand even further. And in terms of making the most of the vitality of foreign employees, I would like to continue to actively hire foreigners in the future if we can find a good match.

Phu I mentioned it at the beginning, but I want to introduce Vietnamese coffee culture to all of Japan, using Niigata as a base. Until now, our market research in Niigata City didn't go so well because of COVID-19, so firstly I would like to open our second shop. Then, I would like to implement a creative way to expand business using a food truck or stall.

Sano Would you set up a food stall at a festival? How about having a Viet Nam Festival?

Phu Through the Vietnamese Association in Niigata, we have an event called "Betoaji" where we make and eat traditional Vietnamese food with Japanese people while exchanging culture. "Betoaji" means "Vietnamese flavors." (*Betonamu-no-aji* in Japanese) When COVID-19 calms down, it would be nice to have a global festival similar to Betoaji for Japanese nationals and foreign residents. Everyone could try the traditional foods at each country's stall, and it would be an exchange between all the people living in Niigata as "prefectural citizens."



Sano Why don't we have a "Tastes of Asia" event! Like "Betoaji," what do you think if we called it "Ajiaji" to mean "Asian flavors"? (*Ajia-no-aji* in Japanese)

Tokita Great idea. It would be nice if the technical trainees and exchange students in the prefecture could participate and introduce their home countries and traditional culture, too.

Phu Let's do it!



(Conversation from November 2022)

Interview with the Prefectural CIRs!

My name is
DAM LAN CHI
(DAM Lan Chi)

Right now, there are Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) from America, South Korea, Viet Nam and Russia at the Niigata Prefectural International Affairs Division. We will introduce 2 new CIRs, who arrived in FY2022!

What's a CIR?
Niigata Pref. HP →



Q1. I'm from Hanoi, the capital of Viet Nam. My country's pride is "Vietnamese dining," of course. Since coming to Niigata, I've been eating delicious Japanese food every day, but I really miss the tastes of home. Something we Vietnamese are particularly proud of is our cheap and convenient street food, which you can easily get on the side of any road. Vietnamese food such as noodle dishes like Bún and Phở,

Bánh xèo (stuffed rice pancake), and Vietnamese spring rolls are really popular with foreigners, so if you ever have the chance to go to Viet Nam, you should try everything at least once!

Q2. When I was a kid, there were lots of shops around my house where you could borrow manga (comic books), and I was really into reading them. Manga like the miracle-performing Doraemon and the cool Sailor Moon left a strong impact on me, which got me interested in Japan.

Q3. I've been drawing anime-style pictures for a while. I'm not at a professional level, but I'm good at drawing cute illustrations. Recently I've been into playing games on my phone, and I sometimes draw the characters from the games.



Q4. I'm now renting an apartment in Chuo Ward in Niigata City. There's a supermarket, convenience store and bus stop nearby, so my life is really good! On top of that, everyone at my office is very kind and helpful, so I feel very grateful every day.

Q5. There's a variety of international exchange events going on in the prefecture. In particular, we CIRs are giving lectures at schools, municipal and prefectural citizen halls, and chambers of commerce, where we introduce the culture, lifestyle, customs, and business conditions in our home countries to promote international understanding. As a Vietnamese person, I want to do my best to enrich the relationship between Japan and Vietnam.



Q1. What country and area are you from?
What is a bragging point in your country?

Q2. What made you interested in Japan?

Q3. Any hobbies or special skills you have?

Q4. How is life in Niigata?

Q5. If you have a message for our readers, please let us know!

Q1. I'm from Ulan-Ude in Russia. Ulan-Ude is in the southeast of Russia, and is the capital of the Republic of Buryatia. The Republic of Buryatia neighbors Mongolia, and a Mongolic ethnic group called Buryats live here. The crown jewel of Buryatia is the deepest lake in the world: Lake Baikal!

Q2. When I was young, I watched a variety of Japanese anime such as Spirited Away, Princess Mononoke, and 5 Centimeters per Second, which got me interested in Japan, and I studied Japanese language in university. In my 3rd year of university, I studied abroad for one year in Japan, and I was looked after by many Japanese people, which made me want to continue studying Japanese after graduation.

Q3. My hobbies are reading books and hiking. However, I'm not really good at exercising, so I like to walk slowly while enjoying nature. Niigata has lots of mountains and scenic spots, so I really want to try hiking here!
I also like to cook. I regularly cook for myself, and since coming to Niigata, I've started making miso soup. I want to try making different Japanese dishes from now on.

Q4. I just came to Niigata in October 2022, so things are still a little hectic, but I think I'm getting used to it. Niigata City is a quiet, easy place to live. The ocean is nearby, and the scenery from the observation floor at Toki Messe really left an impact on me. I'm so glad I got to move to such a beautiful city!

Q5. In recent years, I believe international exchange is really important. Various international conferences and exchange events have been taking place in Niigata Prefecture, and I think it's wonderful that there are lots of opportunities to interact with foreign people. As a CIR, I want to do all I can to contribute to international exchange in Niigata as well as spreading Niigata's charms to the world.

My name is
Иринтеева Дина
(IRINTSEEVA Dina)



Celebrating 50 years of International Relations with Mongolia and China

2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-China relations, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Mongolia, and the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the Honorary Consulate of Mongolia in Niigata. To celebrate, there were a variety of commemorative events that the Niigata International Association also cooperated in, some of which are introduced here.

Niigata Award: Japanese Speech Contest 2022

The Niigata International Association held a speech contest for students studying Japanese in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, on September 17 (Sat.). The 9 students who participated were each nominated by their school or university, and they presented in fluent Japanese on topics such as "Japanese people only see Mongolia for its nomads: I want to change this," "If I were prime minister, I would strengthen Japanese-Mongolian relations," and "I want to study the Japanese spirit of helping one another." The 3 prizewinners were invited to Niigata in April 2023.



Exhibitions at Chisoku Art Museum



Zhu Lin En Exhibition

There was an exhibition held from June 10 (Fri.) to August 6 (Sat.) for Zhu Lin En, who was born in Harbin, a Chinese city associated with Niigata Prefecture. Zhu is known for his "Urban Landscape" style, which uses landscape painting techniques to depict contemporary buildings.



Mongolian Paintings and Calligraphy Exhibition



From August 18 (Thurs.) to October 1 (Sat.), over 50 pieces of Mongolian art were displayed, including paintings depicting magnificent nature with a simple and intimate touch, and *bokuseki* a form of

Mongolian calligraphy, similar to Japanese calligraphy in that it is written vertically and uses a brush.

Mongolia Fair in Niigata 2022

On September 24 (Sat.) and 25 (Sun), 2022, the Niigata Mongolia Association (NIMO), an organization created by Mongolians living in the prefecture, hosted the Mongolia Fair in Niigata City to introduce the various cultures of the country. At the venue, a traditional home used by nomadic groups called a "ger" was displayed, Mongolian goods were sold, and there was a morin khuur (traditional Mongolian horsehead fiddle) concert. It was a crowded and lively event!



From the Foreign Resident Consultation Center — Connecting Niigata —

FRCN
Foreign
Resident
Consultation
Center of
Niigata



- Consultation hours:
Monday-Friday, 10:00-17:00
- Location: Niigata-shi, Chuo-ku, Bandaijima 5-1, Bandaijima Bldg. 2nd Floor
- Consultation Methods:
In-person, phone, email, online
You can make a reservation online for an immigration, legal or administrative scrivener consultation. < Reservations >



For education-related or other general consultations, please call or email us.

☎ 025-241-1881

✉ nia10@niigata-ia.or.jp

For details, see here ⇒



< FRCN HP >

Consultation Languages

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Japanese	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00
Chinese			10:00 ~ 17:00		
English	10:00 ~ 17:00			10:00 ~ 14:00	10:00 ~ 17:00
Filipino (Tagalog)	10:00 ~ 17:00				
Thai		10:00 ~ 17:00			
Vietnamese		10:00 ~ 17:00			
Spanish				10:00 ~ 14:00	
Portuguese				10:00 ~ 14:00	
Russian	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00	10:00 ~ 17:00
Other languages	10:00 ~ 17:00 Can be done via machine translation on a tablet				

NIA Activities Report

Discover the World from Asia!

Experts on world history and culture gave a series of seminars on international understanding, titled "Discover the World from Asia!" at four locations around Niigata Prefecture. A total of 131 participants joined in-person and online.

- Niigata City - It's More Fun In The Philippines
Niigata Philippine Society President Stevenson Allosa
- Kashiwazaki City - From non-renewable to natural energy
~ Trends of China ~
Niigata Sangyo University Professor Kinugawa Gheni
- Tainai City - Food and Farms of Indonesia
Niigata Agro-Food University Vice President Nakai Yutaka & Indonesian Students
- Shibata City - Migrant Workers Supporting the Economy of Hanoi, Vietnam's Capital
Keiwa College Associate Professor Nagasaka Yasuyo



October 15 (Sat.) 2022, Niigata Venue



November 3 (Thurs.) 2022, Tainai Venue

Exchange Student Employment Support Seminar

The Exchange Student Employment Support Seminar took place at Toki Messe on Wednesday, November 9, with 18 exchange students and 24 business and school-related persons participating. One lecture was about the processes for changing one's status of residence for working; another introduced companies in the prefecture, and graduated exchange students shared their job-hunting experiences.

- Learn about Statuses of Residence for Work
Tokyo Regional Immigration Services Bureau,
Lecturer Yasumoto Daisuke
- Job hunting information from businesses and graduates
4 managers from businesses within Niigata Prefecture introduced their companies and graduated exchange students shared their job-hunting experiences



Exchange Student Representatives

Foreign exchange students in Niigata Prefecture eager for international exchange activities registered as "Exchange Student Representatives" and participated in various international exchange events around the prefecture.

ESR Activities Report FY2022

(May 2022 to January 2023)

Number of activities: 29

Number of people dispatched: 122 in total

Main locations: Elementary, junior high and high schools, local governments, international associations, etc.



October 8 (Sat.) and 9 (Sun.), 2022
International Exchange Camp 2022
© Niigata Prefectural Youth Nature Center



November 20 (Holiday, Sun.), 2022
Sports Exchange with Foreign Residents
© Kashiwazaki Sports House

International Understanding Presentation Contest

On Saturday, December 17, the International Understanding Presentation Contest 2022 was held at the Marine Hall conference room at Toki Messe in Niigata City. 9 junior high school and 9 high school teams took the stage to present the results of their studies and daily activities. 10 volunteers and Exchange Student Representatives also assisted, which helped the event run smoothly. The results of the contest are below.

[Junior High School Division]

- First Place
Project "S" (Niigata Shitayama JHS)
"The ocean's future - What's 'Glocal'?"
- Award for Excellence
COSMOS (Middle School attached to Joetsu University of Education)
"The Future of Peace and Us"
Sasakama (Niigata Meikun JHS)
"To connect to the future - Recyclability of Plastics"
- Encouragement Prize
Shitayama-kenji (Niigata Shitayama JHS)
"Everyone's Place"



[High School Division]

- First Place
Jyonon (Joetsu HS)
"Let's Komipasha!!"
- Award for Excellence
Meguro-Shoji Sanjo Branch
(Sanjo Commercial HS)
"Nomophobia - Smart ways to use a smartphone"
Niigata Meikun Global Environment Bureau(Niigata Meikun HS)
"Japan and the World's Pollution"
- Encouragement Prize
Student Group mirai
"Disappointment to Humanity"



Announcement from NIA ①

At the International Exchange Plaza, you can...

Gather information...

We have newspapers and flyers on events and seminars throughout the prefecture. Please feel free to use this space as a place to gather information!



Study or relax...

Our plaza is a great place to study or hang out. Have a break, and take your time.

Borrow library books !

Our library in the plaza lends out books. Any resident of Niigata Prefecture can borrow them!

Lending traditional clothes & flags!

We lend these out for free to schools and public institutions in the prefecture, and also to our supporting members. Please make use of them for various international exchange events!



Announcement from NIA ②

Supporting Members Wanted!

We are looking for group and individual members to support our international cooperation and exchange projects.

Membership period:

April 1 - March 31 of the following year

Group membership fee: 10,000 JPY

Individual membership fee: 3,000 JPY

※ Credit cards accepted!

Improved Member Benefits!

- Group members can also get discounted tickets to establishments within the prefecture!
- There are now even more in-prefecture places you can use the discounted tickets.

⟨ Become a Supporting Member ⟩



Please fill out our questionnaire!

Our association has been publishing the NIA LETTER since 2005, and this is our 25th edition. In order to improve this newsletter using your valuable opinions, we have created a questionnaire.

There are 10 questions, and it takes about 3 minutes to complete. We want to hear your opinions and wishes. To express our thanks, we will select 20 respondents by lottery to receive a 500 JPY QUO digital gift card.

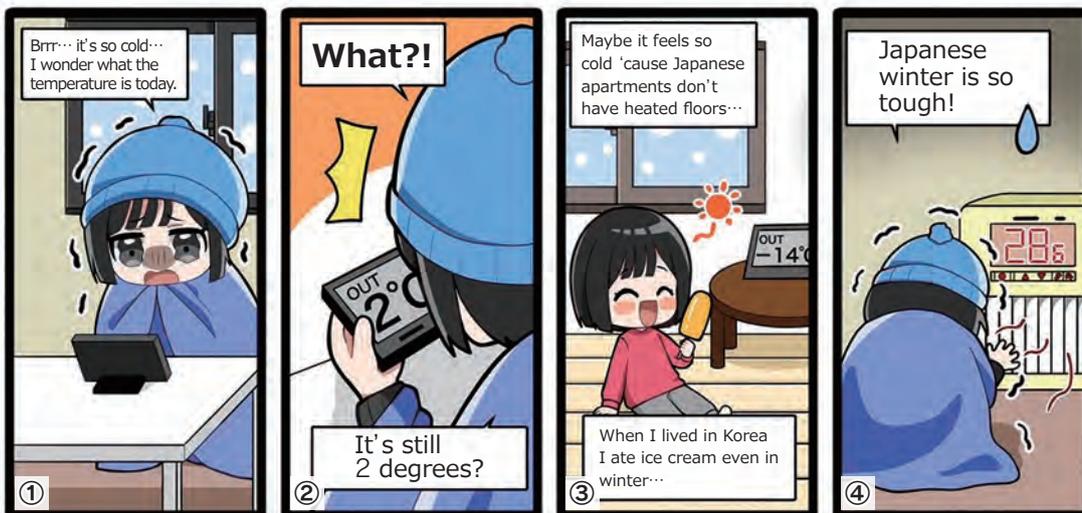
※ Must respond by April 30, 2023 to be eligible.

< Questionnaire >



Comic #10 "Brr, brr, brr!"

Pen name: **Nekono Nekotaro**
Japan Animation and Manga College - Manga and Illustration Course, 3rd year



Hello, I'm Nekono Nekotaro. I'm from Niigata, and I love cats. I usually draw illustrations and comics for boys and girls and characters with big heads.

This episode of life in Japan was inspired by YOO Minhyoung, a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) at the Niigata Prefectural International Affairs Division, who wrote about this topic in the "CIR Tsubuyaki," where the CIRs share their experiences, and was illustrated into a 4-panel comic by a 3rd year student at the Japan Animation and Manga College. You can read this CIR Tsubuyaki article and more at our Association's International Exchange Plaza, so please stop by.

