



*written by students  
for students*

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# Erasmus: A Complete Guide

**Published by:** Erasmus Student Network AISBL

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*This project has been funded with the support of the European Commission. The publication reflects the views only of the authors and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

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# FOREWORD

*written by MYRTO DELKOU (GREECE)*

Each Erasmus story is different, and yet there is a sense of familiarity in all of them. We all experience a unique journey, but feel the same emotions in a way that connects all Erasmus students everywhere. We share the same fears before the exchange begins. We find the same kind of joy in simple things, like catching a train to visit a nearby town with friends or hosting an international dinner in the kitchen of the student dormitory. We cry the same kind of tears when we have to go home after it's all over. We know what it feels like because we lived it too.

The challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the Erasmus experience as we know it. Thousands of Erasmus students had to reconsider the terms of their exchange and try to find something positive to hold onto while dealing with unforeseen circumstances. We believe that the Erasmus spirit is stronger than the pandemic, and that by focusing on everything we learned and the positive experiences we had, we can grow closer together, even if we can only meet online.

Moving forward, the Erasmus programme might look different, but one thing is always certain: it will be a life-changing experience.

We know Erasmus is often hard to put into words, but this is exactly what we attempted to do. Written by volunteers of the Erasmus Student Network, the biggest volunteering student organisation in Europe, this book is here to guide you through your own exchange and help you create your unique story. One that is special to you. One that you will always remember and look back on with happiness.



From making the decision to go on Erasmus, all the way to dealing with the end of your exchange, this book contains everything you need to know - and more!

Welcome to  
“Erasmus: A Complete Guide”

*Written by students, for students.*







BEFORE THE  
EXCHANGE

# Why go on Erasmus?

written by DARIA ISTOMINA (RUSSIA)

*The Erasmus+ programme provided mobility opportunities for more than 4 million people during the period 2014-2020.*

And now, we, your friends from the Erasmus Student Network, are beyond excited to welcome you to the first page of our book!

It may sound weird that we are calling ourselves your friends right away but they say that friends are the ones who help each other, right? And this is the main reason we created this book - to help you to make a decision to go on Erasmus and make the most of your time abroad.

If you feel like you could use some help figuring out why you need to go on Erasmus, let us briefly give you 6 reasons to do it:

## ***1. You will become that «cool person» at all parties when you're back.***

Aren't we all sometimes jealous of those people who always tell incredibly funny and thrilling stories at parties? You can become one of them after your Erasmus! Going out of your comfort zone, travelling, and meeting new people from all over the world will definitely contribute to your social skills and will provide you with unbelievable adventures to share with others. No more awkward small talk, only amazing hour-long conversations!

## ***2. You will have something nice to add to your CV.***

Employers love people who have a line in their CV that shows

they studied abroad. Although to tell you the truth, it will become more than just a line to you after your exchange. Words such as «collaborative», «open-minded», or «hard-working» will no longer just be descriptions that everybody adds to look better, but rather actual traits of yours that you will be able to showcase through your exchange experience. And if you're dedicated enough, you might also be able to add one more language to your CV.

*The unemployment rate of Erasmus students five years after graduation is 23% lower than that of non-mobile students.*

### ***3. You will have a couch to crash on in almost every country.***

What did we say earlier about meeting people from all over the world? This is it. When you meet like-minded people who are not afraid to take their chances, you have no choice but to become, if not best friends, then at least familiar faces in an unknown city. Wouldn't you be glad to know that somewhere out there lives a person who is more than happy to show you around their hometown and give you a couch to sleep on? We definitely are.

### ***4. You will have tons of beautiful pictures for your Instagram.***

Well, it's a joke of course, but the truth that lies behind it is that you will have an amazing opportunity to travel and discover a new country. It's quite likely you'll get to discover more than one! Old towns of European cities, beautiful nature that you've never seen before, local cuisine, and people by your side to share that with you. Sounds quite amazing, even without mentioning Instagram (but it's a nice bonus, isn't it?).

### ***5. You will have a chance to think about your current life.***

No pressure here, but at some point it will happen one way or another. At the end of your Erasmus you may find out that you are perfectly happy at your current place or you may discover a hidden desire to explore things that you've never thought of before. It doesn't really matter at this point, but if you feel like you want to dig into yourself without parental or peer pressure, far from everything that may distract you, an exchange can become a safe space for you to do that.

### ***6. A big part of going on Erasmus is being challenged.***

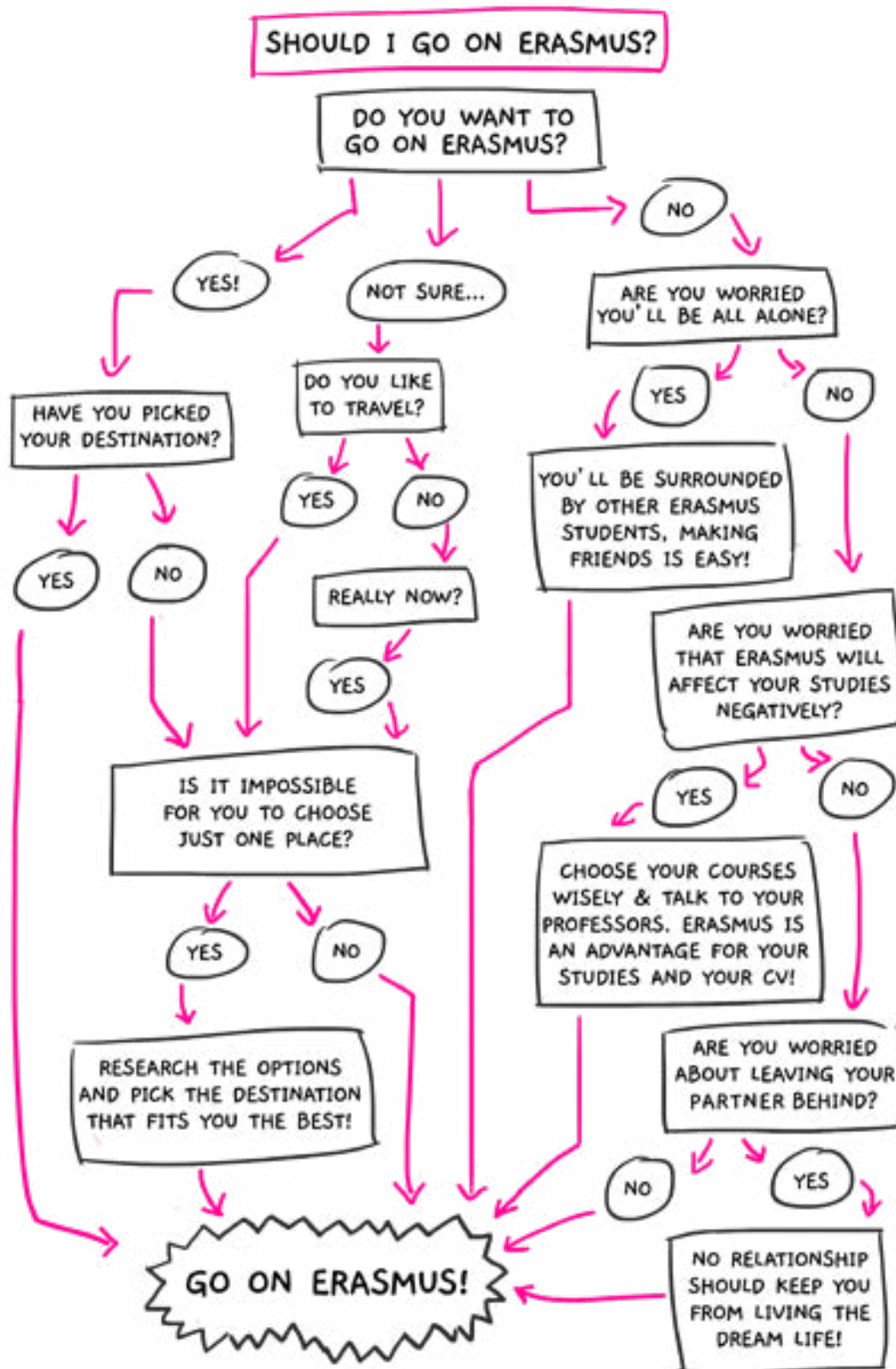
It's not a secret that the clash of different cultures is in front of us whenever we cross the borders of a different country. Therefore, the Erasmus+ Programme facilitates access to student mobility for people with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities. As for the members of Erasmus Generation, it's a joint effort to embrace a proper manner of inclusive culture.

One of the first moves for an Erasmus student in a new country is trying to integrate themselves into their new surroundings/ society. There are many ways international students can do this, from learning the language of the country they're in, to meeting local students and having a basic conversation. Inclusion doesn't happen at once: it's an ongoing process. Both the international students and locals need to introduce an approach based on empathy and eagerness to be open-minded.

In terms of what the local students can do, they should strive to offer more than merely a warm welcome. They, as hosts, should be ready to invite the international students into their community and make everyone feel at home while providing cultural and linguistic diversity alongside inclusive activities and events.

Inclusion is a beauty of seeing the world through the eyes of someone else. Today, creating an inclusive space in all fields of mobility is something every human being should strive to do.

*We hope that this list will help you to take the first step on your way to Erasmus - to start reading this book.* We also genuinely hope that it will be helpful no matter what your decision will be in the end!



A person wearing a blue hoodie is seen from behind, looking at a computer monitor. The room is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the screen of the monitor. The person's hands are resting on a desk in front of the monitor.

“

An Exchange  
is an Amazing

Opportunity.



# Erasmus Opportunities

written by PAULINA WYRWAS (POLAND)

“An exchange is an amazing opportunity” is an often repeated phrase, however, not enough thought is given into it. What do we mean by the word “opportunity”? How to make sure it is used properly?

*The number of languages spoken in Europe is around 225, while worldwide there are more than 7000.*

*Basque is believed to be the oldest European language still spoken today.*

Many students decide to go on Erasmus to improve their language skills. It is an advantage of the exchange that naturally comes to mind. However, in reality it often turns out that people end up hanging out with other members of their nationality or in the best-case scenario, with the international crowd instead of integrating with the locals. Of course there are opportunities to learn: classes are sometimes conducted in a foreign language, everything is written in the local language all around you, and you have easier access to classes of the country’s tongue, either through your exchange university or private institutions. But the biggest learning potential lies in communicating with natives on a day-to-day basis. ***How can you overcome the barrier that seems to be formed between local and exchange students?***

Well first of all there is us, ESN. You just got to meet us at the beginning of this book but already we are here to speak with you and give you advice, and we’ll be more than happy to do it again once you arrive at your Erasmus destination!

Otherwise, finding events that are dedicated not only to exchange students, but also to regular students is also a good idea. Finally – using every learning method that is just waiting to be explored – radio, TV, newspapers, talking to a salesperson in a local market... Language is best learnt “accidentally”, so don’t be shy and speak, speak, speak!

*1 in 3 youth mobility participants come from disadvantaged backgrounds.*

Studying at a foreign university is also an amazing chance to take advantage of facilities or classes that are not available in your home country and to experience an alternative education system. It is fascinating how pedagogical tools and methods of teaching can differ from country to country. In some cases, there is an emphasis on self-study, in others on team projects or problem based learning - this creates an incredible opportunity to explore alternative study methods. Pursue this opportunity by working hard on the assignments and spend some time in the library to get as much knowledge as possible. In case you picked a class that you are not particularly interested in, try to exchange it for another one - ***it is important to remember that changes to your Learning Agreement are possible*** and you don’t need to get stuck with something that doesn’t meet your expectations; however, your home university has to approve of those changes.

***But life isn’t all work and no fun!*** Universities all over Europe offer a various range of extracurricular activities. Whether they are sports classes, drama courses or art workshops, no matter how far from your major field of studies - they are all valuable lessons and a chance for self-development. The period spent on

exchange can very easily become an opportunity to take up a new hobby or maybe even discover a true calling in life.

***Don't forget about all the chances to travel.*** Once you get out of the safe zone of your own country, the world suddenly becomes very small and you discover all the amazing places just waiting to be explored. The truth is, that in the era of low budget airlines, online bookings and couchsurfing, travelling is as easy as grocery shopping. When you move to a slightly different geographic location you might end up extremely close to some of your dream destinations. Don't miss a chance to visit them, even if only for a weekend trip. However, you don't need to go far to become an explorer. Rent a bike or hop on a train and visit all of the neighbourhood, admire the diversity, the climate, the nature. Take advantage of the fact that you already ARE abroad.

Keep an open mind and opportunities will present themselves.

***The key is to say yes to everything, keep looking for ways to come out of your shell and evolve.*** In the end, not even the sky is the limit.

# What will you do next year?



## BIRTHDAY SCENARIO: THE ERASMUS EDITION

YOUR BIRTH MONTH
<b>January:</b> ride a rollercoaster in
<b>February:</b> see your favourite artist live in
<b>March:</b> eat lots of ice cream in
<b>April:</b> host a TV show in
<b>May:</b> make a road trip in
<b>June:</b> adopt a puppy in
<b>July:</b> party with new friends in
<b>August:</b> refuse to admit you're lost in
<b>September:</b> find an exciting new job in
<b>October:</b> learn how to cook your favourite dish in
<b>November:</b> sing at karaoke all night in
<b>December:</b> learn a new language in

YOUR BIRTH DAY	
<b>1:</b> Japan	<b>17:</b> Portugal
<b>2:</b> Italy	<b>18:</b> Germany
<b>3:</b> Denmark	<b>19:</b> Romania
<b>4:</b> France	<b>20:</b> Lithuania
<b>5:</b> the USA	<b>21:</b> Greece
<b>6:</b> Latvia	<b>22:</b> Bulgaria
<b>7:</b> Spain	<b>23:</b> Croatia
<b>8:</b> Thailand	<b>24:</b> Belgium
<b>9:</b> Brazil	<b>25:</b> the Netherlands
<b>10:</b> Hungary	<b>26:</b> Ireland
<b>11:</b> Poland	<b>27:</b> Mexico
<b>12:</b> India	<b>28:</b> Norway
<b>13:</b> Colombia	<b>29:</b> Turkey
<b>14:</b> Estonia	<b>30:</b> Sweden
<b>15:</b> Russia	<b>31:</b> Slovakia
<b>16:</b> the UK	



# How to choose your Erasmus Destination

written by TAJANA MOHNACKI (CROATIA)

If you have reached this part of the book, you have probably already decided to become an exchange student and join the wonderful world of internationalisation and multiculturalism - congratulations! **Now only one question remains - what country and city should you move to?** In order to successfully choose your new home, here are some things you should think about before making any rash decisions.

## UNIVERSITY

If you have applied to do a study exchange, try to remember that your studies should be your priority. **Do some research on which universities are pioneers in your area of studies in order to make sure you will receive top-notch education.** You can do this based on your university's already signed bilateral agreements, to reduce your scope of research, or you can find your dream university by yourself and contact your IRO (International Relations Office) regarding your desire to do your exchange there.

Checking their syllabus well in advance and comparing their course catalogue to courses you have to take at your home



*A truly life changing experience that I am always so so grateful for!*

- Ania Kawalec (Poland)

university is a good idea as well. You should make sure your host university offers the same or a similar curriculum so you can actually pass exams during your exchange and make those hard-acquired ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) points actually count for something. **Also, don't forget to check the language the courses you would like to choose are held in.** Ideally, you don't need to be fluent in the language of your host country because the subjects proposed for international students should be available in English, but it's always better to look before you leap.

## LIVING CONDITIONS

Going on an exchange for a period demands a great amount of independence and sometimes even sacrifice. Whether or not you've done it before, you will have to do some budgeting in a foreign country, and think about paying rent, groceries, local transportation, mobile phone costs and such, all the while trying to save for trips and outings which are also a key part of every exchange.

When choosing your exchange destination, you should try to remember two things - **living costs differ from country to country and living in a capital city isn't the same thing as living in any other city in the country.** Exchange programme grants usually cover about half of your costs and you will probably have to rely either on your parents to support you in this endeavour, or on your own savings. You should remain realistic about the amount of

financial resources at your disposal because, after all, you should have a worthwhile exchange experience.

## CULTURE

For many students, a change of scenery is one of the main motivators to apply for an exchange. Young people crave adventures, knowledge, friendships and embarking into the unknown, all of which exchange programmes are ready to offer them. Moving to another country, even temporarily, is a way of exchanging your own reality for someone else's.

Some choose to immerse themselves in a culture they already feel comfortable with, some consider exchange programmes to be an amazing opportunity to experience cultures they have always wanted to be a part of, and some take a leap into the unknown and decide to become a part of something they know nothing about.

*Studying abroad requires some adaptability, sensitivity and bravery.* However, the experience is only going to make you richer. Take your time and think about your expectations and you're ready to choose your Erasmus destination!

Hopefully, some of these suggestions will make it easier for you to choose your new home. *Good luck and remember - life begins outside your comfort zone!*



What were you afraid of? What were you most excited about?

*"My main fear was that the airline would lose my bags and I'd be left without my belongings in a foreign country - thankfully, that didn't happen!*

*I was mostly excited about being abroad, about meeting new people and trying something new!"*

*Myrto Delkou (Greece)*

What is your best memory of your international experience?

*"When I fell in love. The exact moment, that moment, I will never forget it. And it was thanks to ESN."*

*Federico Bettin (Italy)*

What is the feeling of being part of an international community?

*"It is the biggest, most diverse, colourful, united and powerful family! The feeling of sharing the same passion for volunteering with thousands of people all over the world is beautifully unique. Just mention the word "Erasmus" and you will instantly make new friends!"*

*Elisavet Rozaki (Greece)*

*"It's the security of having friends wherever you go, of having a home in more than one country."*

*Nikolina Đurić (Serbia)*

# Technical Aspects of Erasmus+ Exchange

written by DANUTA GRUSZKA (POLAND)

You've chosen your Erasmus destination - now it's time to make your Erasmus+ exchange happen! The first step is to apply for it.

If upon hearing the word "application" your mind makes an instant connection to the word "paperwork", it's unfortunately correct. But don't allow formalities and technical difficulties ruin your thoughts of your Erasmus destination. Here is a quick step-by-step guide on how to go over the application process stress-free, followed by all the possible document-related issues which could occur before your mobility period.

## 1. Application process at your university

*There is no age limit to participate in any Erasmus+ mobility activity.*

There are certain similarities between various universities, but there are also differences. Students are frequently asked to provide a:

- CV and/or a personal statement in the language of their host country - or in English if it's the language of the curriculum in the host country.
- Filled application form (online or in paper).
- Grade point average or transcript of grades.
- Score from an internal language assessment, any official

exam scores or proof of having a linguistic degree from the university.

If you still have more questions, go ask your university. They are bound to have an International Relations Office or similar service that can help you with this process!

## *2. Acceptance process from your future university*

Procedures may vary slightly but, in general, they aren't complicated. First of all, you will need to fill in the application form online. Remember to attach all the documents they ask from you: ID or passport, European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), ISIC card or any other insurance form, etc. Don't hesitate to email Erasmus Coordinators at your host university - they are here to help you!

## *3. Learning Agreement*

Choosing subjects is scary for the majority of students. Whether you want to study hard, make sure all your subjects match your curriculum or have the longest weekends possible, you cannot skip this step. What can be helpful when choosing the subjects?

- First and foremost, the title of the course is not as important as the academic results that will be achieved - check the syllabus and discuss it with your academic advisor.
- Ask people who were there before - peer advice on courses and professors can tell you a lot!
- Remember that in general, 30 ECTS is a requirement per

Erasmus +

Higher Education:  
Learning Agreement Form  
Student's Name  
Academic Year 20...

## Learning Agreement Student Mobility for Studies

Student	Full Name	Date of Birth	Nationality	Study Cycle	Field of Education
Sending Institution	Name	Faculty/Department	Country	Contact Person	
Receiving Institution	Name	Faculty/Department	Country	Contact Person	

### Before the mobility

Table A  
Before the mobility

Study Programme at the Receiving institution

Component Code	Component Title	Semester	Number of ECTS credits

Table B  
Before the mobility

Recognition at the Sending institution

Component Code	Component Title	Semester	Number of ECTS credits

Illustration by  
Niki Moraiti  
(Greece)

semester, 60 ECTS for a full year. Make sure you know how many credits you should obtain before registering for the classes you want!

- Talk with professors at your university. They want their students to develop and achieve success - and Erasmus is for sure a way to do that!



*Going on Erasmus was a dream of mine for a very long time, so learning that my application was successful was one of the most exciting moments of my life: this dream was about to come true!*

*- Myrto Delkou  
(Greece)*

#### **4. It's getting close!**

After passing the final exam of the current semester, you are officially ready to pursue your studies abroad. Head to the International Relations Office, sign the agreement and pass them your bank account number so they can wire you the money you have received from the grant! You should also be given a certificate of arrival - a document that will later be completed by the International Office of your host university at the start of the study period abroad.

***Congratulations - you are officially going on Erasmus!***





## Packing for your Exchange

written by LUCIE VACHOVA (CZECH REPUBLIC)

Illustration by  
Selin Sari (Turkey)

Your paperwork is done, transportation to your Erasmus destination booked, so what's left? Packing your life into a suitcase of course!

Now it's time to think about what you really need to bring with you on your exchange. You will probably say you need to bring almost everything because you think you will need it at some point, but it's actually the opposite. If you follow these few simple rules, you will be able to take a lot of things with you but,

most importantly, only the things you will really use.

If this is your first big trip, you should spare more time for packing, even though starting a month before your departure is unnecessary. If you travel quite a lot, you have probably already noticed that you're packing less and fewer things with every trip you take, and you know how much is enough. If this is the case, packing for a half a year won't be a problem for you.

Here are a few tips on how to pack efficiently and not forget anything.

*The first Erasmus students went to study abroad in 1987.*

### **Tip #1: You cannot make your luggage grow bigger**

Usually, people tend to choose the size of their luggage according to the amount of things they want to take with them. Do the opposite - choose the luggage first. You can borrow it or buy it and reuse it later - it's up to you. But remember, you will probably have weight and dimension limits for your flight, or even a bus, which you have to meet.

### **Tip #2: Make a list**

Nothing is more helpful than writing everything down. If you're not a fan of your own handwriting, you can use countless online tools to make a list of things you need for your exchange which you can keep and reuse for another journey.

Make it systematic. Start from the bottom layer. Remember that you will probably experience at least two different seasons so you need clothes for both lower and higher temperatures. Don't



forget cosmetics, medication, electronics and anything you need for studying and free time as well.

***Tip #3: If you don't wear it at home, you won't wear it abroad***

You know that one question you always ask yourself while packing to go somewhere: What if...? What if I need something red? What if I go hiking and it rains?

Trust me, if you have a piece of clothing in your wardrobe which you stopped wearing 3 years ago, you won't need it on your exchange. Take the clothes you feel comfortable in and that you wear most of the time.

***Tip #4: Put everything in one place and sort, sort, sort***

Try to take everything out of your wardrobe and see how much you would like to take. You will probably see that your suitcase, which was enormous before, suddenly looks quite small compared to the pile of clothes on your floor. You should take another step: sort it out. It's good to invite your friend or mother - because mothers know best - and discuss if you really need an oversized panda T-shirt, for instance.

***Tip #5: Pack efficiently***

Start with the biggest things, like shoes. So you don't waste any space, stuff your shoes with small things like socks or small tops - it will save you a lot of room. Another good packing trick which can save you space is rolling things. To use all the nooks and crannies, stuff all the empty spaces with T-shirts, shorts etc.

And of course, don't forget the essentials!

*Europe makes up 10% of the world's population.*

## DOCUMENTS

Even if you are spending your exchange in Europe as a European citizen, it's essential to take your ID and passport with you. It's possible you will travel outside the Eurozone and sending a passport through the post is not the safest solution.

It's also useful to have copies of your documents just in case you're somehow left without them. You can save copies online, on Google Drive for instance, and have them with you at all times.

### *Papers*

Paperwork related to your exchange can be scary. However, anyone can do it. Before your exchange you will sign piles of papers you think are not necessary. Remember to save them - don't throw them away at any cost. It's recommended to take them with you in case you stumble upon a problem. You should also make copies and save them on your computer because you never know.

### *Health Insurance*

Even if you're spending your exchange within Europe, it's necessary to have health insurance. The market is full of offers and usually, the cheapest ones aren't the best. Ask your classmates who already experienced exchange or your

coordinators for help and choose the most suitable insurance for you. If you decide to do some extreme sports like skiing or hiking, you can pay more for those extra days in a few types of insurance. Always remember that health is the most important thing we have and we shouldn't save on it.

And that should be good enough! *Ready, set, Erasmus!*

... Hang on a minute, do you have a place to stay?

# Preparing for your Long-term Stay

written by GUILLAUME MINOT (SWEDEN)

Underwear? Check. Bedsheets? Check. Sunscreen? Check.

Alright, all good, I'm ready for my Erasmus! – *said the future exchange student that would soon come to regret the decision to treat their departure on an exchange like a mere vacation.*

If you're going to move abroad for a couple of months, you better have a good look at a couple of not so unimportant details before landing, some of them wayyyy in advance to avoid any awkward situations!

Let's make another, more ambitious checklist, shall we?

- **Find housing:** this may sound obvious, but unfortunately too many students find themselves homeless for a couple of days or even weeks and it's definitely not the nicest way to start your Erasmus. One of the best things you can do is contact your local ESN section and ask them questions about accommodation – they will be more than happy to help and give advice based on their experience. Be wary, not every country works like yours – if you're used to cities where you can just come a week in advance to find housing and stumble upon one on the spot, you might be disappointed by the reality of the situation in some other countries!

- **Look for local holidays:** and more specifically, for holidays on your date of arrival. I guess I don't have to specify why, but on a completely unrelated note did I tell you about the time every store in town was closed and I had to eat toothpaste to survive? Anyways, be careful about the dates, kids!
- **Learn a couple of words:** "But everyone will speak English there" I hear you say... Well, that might be true for most people you will be interacting with, but there's also a large chunk of the population that you will need to interact with that might not speak English, like the bus driver that will bring you to your place, or that restaurant clerk that will feed you on your first day. Plus, it's always nice for your own culture to know a couple of words in a foreign language, like - haphazardly - how to say "hello", "I think you are cute" or "what's your number, please?"! (Note: do not confuse this hypothetical situation with what you have to say to the bus driver. Unless you think the bus driver is cute.)
- **Be prepared for data restriction:** this is very much of a "millennial" kind of issue (you know, the kind they love to complain about in online newspapers), but it has become such a common thing to have unlimited access to data in our everyday life, it can get tricky to do without it. And, as a matter of fact, there are chances you might not have immediate access to your data once you arrive at your new place of stay, and ironically that's also the moment you will need it the most since you don't know the surroundings! (Pro-tip on this one, your phone operator is **NOT** on your side

Europe Day, 9th of May, marks the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration from 1950, considered to be the first official step in the creation of what is now the European Union.

– they will determine which country is part of your European deal - or rather isn't - faster than the European Union!).

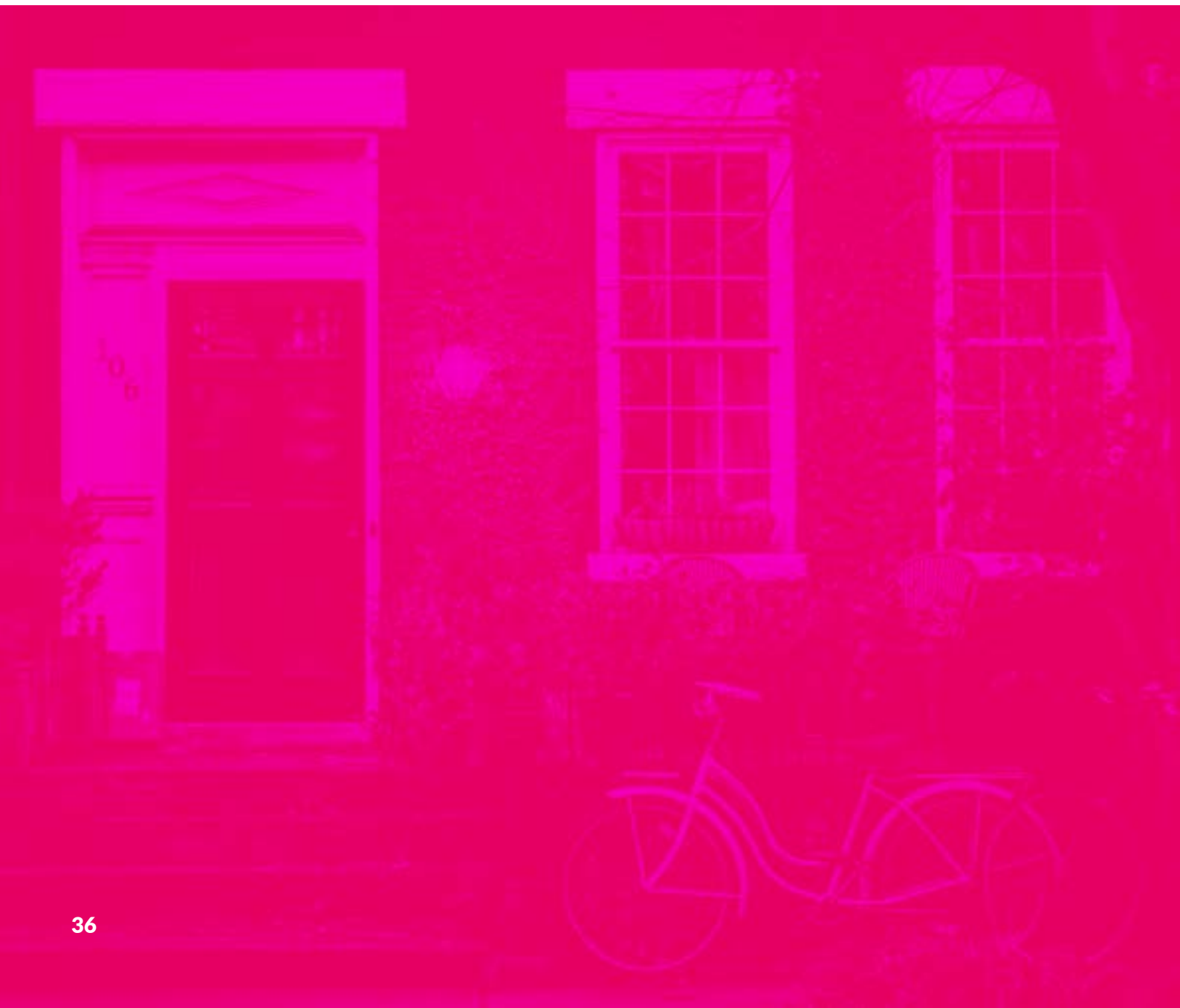
- So you don't wander the streets like a headless chicken once you arrive in your host country, make sure to take a few old-fashioned precautions before landing, like **screenshotting Google Maps** to see how you're supposed to get to your place, or even going all the way and **printing the physical maps, with directions and all**. If you still find yourself in trouble, don't hesitate to use the even more old-fashioned solution - **asking people for help!** Most locals are very nice and helpful, especially if you look lost and carry two suitcases full of clothes (you can try and tear up a bit to look more convincing if you want).

PS: If the locals don't seem to speak English fluently where you land, then please refer to the previous point!

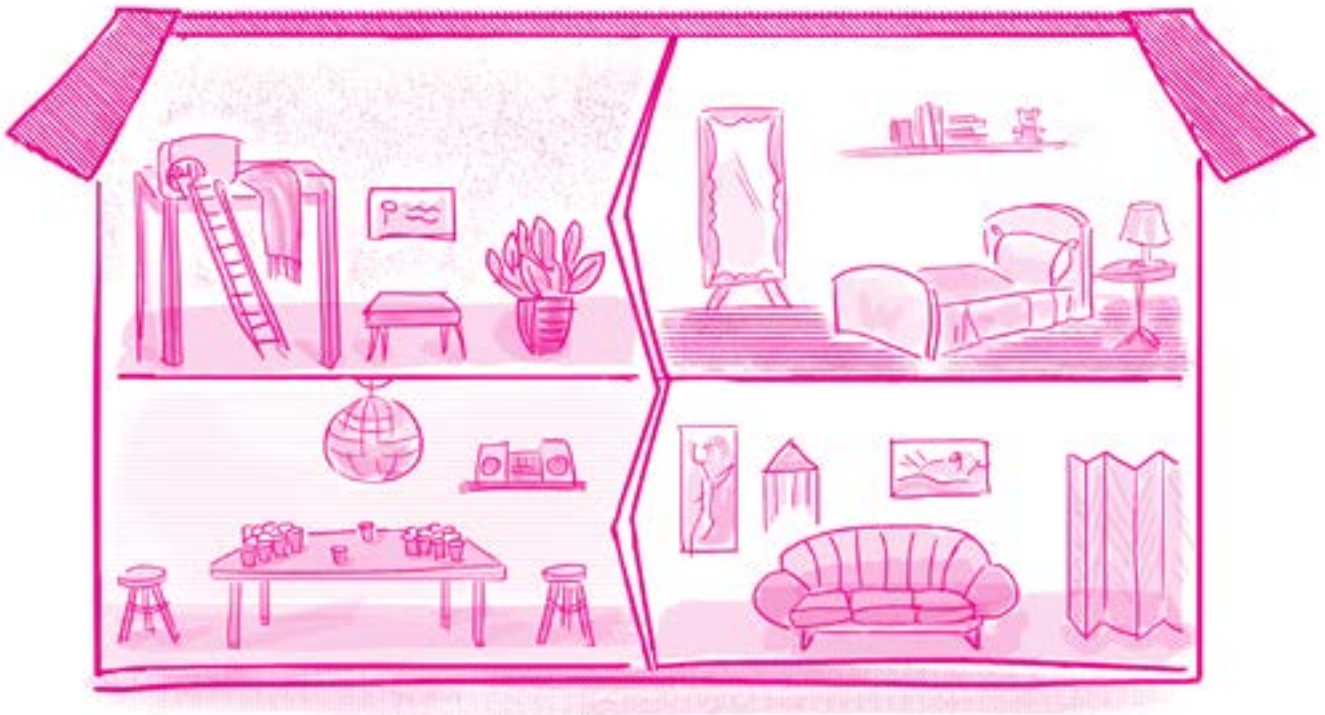
- **Try to have a look at the practicality of the social and legal system:** this one is a bit trickier, but among the necessary administrative steps to take, having a peek at how citizens are interacting with the government is a good idea. Maybe you need a local bank account to get a special deal from the transport company? Maybe you need some form of social security registration to enjoy services all around the country? Maybe you need to register yourself with some authorities when you arrive to officialise your stay? In any case, it's always safer and easier for you to get some information about the local legal and social systems before leaving! It doesn't

have to be a full blown analysis of the legal codex of the country either, but googling quickly “what to do before going to xxx” certainly can’t hurt!

And that’s the best advice we can give for now. There are bound to be some more hurdles, but nothing you can’t surpass! So get packing, and get going!







## Dormitory vs. Apartment

written by SABINA ACHIM (ROMANIA)

*Illustration by  
Bětko Hamrová  
(Czech Republic)*

As was mentioned earlier, finding housing should be one of your top priorities once you've found out you've been accepted into the Erasmus+ programme. This is when you have an important decision to make: ***to apply or not to apply for a place in the student dorms?***

Before you commit to any decision about your new home, consider the financial factors, as well as social and academic ones.



The university dorms might be a good option for those who have never been away from home. *This is the place where, each day, you meet new people from all over the world who are, like you, eager to exchange stories and make friends.* Here, it is easier to notice cultural differences and similarities, and you will definitely find somebody thinking on the same wavelength as you. Most dorms have shared bedrooms, with the option of a private room available for a higher cost. Even if you cannot choose your roommate at check-in, you can ask to be moved to another room if you don't get along. If you want to study in silence, you can use the study rooms at any time. Some dorms also provide a common TV room, game room, laundry room, or even a gym. You can cook your meals, but sometimes you might have to fight for space in the fridge. The kitchen can be for two, or can be shared with the other students on the same floor. There are certain guidelines to follow in the dorm, and you might need to ask for permission to have a friend stay overnight.

*Financially, you will be glad to find out there is an established monthly fee that includes internet and utilities* - unchanged, be it winter or summer. Also, in case of a problem with a leaky pipe, there is always someone from the staff who you can call to fix the problem, there is no need to find a local plumber and pay for the repairs. Cleaning service in common areas is provided and if you are lucky, you will periodically receive replacements for bed linens. Even if you will not find yourself in the heart of the city, living in a dorm can be time efficient in the morning, as campuses are conveniently close to the university; and also



*There is no right or wrong, as each option presents different perks and challenges. Weigh the pros and cons.*

in the evening, if all you want is to relax in one of the bars on campus. Keep in mind that the places in dormitories are limited, so you should consider the option and commit to the deadline set by the host university.

On the other hand, ***renting an apartment is a suitable choice if what you value the most is your own independence.*** Shared apartments are very common, but you have to choose carefully the people you are going to live with - ***finding flatmates fast in order to afford the rent will not work as an excuse to get along when you realise you don't share the same values.*** You live by a few rules, the ones stated in your lease agreement and your own. Your room gives you privacy and intimacy, you decide when you invite people over, you don't need to ask for permission to organise a party. You will have to consider your neighbours though; it is not out of the ordinary for them to call the authorities when they start feeling music through the walls. More space, a bigger bed, a fully equipped kitchen, and flatmates you agree with, all that in the part of the city that attracts you the most. Depending on the region and climate, utility costs may double during winter months. In some European cities, you may have to sign a rental lease for at least one year, so it may become a concern finding yourself a replacement if you only spend one semester abroad.

Your accommodation during the exchange is an important matter and a personal choice; there is no right or wrong, as each option presents different perks and challenges. ***You can research accommodation online, using search engines or Facebook***

**groups.** To go directly to the source, ask your Erasmus officer for information. Your ESN Buddy or your local ESN section might also have a tip or two about their city.

Weigh the pros and cons. Consider staying at the dorm in the beginning to test the waters - you will make your first friends and from there you can easily start searching for an apartment, without being rushed.

***No matter the choice, pack your bags and get ready for your life-changing experience!***

# How can ESN help you?

written by **KACPER BOROWIECKI (POLAND)**

**ESN. It stands for Erasmus Student Network**, and we have already mentioned this name in the e-book because well... it's us! Maybe you have heard of us too? After all, we are present in over 500 local associations and in more than 40 countries!

So, who are we and what can we do for you? Of course you can survive Erasmus without an ESN family somewhere near you, but trust us, if you join the events of the biggest student organisation in Europe, your Erasmus will go to the next level!

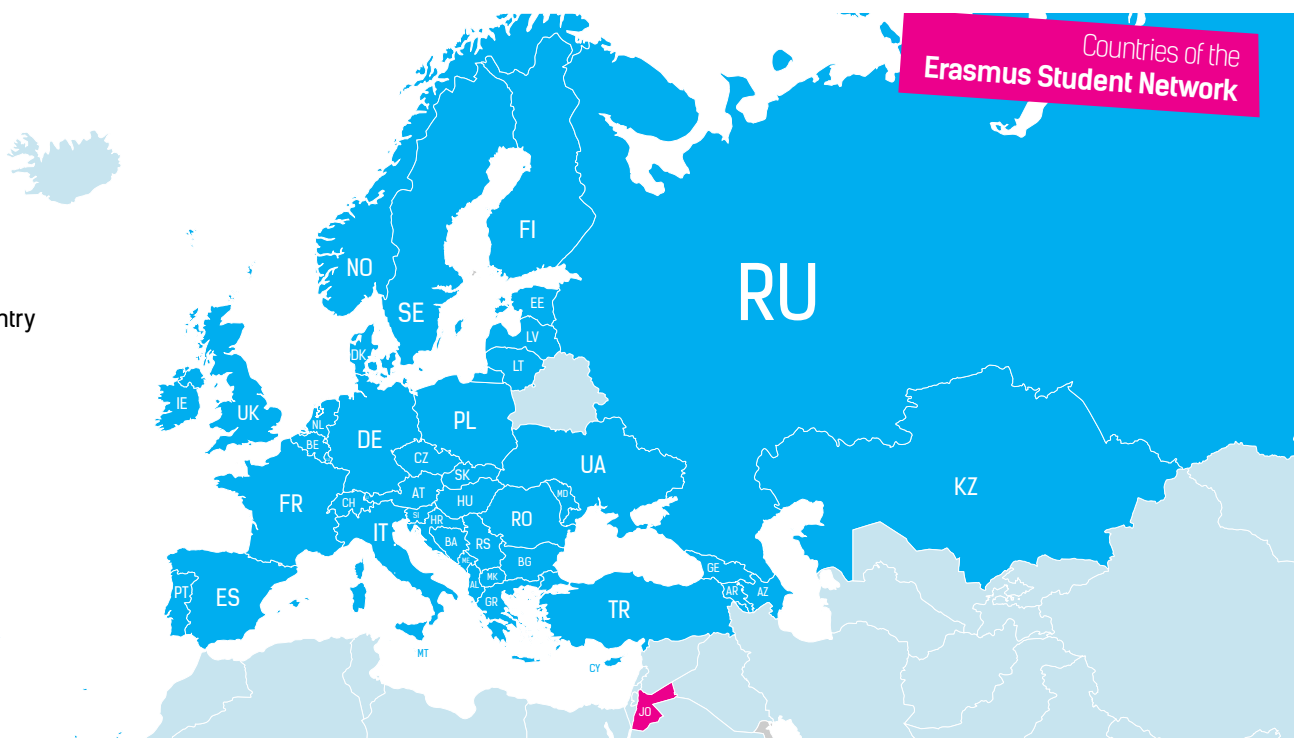


Erasmus Student Network

● ESN member  
as of GA Braga 2023

● Candidate country  
as of GA Sakarya 2022

esn.org



### *We start helping early*

Why? It is simple - because we care. We look after the exchange students from the very first moment possible. Even our name - Erasmus Student Network - stresses that students are our priority. ***One of our values is that we are 'students helping students'.*** And ESN knows what it is doing - we have been around since 1989. Our volunteers are so eager to assist incoming students that we usually start helping you even before you actually go on Erasmus. How? ***Thanks to all those generations of Erasmus students and contacts, we are experts when it comes to mobility!*** We have a lot of members who have already been on exchange. While your International Relations Office should assist you with any questions and issues you might have, you can also always write to your local ESN section and they will be happy to answer all your questions.

*Erasmus Student Network was founded in 1989, in Utrecht, The Netherlands - only two years after the Erasmus programme was launched.*

### *Your buddy will help you!*

After you have asked all the questions and filled in all the papers, you realise that it's all real and you have to prepare for the big day. To help with that, the ESN section at your University will usually assign you your best friend during the exchange - your "buddy". If you get one, definitely contact them before the arrival. ***This person is a student at the university you are coming to and already knows how everything rolls, from classes and public transport to shops and banks.*** They will answer all your questions - you can trust them and ask about anything. Don't ever worry that your question may be weird - we have already been asked about everything, from power outlets to hairdressers.

Upon arriving, your buddy will pick you up - just remember to write to them in advance when and where you will arrive! Then, they will help you find a way to your accommodation - by the way, if you struggle to find it, you can even contact them before arriving and they will send you some ideas. *ESN has partnerships with excellent companies which offer accommodation for students at a suitable price*, just ask a section in your Erasmus city for advice!

Your buddy will then help you with your first steps in the new country. We know that many things can be different, even though you are still in Europe. Your buddy knows where to find the nearest supermarket, the best take-away food and knows all the different customs. Things that are common in your country may be forbidden in your Erasmus country and your buddy knows about it. If you let them help you, they will save you a lot of struggles, time and money! And of course it goes without saying that a nice deal on the mobile Internet will be suggested. You need to have it in order to say hi to your Instagram and your stressed-out family.

### *There is more than a Buddy!*

Although your buddy is most likely the first person from ESN you will have contact with, ESN is, of course, not only made up of buddies. We provide you with many more services and possibilities. For example, the social media groups with all the Erasmus students are very often made and administered by us. You might even get access to yours before the exchange!

*At the very beginning of your Exchange you will get the chance to*

*The ESNcard is used by over 160,000 people every year. It provides thousands of discounts (housing, sport, food, bars, trips etc.) all over Europe.*

***participate in an Orientation Week organised by your ESN section.***

There, you not only get to know other Erasmus students for the first time (and we know that those relationships will then last years!), but also get an overview of the city. We will show you the biggest landmarks, as well as the standard stuff, like public transport tickets. Those tend to be tricky, especially when the lady in the office only speaks in this weird local language.

***We will also be happy to share with you the local culture and***

***cuisine.*** One of the best ways to discover the culture of your Erasmus country is to join trips organised by ESN. What can be better than travelling with other exchange students and local ESN students and sharing unforgettable moments together? We will be really happy if you join ESN trips - we know Erasmus students recall them as some of the best memories from their exchange!

***Speaking of trips, we know you will travel quite a lot during your Erasmus.*** ESNcard also comes equipped with discounts for different services, such as bars, restaurants, hostels and transportation.

And finally - parties! ***Yes, we do party and we do love to do so.***

We are mostly good at making welcome parties, focused on showing the international diversity of the exchange students (for instance by having their country's flag painted on their face during the event) and being a proper ice-breaker for the rest of the exchange. Who knows, maybe you'll meet your best friends for the rest of the semester then! At the very least, we'll make sure you have fun.



Trips, parties, Orientation Week... Already quite a lot, isn't it? But let's not forget to stay active, shall we! Sports are also on the menu of your exchange - those can be simple such as bowling or volleyball, but also as intriguing as zorball. The choice is yours! And if you happen to be keen on competition, join the International Erasmus Games, an international sports competition organised by us with representatives of various countries in the network competing against each other!

### *We help the society*

Apart from the things designed specifically for Erasmus students, we also propose activities which are aimed at helping the society - we want to make a difference not only for Erasmus students, but also for others. Many activities can be organised by your receiving section, from visiting children in a school or an orphanage, walking dogs from an animal shelter or learning how people with disabilities see the world. ***We know this will give you a lot of memories and good feelings, and you will get a feeling of doing something good for the society.***

*Less than 1% of Erasmus students are people with disabilities. The project MappED! by ESN aims to increase this number by mapping the accessibility of European universities.*

This is just a short overview of everything ESN does and can help you with. ***Our organisation consists of over 500 sections and they can organise so many diverse and interesting events.*** Feel free to contact an ESN section at your Erasmus university before the exchange and consider joining ESN at your home university - you won't regret it!



## Why did we join ESN?

*"I've studied abroad for 4 years and got a lot of help during this period. Finally, I thought it was time to pay back and share my experiences with incoming students! After 2 years in ESN I am still thrilled to be part of the network, because I know that every volunteering step I take teaches me so much more than I can ever imagine!"*

**Sena Akçiçek (Turkey)**

*"I first joined ESN because I needed to do something with my time except binge TV shows. I am still here after 4 years because I truly love contributing to the work we all do, and even after all these years of learning, I still see space for myself to grow and learn even more."*

**Nikolina Đurić (Serbia)**





✓ Going

DURING THE  
EXCHANGE



## The First Moments

written by ÀLVARO MIRA (SPAIN)

**6AM. The alarm on your phone rings and you have to rush to the shower to be on time for your flight.** You grab a cup of coffee while your mom and dad are starting to become nervous because it's taking you too long. You get in the car. You get out of the car because you forgot the boarding pass on the table. You finally make it to the airport. Then, the time to say goodbye arrives (and is as emotional as planned), and eventually you're sitting in an airplane. You finally realise: **that's right, your Erasmus experience has just started!**

The beginning of your Erasmus journey is one of the most thrilling, intense, and exciting moments of this experience. Different streets, a different language, different food... at this point, even you are different; because when you left home towards your new life, something in you had already changed.

Arriving in your new home for the following 6-9 months isn't easy. It wasn't easy for me or the rest of the friends of mine who moved abroad at the same time either. But, trust me, in the end, you'll manage to settle down and get used to your new lifestyle and your new city.

**The first week of your Erasmus will probably be the most confusing one.** There are so many things you'll have to deal with, especially

accommodation, red tape, changes in the Learning Agreement and many other unexpected issues. But here's some good news: we all survived! **Be patient, don't stress and take it easy.** One of the best things about not having any help is that you'll become independent and able to solve problems by yourself.



*Arriving in your new home for the following 6-9 months isn't easy.*

**One of the best things you can do during the first days since your arrival is explore the city.** Make sure you know the neighborhood you'll be living in: check for grocery stores, banks and other stores that may somehow be helpful at some point. In my case, I even found out that there's a cinema around the corner! Also, you can start discovering the cultural heritage of your new city, especially museums and other important landmarks, and once you're done with the typical touristy places, go deep into the areas where most local people go. Believe me, you'll feel more at home once you know the main streets and the areas local people visit.

We've already talked about it, and of course we're biased, but here's the best recommendation I could possibly give you: **join the local ESN section!** I'm sure they'll be willing to help you integrate in the city, the university and your new lifestyle. In many cases, ESN becomes one of your best allies when it comes to making new friends, solving university procedural doubts and many other things. At least, it worked for me!

**And what about meeting people?** Yes, during your stay you'll meet a lot of new people, and some of them will become great friends for many years to come. But we both know that making



friends may sometimes be difficult, right? Especially if you're in a foreign country, speaking in a different language. Well, look at it this way: you're all in the same situation. Everyone just arrived over there and they hardly know anyone, so don't be afraid to engage in any conversation and introduce yourself to everyone, even if you don't know them. A language tandem, a party, a class break, lunchtime in the canteen... Any time is good to bring up a conversation and to start talking to new people!

All in all, no one said starting a new journey would be easy. But when it comes to the Erasmus journey, every effort is worth it. *Try to make the most of the first days, even if you're not all settled down yet*, because once your stay comes to an end, you'll be begging to go back to the beginning.



TZETKA

# Erasmus: Booster of your Foreign Language Skills

written by LAURA FERRE SANJUÁN (SPAIN)

As we said before, and regardless of where you are going, chances are that the world around you is going to be written and spoken in a language different than your mother tongue. Foreign language acquisition is probably, together with cultural understanding, one of the most valuable skills that your host country will give you during your period abroad.

Writer Rita Mae Brown once said - *“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”* When living the Erasmus experience, you become a



Illustration by  
Bětka Hamrová  
(Czech Republic)

part of a certain culture, and by learning the language and using it, you are going to have the ability to deeply understand some cultural aspects of its civilization and have a better grasp of your experience in the country as a whole.

*Language acquisition is not a unidirectional, simple process.* It is very complex, and a wide range of factors influence the mastery of your foreign language skills and the amount of time it takes for you to acquire them. Factors such as the proximity of your mother tongue to the second language, your abilities in language learning, the adequacy of your learning method to your needs as a student, your knowledge of linguistics as a science or of other foreign languages, or the time and quality of your exposure to the language shape your process of acquiring the local language, and these factors make the experience different for every Erasmus student. No magic wand is going to make your language skills boost immediately, however, it is for sure that while abroad, language learning will be a part of your daily life, and that the magic wand of the Erasmus programme will have a direct impact on your knowledge of the foreign language.

*First of all, in terms of vocabulary, you will increase your range of words every single day.* The list of words you made while taking your first lessons will become your daily terms to use. From going to the supermarket to ordering your favorite meal in a restaurant, everything will be thought and said in the foreign language. Sometimes, words will have no translation from one language to another. *But that's where the fun part sometimes comes, from understanding culturally specific references*



“

Do you know what a  
foreign accent is?

It's a sign of bravery.

*Amy Chua*

*and expressions that have no meaning in your mothertongue whatsoever.* Other times, you will learn a whole new range of vocabulary regarding realities that you had never thought of, such as local food you had never tasted before, regional sports that will be completely new to you, traditional practices that will enrich your cultural understanding of the country or even the whole spectrum of slang words you can use when going out with your Erasmus friends.



*The proximity of your mother tongue, your abilities in language learning, or your exposure to the language shape your process of acquiring the local language.*

*Secondly, your communication skills are going to be tested.* You will feel more and more confident when using the language that, at the same time, you will acquire the style and certain qualities of the communication rules of the foreign culture. In fact, the language may start to even influence the way you speak in your own tongue. It is quite likely that when you go back to your home country, for the first few weeks you will realise you are importing that communicative style when speaking your native language, and in all likelihood you will keep using some of the idioms, expressions and structures of that language you took some time to learn.

Thirdly, during your experience abroad, because you will be surrounded by the local language all day, and because of speaking with native or semi-native speakers, *your speech will sound closer to the locals'*. Being part of the language community and interacting with people speaking different dialects of the same language makes your listening skills stronger, your pronunciation more accurate, your intonation more similar to that of a native speaker, your grammar structures more similar to

the ones frequently used in that country, and even the sounds between the parts of the speech will become more precise.

*Finally, the Erasmus programme will also give you the possibility to explore the language from a social and cultural point of view.*

What does need to be said? What does not? What references from pop culture substitute common nouns? What historical characters are attributed to which qualities? What is expressed by gestures? What linguistic units are intrinsic to other parts of the speech?

In conclusion, your Erasmus experience will contribute to boosting your language skills from different perspectives. Various factors determine each student's acquisition and mastery of a foreign language, however, what is for sure is that as an Erasmus student, while enjoying an opportunity to learn from other adventurers, to share ideas, to exchange cultures, to have fun, to respect differences, and to enrich yourself thanks to all the diversity and the uniqueness of the host country and of every single person you'll meet, you will be gaining valuable cultural and linguistic knowledge during every single minute of your time abroad.





# How to learn a Foreign Language

written by LAURA KLAUS (LITHUANIA)

As was mentioned earlier, Erasmus itself is a great booster of your foreign language skills. Yet, if you decide to learn the language of your host country, there is one thing you should know: you should practice as much as possible and as broadly as you can. Courses at the university and circumstances that leave you no option but to speak the foreign language are a good start, but that's not nearly enough.

## 1. Talk to the locals

This is unavoidable to practice the spoken language. It might be a bit stressful in the beginning, but don't be afraid to make mistakes - because you will. A lot of them, even. Your local friends will not be annoyed by it - they will be happy you're learning their language. Plus, they're the best teachers because the topics you can talk about can be the ones you usually cover in your conversations. They will correct you and advise you on the spot. And they will definitely congratulate you on your progress.

## 2. Download apps and study on the go

Apps like Duolingo or Memrise are very useful when it comes to studying a new language. Download one or two on your phone,

“

Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.

*Flora Lewis*

and you're good to go. It can help you use your spare time in a useful way – perhaps a morning commute to university would be better spent on learning vocabulary.

### *3. Attend language exchanges*

Every bigger town that has international students has this in a way. Perhaps it's a language tandem organised by the local ESN section. Or language exchange meetings at some café, organised by locals or expats. Do a little research, ask your local and foreign friends, and you might find a regular event that can improve your language skills by a mile and make you many new friends in the process. Plus, at most of these events you will have a chance to share or teach your mother tongue, which is pretty cool, right?

### *4. Watch films and listen to music*

This helps you do something you love and learn at the same time. Download your favourite film in the language you're learning. It's a bonus if you know the dialogue by heart. You will learn vocabulary, improve your grammar, and get a sense of how people speak. Plus, reading subtitles can help you see how they pronounce their alphabet, as well as some words.

Same goes for music. You can listen to it everywhere, no need to pay attention to the screen. Unless you want to, of course. In that case, you can download an app that shows lyrics and it will help you improve your reading and pronunciation as well. And your singing, too!

### *5. Read. A lot*

Just like films and music, it helps you improve your language skills. But reading is easier because translating unknown words is more convenient. Especially online or on some e-book readers. Just download a browser plugin or a language database and you can translate unknown words with one click.

Good luck!







## Don't you go talking to someone from your home country while abroad

written by **GUILLAUME MINOT (SWEDEN)**

“Oh wow, I just learned that there's a huge community of people from my home country where I'm going for my exchange! Lucky me! They're all over the city, they are regularly going out together and, of course, everybody is going to speak my mother tongue.

But more than that, I also have friends from my university/city/insert familiar group here... coming to the same exchange destination as me. *Man, I can't wait to share a flat with them, just so I can speak my own language almost all the time and not learn anything new, in English or in any other language.* Even better, I won't even have to learn anything about any other cultures since I'll be with my friends the entire time, so I'll just keep talking about the same subjects I'm always on about back home!

Needless to say, thanks to all that, there's no point in me going around meeting new people. *What's the point of making friends on Erasmus if I already have friends to begin with?* Well, that's not entirely true - after all, I will still meet some new people among those expats from my home country, and we probably have a lot of brand new topics to engage on, like ranting about the situation of our country and its politics (don't lie, we know you do it, no matter where you're from).



I mean, I could probably not do that, and go a bit outside of my comfort zone, like I'm supposed to do during my exchange. But what good can come out of it anyway? And what do people actually expect me to do about that? Not engage in any of those silly ESN activities, I hope! Parties and events organised especially for international students? Pssh, thanks but no thanks, I'll be much much happier watching TV shows and movies from home with my fellow countrymen! And why should I try different kinds of delicious food from all over the world when I can enjoy my perfectly familiar local dishes, except slightly less good because they're not local right now? Yeah, no brainer, I know exactly what I'll do, thank you very much!

*Yeah, I can't wait to go on this exchange to experience absolutely nothing different from my current situation!"*

*- Said no Erasmus student ever.*



# Exploring the Culture of your Host Country

written by LAURA KLAUS (LITHUANIA)

That's it. You have settled in. Your suitcase is unpacked, you're starting to know your way around the city and your classes have started. So, what now?

Well, did you plan to get to know the culture of your host country? Get to know about the food, or the history, or the language even? Here's a little recap of the few steps you can take to help you with that goal!

## 1. Meet the locals

The first thing you should do is meet some locals. Perhaps your buddy from your host city, or some local students studying with you?

Why? Because there is no culture without people.. We are the ones creating the culture, be it in our universities, organisations, cities, countries, and beyond... Thus, if you really want to explore the culture of a country, locals will be your best guides and mentors. These are the people you should ask for advice on where to go, what to see, what's important for this country when it comes to art, sports, traditions, celebrations, or anything else that you want to explore.

## 2. Attend language classes

It's scientifically proven that languages shape the way we think. That's why one of the best ways to explore the culture of a foreign country is through its language.

*Europe takes its name from the mythological goddess Europa; she was abducted by Zeus who disguised himself as a white bull.*

You don't need to learn it perfectly, in most cases it won't be possible during your time abroad anyway. But it can help you see how people think. Even small differences in languages can say a lot about them.

For example, which words does the language have the most synonyms for? Perhaps rain, because it rains a lot there? Or snow? Or some leisure activities that are very important? Or food? Also, how do people imagine various phenomena? Maybe moon is a female, and sun is a male? Or maybe there is no concept of gender at all? All these small things can tell you a lot about the culture.

Bonus - locals will love you for learning their language. Especially if it's not very widely spoken one.

## 3. Enjoy the local food

If you have travelled to at least a couple of countries before, it might be an obvious one: try local food. It will be delicious, or unexpected, or something you could never have imagined. But it's worth it. It's also a part of the culture. It helps you understand what products people tend to use for cooking, such as what kind of veggies, fruits or berries grow in the country. Even what people like to do - for example, maybe they love to



*Illustration by  
Bětka Hamrová  
(Czech Republic)*

go mushroom picking and that's why the main national dishes are mushroom based.

Thus, you should try all the local dishes. After all, you have time to do so, so why not be curious? And finally, when you find your favourite one, you should learn how to cook it. Ask advice from your local friends, or google the recipe and surprise them. Also, in exchange, don't forget to share some traditional dishes from your country.

#### **4. Engage in local arts**

Art galleries and museums, music festivals and concerts by local artists, theatre, cinema, literature – every country has so much to offer. Try to explore it! Visit an art gallery or even an exposition of some local photographer. Go listen to some local

*The European anthem is an excerpt from the prelude of the Ode to Joy from Beethoven's 9th Symphony.*

folk music or attend a live music concert where the singers perform in the country's native tongue. Perhaps some theatre play has been translated into English. Books and films most likely are. Choose a local writer and check what they have written!

We don't really have a chance for these things often. If you go for a week-long holiday to some country, you most likely won't have time to read books, attend many concerts and watch the films in the cinema. But on exchange, you can. And if you hoped to learn about the country's arts, that's a good way to do it.

### **5. Educate yourself about History**

Every country has their own history. And you can bet a very interesting one that you might enjoy learning about.

The easiest way to do this is to read about it online. But that's not that much fun, is it? Visit some museums or castles, ask locals about the history. Or just wander around the streets and think about what kind of stories are hiding inside the walls of older buildings.

By learning some local history, you will find out what the locals are proud of. What's bitter and sad to remember or talk about. Which legends surround your favourite places in the city, and what has happened there in the past.

### **6. Embrace the traditions**

Just like the history, many traditions are there to be discovered.

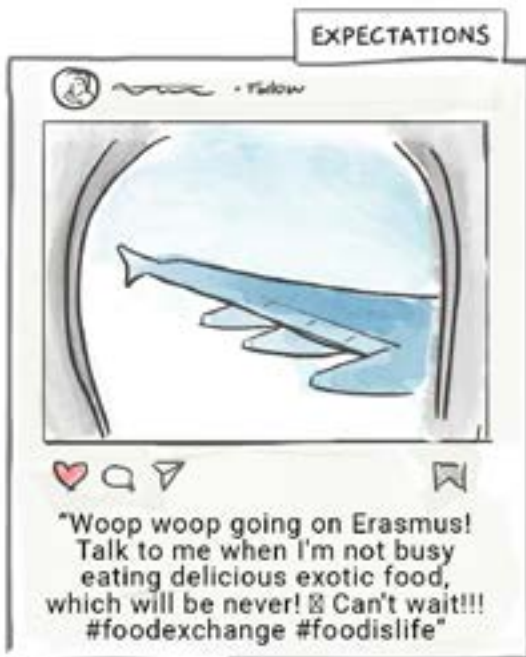
We all celebrate different holidays, or the same holidays in different ways. Learn how the locals celebrate and join them, because the more the merrier!

Some traditions can seem crazier than others, but just like the language, history and arts, they help you understand the country better. You should try to dress in traditional clothes, teach yourself some local crafts, celebrate holidays like a local, and adopt one of the local customs.

Once again, that's not possible when you're just visiting the country. Now is your chance to learn everything about it, because this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Will you take it?







# Typical Erasmus Activities

written by [GUILLAUME MINOT \(SWEDEN\)](#)

You're in your host country now. You've been out and about, moved in all your stuff, maybe met some exchange students and locals already? You might still feel a bit disoriented, unsure, and overall ill at ease in this land full of new opportunities. It would do you a world of good if someone, somewhere out there were to propose something to do, anything for you to blow off some steam and relax a bit.

Well fear not, dearest exchange student. We, at ESN, are here for you! And what's more, we have a ton of activities for you in mind! And regardless of where you end up, [there's 5 kinds of activities you will probably almost always find](#), so have a quick look around to see what to expect.

## Welcome Party

Welcome to the Erasmus life! And what's a better welcome than an internationally themed party, where you get to meet people from all over the world who will soon enough become familiar faces during your Erasmus period? Add a pinch of international music and you have an amazing party to welcome you to your exchange. Oh, and due to international laws, "Despacito" is now forbidden to be played more than once during any kind of party, even a Latin themed one – feel free to remind the DJ!



### *International Dinner*

*Illustration by  
Bětka Hamrová  
(Czech Republic)*

Why do people travel? For cultural diversity? For eye-opening experiences? For professional opportunities?

Ahah. No. People will tell you that, but they're lying. The real reason you're so excited to go abroad is to get a taste of all those wonderful new dishes from other countries. And during International Dinners, you will get a chance to take it up a notch: you get access to food from all over the world! At the same time, you will also have the opportunity to showcase the

gastronomy from your country, which is always nice! Except if you're from one of those countries where you're expected to cook like a chef – if that's the case, and you're not a chef, you might want to call your family for an emergency last minute cooking lesson! Ah, the joys of being on exchange...



*As a rule of thumb, expect the unexpected!*

### City Visits & Trips

What do you do when you're on exchange? Travel some more, of course! Be it within your own host city and its surroundings, elsewhere in the country or even abroad! ESN sections usually have deals with local travel agencies, or simply plan visits for you to have a blast. So, wander around and discover the secrets of your host city; or go hiking, strolling on the beach, visit monuments and castles... In short, discover and have fun!

### Social Activity

Erasmus is not just all work and no fun, we already said that. But it's not all fun and no care either. In fact, most of us in ESN do care about international students, as you will have understood by now, but in turn we care about more than that, and many of us grew to care for the city and country they live in, whether we are locals or arrived only a year before you, we are all united in a common sense of care and responsibility towards the place that welcomed us and made us who we are.

So to reciprocate, we like to organise social activities. Be it visits to the local schools, workshops on awareness about various topics, environmental care and more, we will try to do good

around us and involve you as much as we can! And who knows, you may end up caring about the place as much as we do!

### *Goodbye Activity*

All good things must come to an end. But no time for tears or waving tissues at the train station, that's not what Erasmus is about! Erasmus is fun, Erasmus is joy, and moreover it's about the people you met! Seize this last opportunity for a full blown ESN activity with your newly found friends - be it a barbecue, a party or a casual hangout together, it will be memorable, because those months abroad surely were!

And here you have it. Excited yet? We surely hope so. Of course, as stated above, these are more of a common trope within ESN sections, you will have much more activities to do, be it that they are proposed by your local section, or that you stumble upon them yourself. *As a rule of thumb, expect the unexpected!*  
*And have fun!*



## How to make your Long-Distance Relationship work

written by AMENI MEHREZ (HUNGARY)

Illustration by  
Niki Moraiti  
(Greece)

If there's one thing you can usually not bring in your suitcase, it's your partner. Despite all the amazing perks it brings, this is one of the factors that can make the Erasmus adventure less exciting for those who are in a couple before they leave. *We often believe that LDRs (long distance relationships) tend to collapse and end up failing.*

According to a study made by the Centre for Study of Long Distance Relationships, 14 to 15 million people in the USA consider themselves living in a LDR. However, rates of break-

up for traditional relationships are estimated by 25% per year while it is just 8% for couple experiencing distance. *Separated relationships are proven to be more vibrant and solid due to the fact that while you're far from each other*, you tend to communicate more deeply and therefore feel closer to each other.

### 1. Communicate often

It is very important that you plan your communication time with your significant other regularly. Today, communication means are more and more developed. With modern tools of communication, you can write to anyone from almost anywhere. And what's best, you're due to discover all the new and exciting things we already mentioned earlier - so, you're not gonna run out of things to say anytime soon.



*Rates of break-up for traditional relationships are estimated by 25% per year while it is just 8% for couple experiencing distance.*

### 2. Plan when you'll see each other next

Speaking to each other virtually is nice - but a good relationship needs some physical connection too! As such, you should definitely plan a physical meeting as soon as you can, before you leave most likely! Being able to plan your reunion will help you keep calm and optimistic. Besides, Erasmus can be an amazing opportunity here too! Have you ever dreamt of a romantic walk around Paris? Well then your exchange in France is definitely going to help that! What about hiking around? There are several gorgeous landscapes to be seen around Europe. You are sure to have something for your taste!

### *3. Do things together*

Sometimes you don't realise how much you can do together in a relationship. In fact, there are so many simple things that can be experienced even when you are far from each other. For example, watching a movie together at the same time, cooking a dish, meditating or doing yoga on Skype, going shopping and asking them for their opinion... The list is infinite. Just be creative and try to think of new stuff that you never did together before. That way you don't only share special moments with each other but you might also discover things you didn't know about them. Even simple gestures can make your day and have a big impact on your relationship.

### *4. Be creative and attentive*

Try to surprise your sweetheart with unexpected ideas. For instance, write them letters in your own handwriting sprinkled with your own perfume or cologne. It might seem a bit traditional for some people in comparison to phone messages but it is one of the best ways to test your patience and show the other person that you are not like any other ordinary person. This will definitely make your relationship more exciting. You can also send small gifts, flowers, or anything else that would make your partner happy. And with the added bonus of being abroad, you may be able to send them some traditional gifts, food or postcards from your place!

### *5. Find time for yourself*

This may seem counterintuitive compared to the other tips that



advise to care about your partner, but caring about yourself will have a positive effect on your relationship as well. After all, you're not in jail, you are also supposed to be free to go around, visit, and live your own experiences while your partner does the same where they live. And as an exchange student, you are due to have many such incredible experiences, which can and should be for yourself. This only ought to make the reunion even better!

### **6. Trust your partner**

One of the most crucial things in a relationship is trust. Of course it is not easy to have trust when you don't see the other person and have no idea who they're spending time with or where they go. Don't try to follow every single person or thing related to them which may break all trust ties. Moreover, not only do you make the other person uncomfortable, you also doubt yourself, become paranoid and ultimately make things harder for the both of you. What you should do instead is show your partner how much you trust them by making them believe that you're not the jealous type. Love is all about trust so keep building your trust castle until you meet your prince/princess again and be united for the rest of your days. Remember that without trust, there is no castle and without a castle there is no happily ever after.

Overall, ***long distance relationships might not be as difficult as they seem***, especially if you believe in the power of love and try your best to give it a chance. So close your eyes, go on Erasmus and follow these tips.



“

If you talk to a man  
in a language he  
understands, that  
goes to his head. If  
you talk to him in his  
language, that goes  
to his heart.

*Nelson Mandela*

# Erasmus Love

written by LAURA KLAUS (LITHUANIA)

Now, we've talked about being in love before you leave. But what if you are single before your exchange and happen to meet someone there. How is your experience going to be affected by it, and will it even work out?

## *Erasmus and love*

Your attitude toward falling in love on your Erasmus exchange depends highly on what your hopes for your exchange are. Some people leave in hope to find love. Not the majority, but some do. Usually, reasons to go on an exchange aren't connected to love – experiencing different cultures, learning foreign languages, improving in your field of study, travelling, meeting new people, experiencing new things... the list can go on and on because we are all unique and we all have different dreams and hopes.

*27% of Erasmus students meet their long-term partner during their mobility period.*

It's not too uncommon to date people during your exchange. Some even hope for it. But dating and being in love are two different things. In the first case, you know that it will probably end once you both go back to your perspective countries. And in the other case, you know that you can't allow it to end. Ever.

## *Should you fall in love on Erasmus?*

You might want to. And it might be the last thing you want

during this particular period of your life. But this part, you just can't control it. No matter what your plans are, it might strike you like lightning and you'll fall head over heels for someone. On the other hand, you might want to fall in love with all your heart, but it just won't happen.

And it might be easier this way. Because falling in love is always rewarding, but when there's an issue of long distance that will come up sooner or later, it's no less challenging.

### *WILL it work out?*

*33% of Erasmus Alumni had a life partner of a different nationality compared to 13% of those who stay home during their studies.*

Once again, it's up to you. If your feelings are really what you think they are, it will work out. Just don't suppress your feelings. Don't try to run away from them. Love is not a thing you should run away from. It's one of the strongest feelings you can have in your life. And if you do have it, you should embrace it.

As a positive however, there is proof that Erasmus love stories end up working as well. By now, statistics show that about a quarter of those who went on their Erasmus met a long-term partner there. Or maybe you've read one of our Erasmus love stories on our ESNblog? Or anywhere else on the web really. Eventually during every exchange semester at any given university, some couples are formed. And they make it. And you could be one of those!

No matter the distance between their countries, no matter their culture, language, or what other people think. If you want something really badly, everything else will work out. If you can believe in it, you can make it work!

# Maintaining a Healthy Diet during your Erasmus

written by **MARIJA PAPIĆ (SERBIA)**

When preparing for the life-changing experience called Erasmus, we tend to forget how important it is to keep our health in good condition and what strategies we can adopt to make this process easier. In the preparation phase, we are overwhelmed with many other things - finding our bearings, dealing with administration, etc.... *And once we arrive in our new home we are excited to meet our new environment and make lots of new friends.* We like to fill our free time with trips, parties, and many of the other social events we described earlier.

*In all this chaos we usually forget about the complicated part of every Erasmus experience - living on your own.* This one is especially difficult if you have been living in your family home your entire life, like I did. Over time, you got used to not having to think about washing, cleaning, shopping, cooking and many other chores and duties. Just the idea that this is all up to you now might sound a bit scary.

*In my case, the scariest part was cooking.* I was never interested in cooking and everyone who knows me would never say I'm good at it. However, I discovered it's slightly more nuanced than that. The fact that I wasn't cooking often never meant that I couldn't cook. I was just not interested in it and my free time

was reserved for other things, while I was carelessly enjoying my mum's delicious cuisine.

When I found myself abroad, far away from mum's kitchen, I still wanted to have warm, homemade meals every day which would of course require extra effort and time from my side. I decided to give it a try, and my experiments in the kitchen started. I must admit that, in the beginning, it was hard. Mostly because I was trying to figure out how to organise myself so that cooking became a fun activity. Also, I didn't have any practice or routine from before, so it was difficult to get the ingredients I needed and to know how I should combine them in order not to waste too much food, which is something I hate doing.

How did I start? Simply by googling things. *Usually I would just Google "meal with..." and then add the main ingredient I want the dish to contain.* For example: "meal with chicken". I would get many recipes, and then I would just use the ingredients that I like from the recipe, the ones I have or the ones I can easily buy. I never followed the whole recipe strictly, word for word. I was just having fun experimenting and testing my (new) skills.

Before I share with you some of my recipes, I would like to give you some tips and hopefully make this process easier for you:

## TIP 1

Check with the locals, for example your buddy, what are the good supermarkets for shopping and check the recommended

ones first, but don't hesitate to check other nearby supermarkets as well (if there is a big variety of them). Different markets can also vary in the quality of food and brands they offer, but also in price which is important when it comes to budgeting.

## TIP 2

Make sure to do a weekly shop. Find the days when you are least busy and avoid weekends when supermarkets are crowded, especially with locals who don't have much patience while you look at every product carefully and take time to decide what to choose. Pick some weekdays to go shopping, preferably with a list of ingredients you need.

Make sure to always have the basic ingredients that you can combine with others. The list of basic things may vary depending on your culture and eating habits, as well as taste, but let me mention some of them: oil, rice, pasta, cereal, milk and other



dairy products (yogurt, cheese, cooking cream, etc.), eggs, spices of your choice, jam, ham, etc.

Of course, during cooking time you will need many other things besides the ones I mentioned - vegetables, meat, etc. You can include them in your weekly shop or you can simply buy them when needed.

### TIP 3

Not everyone likes fruits (me, for instance), but everyone knows how healthy and beneficial they are for our health. It's best to eat fruit even if you're not a fan, but there are some alternative ways to consume them that you may prefer. For instance, try the following: buy some limes and/or lemons and after washing them, cut them into big pieces, put them in the carafe or bottle and store it in the fridge. This way you have a healthy juice that has no added sugar and at the same time you are giving your body some fruity vitamins. Make sure to refill water only around five more times and then throw out the fruit. You may also experiment with other ingredients such as ginger, cucumber, grapefruit and others.

### TIP 4

Just like eating fruit is healthy, the same goes for vegetables. I have always loved almost all types of vegetables, but I have also loved them the most when they were combined with some

kind of meat. However, during my exchange I discovered that there are so many good ideas for vegetarian meals that are light, but nutritious at the same time. Vegetables can't stay fresh for a long time, so when doing the weekly shopping choose wisely what you can actually eat in a week and store them in the fridge, as some of them are highly sensitive such as mushrooms, especially in case it's too warm in your lodging.

## TIP 5

When going abroad, you will definitely use the ingredients of your national cuisine or you will at least search for them. You will be nostalgic for different flavours and you will try to copy them the best way possible in your new home. Your new friends will really appreciate it, especially when you go to the International Dinner or you simply make some spontaneous picnic or dinner with different national cuisines. Still, don't forget to check what your host country has to offer, what its typical flavours and ingredients are, and you are ready to jump into the new adventure of combining ingredients and recipes from two different cuisines. Upon your return back home, your new skills will be highly valued by your family and friends who will be curious to try new things, while you will be proud to show them what you have learned and introduce them to your second home in the best way possible.

*I hope these tips will help you make a good cooking plan and that they will inspire you to spend some time in the kitchen!*

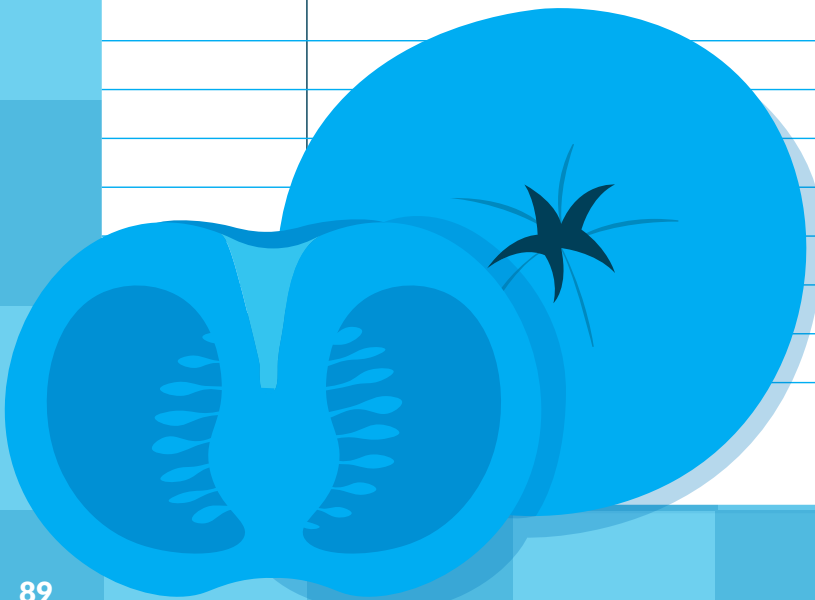
## tomato soup

Pour the water into the pot so that it reaches approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the pot, then add a grated medium-sized carrot and half of a soup cube into the water. Let it boil for a few minutes and then add the tomato sauce - as much as you wish. If it's too sour, you can add a bit of sugar. Apart from sugar, you can also add other spices you like, such as salt, pepper, basil, etc.

To make this soup a bit 'heavier' you may add some pasta or noodles that are used specifically for soups. In case you would like to add them, do it when the water with carrot starts boiling and keep it like that for a few minutes, then add the tomato sauce and continue cooking for a while until everything has been cooked nicely.

If you follow these instructions you should have enough for two plates, but the amount depends mostly on how much tomato sauce you add.

Tomato soup is good as a starter or as a main dish, it's light and healthy.



## chicken & courgette

Cut chicken breasts into cubes and fry them in oil. When it's done, take the chicken out of the saucepan and put it aside. Then, put grated courgettes in the saucepan and use only the oil that was left after frying the chicken. No need to add any water, since courgettes are already full of it. Make sure to stir it regularly until the water has almost evaporated. Then, put the chicken back into the saucepan, add your favourite spices such as salt, pepper, basil and add some cooking cream into it. Stir it all so that ingredients mix well and cook for a few more minutes until the cooking cream becomes dense.

If you like, you may also add a bit of garlic together with the courgettes or fresh at the very end.

If you follow these instructions, you should have enough for one person, but it depends on how much chicken and courgette you use. This is another easy, light and healthy meal.

Bon appetit and eat healthily during your Erasmus!

# Healthy Recipes for a Healthy Exchange

written by ANNA WOJTKIEWICZ (POLAND)

*So, let's make it healthy! And on budget.*

*Let's make it healthy and on budget.*

## SITUATION ONE

*It's morning and you're hungry, but you're in a rush to go to class.*

*Solutions?*

1. You can make anything with eggs, it is a very nutritious ingredient and usually very quick to make! So, scrambled eggs (you can add some veggies or ham here), omelette (add whatever you like, you can make it sweet or salty), eggs benedict (if you have more time), soft-boiled or hard-boiled-eggs.

2. Sandwiches. You may think it's boring, but think about a sandwich with avocado, tomato and a little bit of salt or an unconventional version with yesterday's chicken and some pickled veggies. Yummy! Just try not to add junk food to your sandwich. And stop, don't touch that Nutella. No, seriously, stop it.

**Bonus:** You can toast your sandwich if you like it warm and crunchy!

3. If you have a little bit more time, you can make your own granola with anything you like! You can use an already done

base or bake oats yourself (with a little bit of coconut oil). Just don't use those "instant" or "quick-cooking" ones. You can eat your granola with your favourite yoghurt.

4. Smoothies, of course. You can make it with frozen fruits and milk (including almond/soy/rice/oat milk). Apart from eggs and a chicken sandwich all these ideas can be vegan-friendly.

## SITUATION TWO

*It's the night before the morning where you'll be in a rush.*

*Solutions?*

1. Take a muffin shaped mould (silicone one), add some oatmeal on the bottom (or any granola), add some fruits (can be frozen) and yoghurt. Keep it in the freezer overnight. Enjoy in the morning!
2. You can make oatmeal overnight, this way it will be a lot healthier. You just need to add hot water to your oatmeal and any seeds you like. You can also add some fruits in the morning. Preparing it this way will make your bowels much, much happier during the day.

## SITUATION THREE

*It's dinner time and you're at home. Solutions?*

Well, you need to remember that you need to have carbs, protein, and fat in your meal. Try to always add some veggies. It's that simple. It really is! It's up to you how you combine them to make a delicious meal.

## 1. Meatballs

Can you feel the Ikea vibes? All you need in meatballs is any kind of meat, some garlic, and an egg. You can add bread crumbs. Mix it all and put in boiling water or fry in a pan (but try to avoid eating too many fried dishes). Later you can make any sauce you want (tomato sauce goes great with meatballs) and side dishes (pickled cucumbers, fresh cucumbers with sour cream and a little bit of salt, carrots mixed with lemon juice and so on).

## 2. Risotto

You can make it in so many ways! You can mix rice with chicken broth - add chicken and carrots from the broth and some sour cream. Another way is to make rice with curry and shrimps.



### 3. Pasta

For example, make whole grain pasta according to the description on the package, pour one spoon of olive oil on the pan and add spinach (can be frozen or fresh), add some cheese (any kind that you like, just make sure it will melt well) and mix it. Don't forget to add your favourite seasoning!

## SITUATION FOUR

*It's evening and you want to make lunch for the next day.*

### *Solutions?*

You probably have a jar, so no need to buy any expensive lunch boxes.

1. Take sushi ingredients and layer them in your jar! You can put rice, avocado, cucumber, carrot, surimi and some soy sauce with nori, for example.
2. Put some pasta in your jar! The whole grain pasta recipe will do!
3. Layer rice, sauce, and fresh veggies (e.g spinach - rice with spinach, smoked salmon and cheese is a great idea!) in your jar!
4. Put oatmeal, seeds, and fruits in your jar!



“

We miss you

already!

# Feeling Homesick: A Personal Story

written by PAULINA BAŁYS (POLAND)

“We miss you already,” my mom uttered these words the day prior to my departure to my Erasmus destination. I just nodded and answered that she should stop cracking jokes because we both knew no one would eat all their food once I was gone, and no one will ask her for the millionth time if she had seen where my missing stuff was. But, deep down inside, I didn’t want to admit that our familial bonds were so tight that it was a bit hard for me to imagine the next few months without asking “Mum, have you seen my...”. So, for the remainder of the evening, *I was trying to feed myself happy thoughts about all the people I was going to meet, travels we were going to go on and classes I was going to attend - positive thoughts instead of missing home before I actually got to leave.*

The first days of my exchange were wonderful - I met lots of people and not only from Europe, but from Mexico, Australia and South Korea as well. I was granted a chance to broaden my horizons while we were talking about our traditions, culture and the environment we were raised in. *As the days went by, I couldn’t really say that I missed my parents, my friends or even my bed!* Together with my new friends, I was dreaming of all the places we were going to visit. During these days, I had short phone calls with my mom, but they weren’t many and, truth

be told, I felt a bit tired of talking about what I did or ate that day. Of course, I was anxious to know if everything was okay, but I was kind of impressed by the fact that I wasn't missing my family as much as I thought I would.

*And then, after about five weeks, something changed unexpectedly.*

Since plane tickets weren't so cheap, my parents and I decided that I should spend Easter with my new friends who had decided to stay as well, since they weren't really celebrating Easter. I was a bit bummed when it hit me I wouldn't be going home for Easter. I realised that for the first time I wouldn't be spending Easter at home with my loved ones, but with people I had just met, which isn't the kind of connection I was looking for at the time. *For the first time since the beginning of my exchange, I felt sad.*



*She told me that my dad missed me, but that I'm an adult now and that I should try to cope with my homesickness.*

Still, I made plans with my friends to spend Easter abroad and, before I knew it, we bought tickets for the bus, booked our accommodation, discussed how much money we actually needed and we were ready to go. Two weeks later, I was sitting with my friends in coach, we were really excited about our trip and the opportunity of making new memories together. The trip seemed like a good idea, it was something I definitely needed in my life at the moment because I was so used to spending Easter with my family that I couldn't imagine spending it anywhere else than back home. I tried not to think about it, but I failed. To make things worse, I couldn't even spend all the time with my friends because we wanted to experience completely different things, so I felt utterly alone and that was the first moment

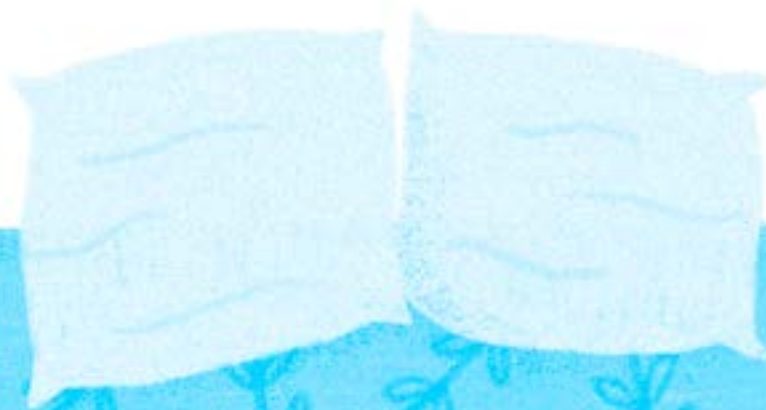
when I thought I should have booked a flight ticket back home instead of going abroad with my new friends.

After Easter break, when I was back in my dormitory, I called my mum and told her that I couldn't get over this homesickness and that I really wanted to come back home. *We had a really long talk, she convinced me that I should stay and that it was just a few more months before I'll be back home.* She told me that my dad missed me, but that I'm an adult now and that I should try to cope with my homesickness. After our talk, she sent me some photos of my animals, as well as some photos from my childhood, all enclosed with a message saying that I should stop being sad and try to focus on my studies, as well as making positive memories. She also told me that if I can find a cheap ticket for a flight home, I could come, but she recommended me to spend as much time as possible with other people so I could avoid thinking about going back home.

I think my mum is the smartest person I know, so I took her advice and started focusing on my university and enjoying every single moment of my exchange which made me stop counting down the days before my departure. *Counting down days to something is actually the worst thing you can do to yourself - don't do it!* As soon as I gave it up, I really started enjoying my exchange. I stopped thinking about going back home, and I actually realised that the time that was left to my exchange was really short, and I started having regrets about my exchange being just one semester long, and not two.

*Illustration by  
Sara Felgueiras  
(Portugal)*

An exchange is a great opportunity to broaden your horizons. It opens your mind, it helps you see the difference between studying at your home-university and the university abroad. During the exchange, you can improve your language skills, you can meet lots of new people you can exchange great ideas with. Don't you think that sitting in your room and crying because you miss your home is a big waste of time and the opportunities you were granted? *Let your exchange experience truly be the best time of your life!*



# How to deal with Homesickness

written by *TAJANA MOHNACKI (CROATIA)*

- Take some photographs of your family and friends with you on your exchange;
- Take an item which reminds you of home with you;
- Decorate your temporary home to make it feel warm and cosy;
- Integrate a part of your old routine or some daily/weekly/monthly tradition in your new lifestyle;
- Have a phone or video call with your family and friends whenever you feel like it - set up a date for it if you feel like it!
- Stay in touch with what's happening in people's lives back home and tell them what's happening in yours;
- Invite your new friends for dinner and make some traditional food from your home country ;
- Share some stories, experiences and customs from your life with your new friends;
- Familiarise your new friends with the culture of your country ;
- Plan a trip home;
- Invite your family and friends to come visit you on your exchange.





Betka



## Phone Photography Tips

written by *SABINA ACHIM (ROMANIA)*

*Illustration by  
Selin Sari (Turkey)*

Some moments can't be repeated - take your phone out and create the best souvenirs!

### *1. Manual focus - put your finger on it*

Tap on the subject on your screen to focus, don't leave anything to chance or autofocus.

## *2. Manual exposure - just like a pro*

Exposure controls how much light enters the camera; you don't want to lose details in a bright light or a dark area.

## *3. Don't go into the light*

Avoid back-lit positions or light coming from the top down. And if the situation doesn't require it, don't use the flash.

## *4. Go closer, but never zoom*

Or your photo will be pixelated. Most phones have a digital zoom, that means it will only crop your image down to a smaller size, something you can do later on by editing the picture.

## *5. The grid is your friend*

It will allow you to calculate your composition to best accommodate your main subject(s).

Follow the rule of thirds: the grid will help you divide the screen using two horizontal and two vertical lines. Your subject should be placed along the lines or at their junction points.

## *6. Black & White*

If something just does not click about your composition, give black & white a try. It can remove distractions and bring attention to your subject.

## *7. Don't be static*

Don't always go with the standing position, challenge yourself

and explore. Try different angles and perspectives, walk around your subject, lay down on the ground, get closer; the same subject can be seen from a hundred different points of view. Have fun with whatever you stumble upon - windows, puddles, holes.

### ***8. Keep your lens clean***

No need for further explanation here!

### ***9. Consider accessories***

A mini-tripod, add-on lenses, spotlights or a stabiliser will allow you to experiment more and might inspire some great ideas.

### ***10. Edit like a pro***

After getting the best out of your camera phone, it's time to give your pictures a final touch. Editing is a step professional photographers do not skip. There are no limits in creativity and there are plenty of good free apps to help you mix & match until you find the one to suit your needs: Snapseed, VSCO, Pixlr, Adobe Lightroom Mobile.

# Self-Development

written by PAULINA WYRWAS (POLAND)

For many, going on Erasmus is a stepping-stone to adulthood and independence - this kind of a huge leap is usually the best way to improve and evolve. An exchange is an opportunity to learn self-reliance - *you become responsible for yourself, your bills, formalities and documents, the state of your house, or your fridge, or your laundry.* No matter if you decide to live in a dorm or rent a room, suddenly you have more responsibilities than ever and there is no one close by to help you out. You will find yourself staring into the face of a crisis on more than one occasion; you will have to deal with emergencies and make on-the-spot decisions. This is how you get to know yourself and your weak points better, which is a starting point for self-improvement.

It can be a time to reflect and do some soul-searching. *Reality around you changes and your perspective broadens.* You can take a step back and look at yourself from another angle. Erasmus is often associated with loud parties and crazy social life, but the truth is that at times, it can also be a great chance to simply catch a breath and step away from everything and everyone you know. You can learn how to be on your own and enjoy it. Spend a quiet night in, read a book, relax and feel good in your own company.

On the other hand, *you get a chance to interact with people from*



*different backgrounds, which lets you form your own opinion on multiple subjects* – whether it's ethics, politics, culture, you become a conscious citizen of the world. Nothing shapes you on such a significant and profound level as the people you meet along the way and Erasmus is a time when you will meet them with every step you take.

What's more, a period away from home changes the way you look at already existing relationships in your life. *It lets you appreciate your family and friends – sometimes, you can only feel something in its absence.* You will miss your mum and the way she nags you when you come home late more than once, you will miss your brother whining about how much time you take in the shower and you will miss your best friend who always unexpectedly pops around to your house. *One of the signs of growing up is realising that you don't always know best and looking for guidance and support of those who are older and wiser.* Once you move away from your family, you get a chance to grow a lot in this area. There is a huge chance, however, that after you learn to be on your own you will no longer be able to live in your old house, and decide to move out. It's just a natural way things go. You grow up, your relationships change, but it doesn't mean the bond you share with your family weakens. It simply evolves.

The experience of going on Erasmus will undoubtedly change your life. It is up to you to decide how. You can decide to focus on developing various areas of life - not only on your academic career but also on your mind and soul. *Just make sure to make this experience as positive as possible and accept the changes ahead.*



AFTER THE  
EXCHANGE



# Influence of Exchange Programmes on Career Perspectives

written by DANUTA GRUSZKA (POLAND)

An article based on The Erasmus Impact Study Regional Analysis prepared by CHE Consult GmbH and CHE Consult Prague s.r.o. for the European Commission in January 2016.

Since not all of us are fans of burrowing through statistics and analysing the results of scientific research, I decided to show you the most relevant proof that studying abroad is going to kick-start your career.

*Your way to your dream job is set and can be reached through your Erasmus exchange - all you need to do is to take the first step!*

There are as many reasons to study abroad as there are students. Whether you decided to take this step to meet new people, visit your favourite country, live abroad, improve a language, gain independence or simply have loads of fun – the experience abroad will influence you in so many ways, and one of them is increasing your potential on the job market. Becoming more employable while having the time of your life? Yes, please!

How does Erasmus increase employability? The researchers measured skills such as tolerance of ambiguity, curiosity, confidence, serenity, decisiveness and vigor (problem-solving skills) before and after mobility. Across Europe, 93% of the

surveyed employers confirmed that these six traits were indeed important for the recruitment and professional development of their employees, pointing at some other important one's: the ability to adapt and act in new situations, analytical and problem-solving skills, communication skills, planning and organisational skills, and team working skills.

After our Erasmus exchange, we can easily see the improvements – *stepping out of your comfort zone gives you a new perspective, puts you in front of new challenges and helps you gain life skills.* Just think about organising a road trip to some wonderful destination in your new country - are there any skills mentioned above that you are not working on?

When employers review CV's, they are trying to develop an impression of the applicant in a short amount of time. *A CV that shows that you went to study abroad shows a potential employer your drive, confidence and passion.* You are seen as culturally experienced and mature, and as someone who can adjust to a new environment quicker than others.

Entering a job market seems easy now, but what if your country has a high unemployment rate? Your friends who graduated a couple years ago are still jobless? If you participate in an exchange programme, the likelihood of you being unemployed is less than for non-mobile students. Even five to ten years after graduation, the statistics favour you over graduates who have never experienced life abroad.

According to the study, after going abroad you are also more likely to gain entrepreneurial spirit and establish a start-up, hold managerial positions, have a higher salary and, of course, work abroad!

*New experiences, new cultures, new ideas, new friends, new university, new language, new places, new YOU?*

As proven by the study, the average change achieved in six months through the Erasmus programme can be considered equivalent to a personality change that would normally happen over four years of life without this experience!

Studying in a different country forces you to be more flexible. New surroundings and many other changes you will begin to see in yourself will, in the long run, make a huge difference! It will be challenging, but also enriching, shocking but satisfying, difficult but it will make things easier for you in the future. Trust me, there are no barriers you cannot overcome, and difficulties now will increase your ability to handle change later in your career!

Leaving your home behind for a couple of months may seem terrifying at first. It is, indeed, a huge step to take, but it puts you at an advantage compared to the majority of your competitors on the job market. *Study abroad, and you'll see what I mean. The sky's the limit.*

## What skills did your International Lifestyle teach you?

*“Communication skills! I improved a lot at listening to people and being more patient, also giving more value to different people’s ideas. Time management, since I am president of my section and I also started working, I learned how to be better at organising myself.”*

*Federico Bettin (Italy)*

*“I changed so much on Erasmus. I became more open to new experiences and more confident in my own skills. I also became less about “oh, let me talk all the time about me” and more about listening about others. I’m in no way the same person I was before my Erasmus experience.”*

*Jéssica Alves (Portugal)*

*“Project & event management, leadership, correct communication methods, volunteer management, delegating tasks, giving constructive feed-back. I believe all these taught me how to lead a team with minimal miscommunication and misunderstanding.”*

*Sena Akçiçek (Turkey)*

*“During my time in ESN, I’ve had the opportunity to make presentations in front of big or small crowds. In the beginning, it was an extremely stressful experience, just like it is for most people. However, having the opportunity to practice my presentation skills several times really helped me improve my delivery. Two years later and I now present in front of a crowd as if it’s something totally natural!”*

*Elisavet Rozaki (Greece)*

## Post-Erasmus Depression

written by MILENA DIMITROVA (BULGARIA)

Depression is a condition we have all heard of. It's dark, sad, indifferent... You would never connect it to Erasmus, would you? All those new experiences and friendships, wonderful places and memories make these two terms seem completely incompatible.

However, your opinion may change a little once the fairytale is over.

*“Erasmus is not a year in your life, but your life in a year.”*

Does this sentence strike you “right in the feels”? Once home, are you struggling with getting back to your “normal” life?

*Well, we are here to let you know: you are not alone.* And, I assure you, this is not the end of the world. But rather a new, exciting beginning in itself, in a way.

*It's completely normal for people to feel somewhat lost in the face of change, and to need some time to adapt to the new.* But being at home is nothing new, right? It's the place you've spent so much time; it's your own country. Yet, when you enter your old room, the feeling is weird. Of course, you remember what the place looks like. It's not unknown, but still foreign. You know it's home, but still not the home you had during the past months.

All of a sudden, everything might seem a bit too dull. While on



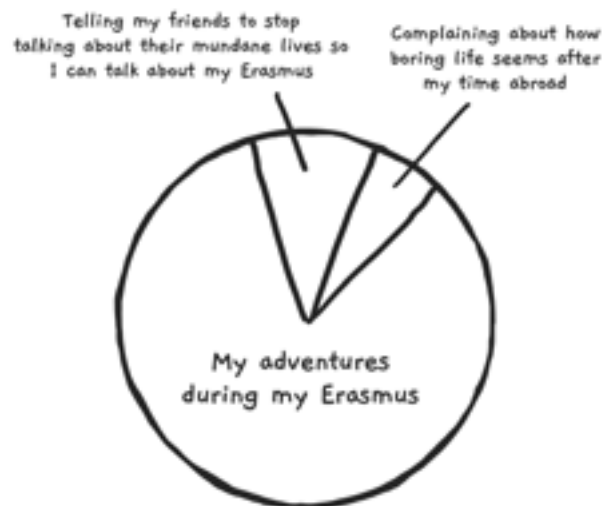
Your senses got used to being served all fresh and exciting experiences, so now they might struggle with the “normality” of you being back home.

Erasmus, you were hanging out with awesome people, attending cool events and parties and going on unforgettable trips all the time. And now all you see are exams to be passed and chores to be done. Your senses got used to being served all fresh and exciting experiences, so now they might struggle with the “normality” of you being back home.

But hang on, it’s not entirely over, really. *For starters, the modern era we live in lets us stay connected to people from the other side of the globe.* And what is even more exciting, you can plan a trip to visit your friends. You will not only get to meet people that are important to you, you will also have a knowledgeable guide to show you around. Or it can be the other way around. Invite your friends for a visit and make amazing memories together.

Of course, these random visits will not be a daily occurrence, it takes time, money and preparation. Isn’t there anything else exciting to do in the meantime?

### My conversations after Erasmus



We think there is! In fact, you could say the opportunities are endless and you have so many more adventures to look forward to. How about joining another mobility programme? Did you know you can go on an internship in the scope of the Erasmus+ programme? Or enroll for your Master degree even outside of Europe with the support of Erasmus Mundus? If you would like to take things a bit slower, how about going on a one-week youth exchange? Or couchsurfing on your next trip?

*Here's the thing about mobility - it can get a bit addictive.* If you have already been on Erasmus, you surely know what I mean. It's like tattoos; when you get one, there's no stopping.

Your feet will almost constantly itch to walk new lands and your heart will long to meet new people from different cultures. And again, there are upsides of being part of the generation that lives in the information era: you can make a living online, work remotely from a tropical island and find amazing volunteering opportunities like Workaway.

And though travelling isn't cheap, you can always work with what you have now, start smaller until you can afford to go bigger. Did you know that the Couchsurfing app has a "Hangouts" feature, where you can meet travellers in your city? There are also different events like meet-ups and language cafes which will help you maintain the level of your foreign language while having fun with cool people!

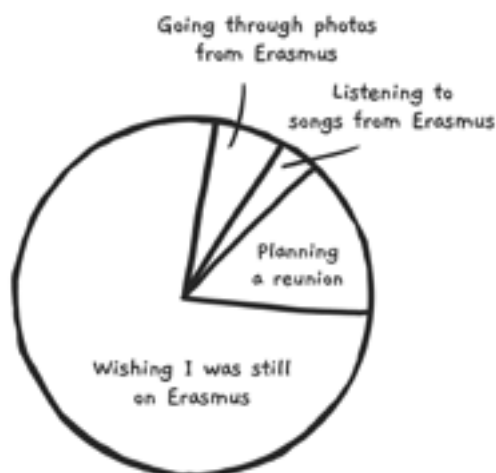
You still feel like something is missing? You want to be a part of the family again, of something bigger? How about joining a





*Illustration by  
Selin Sari (Turkey)*

### My life after Erasmus



family of about half a million people? You already know what I mean, right? *Together with its volunteers and all the Erasmus students around Europe, ESN is definitely one big, big family.*

If you went to awesome events and on trips during your exchange, it was most probably because of the efforts of the awesome local ESN section in your Erasmus city. Do you want to be an Erasmus again, but in your own town this time? Then join ESN and let the fun begin! The opportunities there are endless as well, as you can dive into activities that interest you and allow yourself to use your skills and creative abilities. And hanging out with Erasmus students again and receiving their “thank you” and knowing you helped them with creating some amazing memories is priceless!

Furthermore, ESN works not only with incoming students but also with outgoing ones. Motivating people to go on this amazing adventure will be no trouble for you as you can’t stop talking about Erasmus anyway, can you?

*As you can see, post-Erasmus depression wants to pick a fight with you, but it's definitely not going to win the war!* It's okay for you to feel sad after you come back home, but don't allow that feeling to turn into a permanent state. Instead, look around and notice all the chances you have for making your life an ever-lasting exciting experience!

The travels, the adventures with new friends, helping people - all these will be the things you will remember when you get old. *The memories of suffering after your Erasmus will be long gone, quickly exchanged with all those unforgettable moments.*

So, don't be afraid to allow yourself to think that you are a young global citizen and that the best is yet to come!

## From Erasmus to Erasmus Student Network

written by SABINA ACHIM (ROMANIA)

You'll see, accepting that your Erasmus is over is not an easy task.

Your bed at home does wonders for your back, the food you missed is finally available anywhere, and it feels so good to see your folks again. But, the past months have changed you and it's tough adjusting back to your previous routine.

You have created new experiences, made new friends. The friends who skipped this experience won't really understand all of this, and will only tolerate your nostalgic stories the first couple of months.

After this very animated chapter in your life, you need to find something to snap you out of the routine that is your life. **Time passes by no matter what, it's up to you to decide how.** We at ESN think volunteering might be the most rewarding thing you can do with it.

The years we dedicate to volunteering are usually the years that form us. It's a time to learn by doing, to experience as much as possible and discover what we want to do later in life. **You find something that you're good at, then jump to try something new.**

By volunteering, you meet people, gain confidence and skills, make a change in the society; you can see how your contribution has an impact. You serve a cause that you believe in. It's always a win-win situation.

By this point in the book, you have definitely heard about ESN. Maybe even today you met up with your buddy for coffee or you are getting ready to attend an event ESN has organised. Going back to 1989, two years after the first Erasmus student went abroad, *the Erasmus Student Network is the biggest student association in Europe*. It's some sort of a big family of more than 500 sections in more than 40 countries.

At a first glance, it may seem chaotic to have so many people from different backgrounds trying to get along. But then you just sit down at the table with these strangers and get up hugging like best friends - sounds a bit like Erasmus, right?

Students helping students, ESNers strive to make mobility more inclusive and represent the needs and rights of international students. *United in diversity, active citizens are shaping the perception of youth and becoming the leaders of tomorrow*.

From the outside, the role of the enthusiastic volunteers might seem unclear. It's not just about interacting with Erasmus+ students and internationals. We engage in social activities, promote mobility, work with a large number of organisations and directly with the European Commission for the future of the Erasmus+ programme.

*The motto of the European Union is "In varietate concordia", which translates as "United in diversity."*

Joining your local ESN section will help you more than reintegrating in your city; *it will allow you to keep living in a multicultural environment, speak different languages, gain soft and hard skills, travel for events, meet people who share the same values and can connect to any of your stories*.

In ESN, you make best friends that you meet in 6 different countries in just one year. You organise an event for 1,000 people or you become the President of a national NGO at 20 years old. Maybe you consider applying for a Master abroad or you need a couch tomorrow in a neighbouring country - you'll find a network of 15,000 people prepared to offer you support one message away.

Besides being an admirable reference in your CV, ESN will prove to be anything but boring. You can get involved to the extent that you want. Things are happening at the speed of light and there are various areas and levels that you can be a part of, according to your priorities and what makes your heart sing.

*ESN is one of a kind. It's like Erasmus, but more.*

Did you get the hint?

Take the [next step](#).



## Is Volunteering Important?

*“Volunteering gives you the chance to make changes in your society. Changes that you see no one else taking action for! United with like-minded people, you spread the ideas that you believe are worth spreading.”*

*Anonymous*

*“Volunteering could be a crucial part of our growing up, just the way formal education is. It is a place where we can discover ourselves and learn in a safe space, without the fear of failing.”*

*Nikolina Đurić (Serbia)*

*“It’s a gateway to help everyone, including yourself.”*

*Jéssica Alves (Portugal)*

*“It teaches being selfless, and caring for people around you!”*

*Sena Akçiçek (Turkey)*

*“Being a volunteer is the most unique way to develop yourself while changing the world. Even the smallest action of kindness may change the life of a person forever! Volunteering sees no race or gender, it sees no religion or sexual orientation. It unites people in the most powerful way. Anyone can find a cause they believe in and offer their help. I believe that everyone should volunteer at least once in their lives.”*

*Elisavet Rozaki (Greece)*



## Exchanges after Erasmus

written by VASILIKI KATI (GREECE)

Is joining ESN the only opportunity I have to deal with my post Erasmus depression and my need for more adventures? Are there more opportunities for me?

Well yes, yes there are!

The Erasmus+ programme does not include only studying abroad, it has many more opportunities.

### ERASMUS+ TRAINEESHIPS

Besides studying, there is an opportunity to do an internship and work for a foreign organisation or company for 3 months. Erasmus+ provides traineeships (work placements, internships, etc) abroad for students in higher education institutions at the Bachelor and Master levels, as well as for doctoral candidates. You can learn more [here](#).

*1 in 3 Erasmus+ trainees are offered a position by the company they trained in.*

So, if you feel that you are not ready to go back to normal life after Erasmus and you want to gain some work experience in your field of studies, doing an internship is an idea worth exploring. It can be described as a nice transition phase from education to the labour market, in which work experience is highly appreciated.

If you want to stay tuned for all the traineeship opportunities and apply for traineeship vacancies, this site is the perfect place for you ([ErasmusIntern.org](https://www.erasmusintern.org)), because it is a place which provides companies and organisations the right to publish their traineeship offers.

## ERASMUS+ YOUTH EXCHANGES AND TRAINING COURSES

Another option is to participate in a [youth exchange](#) or a [training course](#). Both programmes last approximately 10 days and aim to attract people from 18 to 30 years old, although there is a slight difference between them. In youth exchanges, the goal is to develop competences, discover new cultures, and strengthen values by doing a variety of activities such as workshops. However, training courses are aimed at supporting the professional development of the participants (mostly youth workers; people who work with young people to engage them in non-formal education, providing support and social activities).

Don't you feel excited about all these opportunities? We are sure that they will help you fight your post-Erasmus depression.

## THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

One more significant part of the Erasmus+ programme is the [European Solidarity Corps](#). Formerly known as the European Voluntary Service (EVS), it became the ESC in 2018. The aim of



“

I love commuting  
between languages  
just like I love  
commuting between  
cultures and cities.

*Elif Safak*

this programme remains however, and it provides anyone aged 18 to 30 and legally residing in Europe to get their chance at being an active citizen. By registering to the ESC, you get the opportunity to volunteer in projects, be it in your home country or elsewhere in Europe, that will benefit the local communities and people of our Union. The ESC programme is based on living among different cultures, cooperation and the idea of active citizenship. By being part of it, people can gain personal and professional growth. Imagine working under the cause of art, culture, communication or environmental protection in a country that you love, or in a country you have always wanted to visit!

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In addition to the above, Erasmus+ supports the professional development of people working in vocational education and training ([VET](#)) through training periods abroad. Vocational education provides practical experience in a particular occupational field such as agriculture, home economics or industry.

So, training periods can be work placements or job shadowing or observation periods at a VET institution or another relevant organisation based in an Erasmus+ programme country. Organisations vary from businesses and public bodies to social partners, research institutes and non-governmental organisations.

These are the tools to fight your post-Erasmus depression and to satisfy your curiosity to explore the world, its cultures and people. *So, grab one of those opportunities, pack your things and let the Erasmus feeling flow.*



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