

The Promise of Eternal Life in Russia

Originally written by Daniel Vallot for RFI. Adapted by Ian Kime for this lesson.

Find the original article here: <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/podcasts/reportage-international/20210516-en-russie-la-promesse-d-une-vie-eternelle>

More than 15 years ago in Russia, a company embarked on the scientific adventure of cryonics. The company has "frozen" 80 people so far and keeps them stocked somewhere deep in the Moscow region.

At first glance, the premises of Kriorus does not inspire much confidence... A tin shed, located in the distant suburbs of Moscow, with three huge white containers inside. This is where Kriorus' "customers" are stored.

Valeria Oudalova is the director of this rather special company. She explains the process. "After death, the blood is drained from the body. Then, a vitrification system prevents the formation of crystals. After that, we immerse the body in one of these containers. Our patients are stored there in liquid nitrogen at a temperature of -196°C . They are placed vertically, upside down..."

To date, Kriorus has frozen 80 people and 45 pets. The company offers two options: preservation of the body for 30,000 euros, or preserve only the brain for 12,000 euros.

Hopes for a better future

Elena is 32 years old. Her mother was cryogenically frozen last December at the age of 71. "We decided to keep her brain, because the brain is like a USB stick with all the necessary information on it about the person. When science has progressed enough, we will be able to "recreate" a new biological body - maybe even with modified DNA that will prevent diseases..." she hopes.

To its detractors, cryonics looks like bad science fiction at best, and at worst a scam. But not for Elena who is also considering signing a contract with Kriorus.

"Of course I have thought about reuniting with Mom a few times. Besides, I bought a notebook to write down everything that happens in my life... And when we meet again, I will give it to her to read so that she knows what happened in her absence." says Elena.

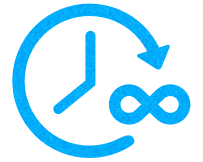
An offer not without conditions

The contract that is signed with the patient specifies that the company guarantees only one thing: the preservation of the body. For the resurrection aspect, Valeria Oudalova explains that we will have to rely on future scientific progress. "What we are proposing is to transport a person into the future, hoping that one day science will be able to revive them. This is a scientific gamble, there is nothing spiritual or religious about it. It's the idea that progress has no limits." exclaims Valeria Oudalova, "It's a prediction we strongly believe in."

Tolerated in Russia and the United States, cryonics is illegal in many countries, including France. The Russian company also hopes to expand its offer to Europeans - Kriorus has already frozen the bodies of 22 foreigners. However, they have new competition from a Berlin-based outfit called Tomorrow Biostasis which bases their pricing structure on a monthly insurance plan at as low as 35 euro a month.. In Russia, the offer is much less expensive than in the United States, where it costs nearly \$ 200,000 for this promise of eternal life.



HOW TO LIVE FOREVER - B2



NEWZY WARM-UP

Answer the questions in pairs

- Which scientific advancement has been the most beneficial for mankind so far? Explain.
- Which problem would you most like science to solve in the future? Explain.

NEWZY READING COMPREHENSION

Read the article and tell the class whether or not you would pay for this service. Then, read the article a second time and respond to the following questions:

1. What do the Kriorus premises look like? Does this match your idea of what a place like this should look like?
2. What's in the containers?
3. Complete the phrase which explains the process:
 "After death is drained from the body. Then, we the body in one of these containers. Our patients are stored in, at a temperature of - °C. They are placed vertically,"
4. How many people and how many animals are currently frozen at Kriorus?
5. What are the two options the company proposes to their patients and how much do they cost?
6. Who is Elena and what is she hoping for?
7. What does the contract guarantee?
8. According to Valeria Oudalova, what are patients betting on?
9. Is there any competition?
10. How much does the service cost in other places?

NEWZY VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Match the synonyms and antonyms of the words below (a-f) with the words in bold. Then, use them correctly in the phrases on the next page.

preventable inevitable thrive harbinger conjecture premonition
 development languish regression hunch prognosis subsequent

- a. prediction = =
- b. intuition = =
- c. foreboding = ≠
- d. stagnate = ≠
- e. unavoidable (adj.) = ≠
- f. evolution = ≠





HOW TO LIVE FOREVER - B2



VOCABULARY EXERCISE

- The average life expectancy continues to rise, but death is still a/an phenomenon.
- I would never go see a fortune teller because I am afraid I will hear a horrible
- Some cultures have seen the eclipse as a of doom.
- After a while, I had a strong that my wife was planning me a surprise birthday party.
- A lot of fake news and misinformation is based on
- In your opinion, will artificial intelligence drive mankind to or ?
- Do you think it is possible that one day all diseases will be ?



SPEAKING

Let's imagine that immortality is possible... Firstly, respond freely and individually to the first 3 questions, then discuss with your peers. Afterwards, comment on the propositions presented in the 2 boxes below..

What would you do differently if you were immortal?

Why would someone want to live forever?

What risks would be involved for you and for others?

IMMORTALITY

If you could live forever on the condition that you...

- must work your whole life;
- have to pay more taxes;
- can't have children;
- aren't allowed to travel;
- are forbidden from eating meat;
- could only ever remember the past week;
- live in Siberia;
- live like a caveman;
- live in a space station;

would you accept?

What would you accept to eradicate from the face of the Earth in order to live forever?

- music
- films
- telephones
- alcohol
- chocolate
- sleep
- texting
- books
- cars
- coffee
- the Internet
- restaurants
- comfortable beds
- cats
- other



HOW TO LIVE FOREVER - B2



READING COMPREHENSION

Read the article and tell the class whether or not you would pay for this service. Then, read the article a second time and respond to the following questions:

1. What do the Kriorus premises look like? Does this match your idea of what a place like this should look like? **It is a tin shed located in the outskirts of Moscow with 3 enormous white containers inside.**
2. What's in the containers? **Kriorus' clients.**
3. Complete the phrase which explains the process:
*After death **blood** is drained from the body. Then, we **immerse** the body in one of these containers. Our patients are stored in **liquid nitrogen**, at a temperature of - **196 °C**. They are placed vertically, **upside down**."*
4. How many people and how many animals are currently frozen at Kriorus? **80 people and 45 animals.**
5. What are the two options the company proposes to their patients and how much do they cost? **It costs 30,000 euros to preserve the whole body and 12,000 euros to preserve only the brain.**
6. Who is Elena and what is she hoping for? **She is a 32 year old Russian woman whose mother has been cryogenically frozen. She hopes to one day resurrect her mother when it is scientifically possible.**
7. What does the contract guarantee? **The preservation of the body.**
8. According to Valeria Oudalova, what are patients betting on? **It is a scientific gamble. There is nothing religious or spiritual in what they do, they simply believe in limitless progress.**
9. Is there any competition? **Yes there are companies in the USA and one in Berlin.**
10. How much does the service cost in other places? **200,000 dollars in America and 35 euros a month in Berlin.**



VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Match the synonyms and antonyms of the words below with the words in bold. Then, use them correctly in the phrases on the next page.

- a. prediction = **conjecture** = **prognosis**
- b. intuition = **hunch** = **premonition**
- c. foreboding = **harbinger** ≠ **subsequent**
- d. stagnate = **languish** ≠ **thrive**
- e. unavoidable = **inevitable** ≠ **preventable**
- f. evolution = **development** ≠ **stagnation**

- The average life expectancy continues to rise, but death is still a/an inevitable phenomenon.
- I would never go see a fortune teller because I am afraid I will hear a horrible prediction.
- Some cultures have seen the eclipse as a harbinger of doom.
- After a while, I had a strong hunch that my wife was planning me a surprise birthday party.
- A lot of fake news and misinformation is based on conjecture.
- In your opinion, will artificial intelligence drive mankind to thrive or languish?
- Do you think it is possible that one day all diseases will be preventable?