

Experience report study abroad semester

How was it?

You may have heard this question more often now that you are at the end of your semester abroad. The International Center would also like to know how you evaluate your semester abroad. The experience reports will be published and serve to help orient others going abroad. The International Office would also like to use the contents for advertising purposes if necessary. We would therefore like you to keep this in mind when filling out the report.

1. General information

Please do not mention any personal information (name, e-mail address, etc.) in the experience report.

I agree to the publication of the report and the attached photos:

yes No

New outgoing students sometimes ask us for a way to contact alumni outgoings. Are we allowed to pass on your contact details in case of enquiries?

yes No

Study program at EUF

B.A. European Cultures and Society

Discipline combination (if BABW)

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Host country

Finland

Host university

Åbo Akademi

Semester abroad (e.g. winter semester 2020/21)

Autumn Semester 2020/21

2. Your story

At this point you can now tell your stories from abroad. Often it is not so easy to tell about your experiences abroad in such a compressed way. We have therefore prepared some reflection questions to help you do this. At the end of the questionnaire, you will also find a free field for you to fill in, in which you are welcome to enter aspects that are not covered by any of these questions.

How did you prepare for the semester abroad?

First of all, I completed the application process and other formalities. This was rather easy and the International Offices at the EUF and at the receiving university provided perfect guidance for it. While this was ongoing, I already applied for student accommodation. I recommend to apply for the student housing as soon as the online process opens, as there are only limited spots available. I only applied at TYS (Turku Student Village Foundation), as they provide affordable and rather comfortable accommodation for exchange students next to the campus and at other places. I also recommend to take a look at private accommodation, especially during times of online studies.

To get to Turku, I booked a ferry trip from Travemünde to Helsinki together with a friend. We already booked the return trip with it, as it was cheaper. From Helsinki we took the train to Turku.

A few weeks before I came to Turku, my student tutor organized from Åbo Akademi contacted me and helped me to get the starting package (with blanket, pillow, basic kitchen utensils and curtains) and the keys to my student room. They also helped me to receive other information about the university and quarantine regulations.

I had to modify my learning agreement twice, as the course catalogue was not updated yet when I had to submit the agreement. This was no problem at all.

How did you establish social networks in your host country? Do you have any tips on how this can be achieved?

Because of the Corona situation, it was a bit difficult to get to know new people. I mostly met other Erasmus+ students who also lived in my building in the student village. The university and the tutors organized a few online social meet ups and we were also able to meet a few people through that. I recommend to take part in those fun meetings and the possible events organized by the tutors. Some tutors also became good friends and so one got to learn more about life in Finland, the education system and Swedish speaking minorities in Turku.

The most social space was the shared kitchen in my accommodation, where I met the other exchange students on my floor. When the situation allowed, one could also take part in the campus sport and meet people there.

Apart from that, I had the most beautiful conversations with local people and students in random situations, for example while doing laundry or waiting at a traffic light.

**How was the study program at the partner university structured?
(e.g. premises, workload, language of instruction, examination forms, accessibility)**

Beforehand, I chose five self study courses and one seminar with live online classes. Next time, I would choose three self study courses max. For those, I had to read one to three books and write essays or electronic exams. I did this on my own accord. The topics were quite interesting, but the workload for five ECTS seemed to be more extensive than in Flensburg. The essays were shorter than the ones I've written before. Also, I could not get in contact with students who were also doing the same self study courses, which I did not expect before.

The online seminar (Comparative Democratization) was thought provoking and well structured.

The electronic exams take place in specific supervised exam rooms on campus, which is rather convenient. You can book your own exam and time slots for any time during the semester (Tip: Do this a good few weeks before you would like to take the exam, as the best times are booked quickly-instructions are provided on the Uni website).

Everything was easily accessible in English and the university cared very much for the students and also their mental health and wellbeing.

As there were no classes happening on campus, I cannot say a lot about the premises. Buildings like the library, the cafeterias and some study spaces which were still in use were all well equipped and nice and safe places to be in.

In the beginning of the semester, the university organized an online welcome week, where all necessary information was provided.

What was your daily life like where you were? (e.g. living, shopping, leisure, inclusion)

Because of the situation, I spent a lot of time in my accommodation, where I cooked, studied and did a bit of yoga. Apart from that, I took a lot of walks in the nearby nature. With my second hand bike, I got easily around town. As there was luckily no lockdown at that time, there still were some free time opportunities. Oftentimes, friends and I went to the cafeteria to get delicious and cheap lunch and afterwards I went to one of the many study spaces on campus or to the public library and cafés (Highly recommend to check out the different very nice study spaces, e.g. in Arken or in the Educarium and the libraries). My favorite café was the Kirjakahvila, a social, diverse and alternative

place with an all vegan menu, books, a sharing spot, board games and small events with local artists.

There are also a few museums in Turku, which I checked out. On the weekends with good weather, I went on hiking trips. Once in the late summer I stayed with friends in a small wooden cabin on the archipelago. Also, we went to the free sauna in the student accommodation at least once a week. Another time, I went spontaneously to the Swedish theatre in town and watched a play in Swedish language. They sell very affordable tickets for students. I mostly learned Swedish during my stay and just a bit of Finnish, as Swedish was easier for me and also useful in Turku.

How did you manage with the money?

As Finland is more expensive in Germany, I spent a bit more money than at home. Food prices were okay, most of the times I went grocery shopping at Lidl and just sometimes got specific foods in the more expensive K-Markets. The plant based food options were most of the times not more expensive. The cafeterias provided a good opportunity to get relatively healthy and affordable meals. I did not use public transport a lot, but the prices were reasonable. For the student accommodation (including my own furnished room with fridge and bathroom with a shared kitchen), I paid almost the same amount as for my accommodation at home in Flensburg. With a bit of planning beforehand and the Erasmus funding, the living costs in Finland were manageable.

Is there anything else you would like to share? (e.g. anecdotes, criticism, etc.)

The Erasmus+ semester was an amazing experience and also not without challenges. I am equally grateful for the challenges which provided even more learnings. Additionally, it was interesting to see how the Finnish government and people managed the pandemic situation in comparison to Germany and other countries. The stay helped me to broaden my horizon and apply some knowledge gained in EUCS.

When it is safe to travel again, I would like to experience the parts of Finnish culture I missed out. Turku and especially the Åbo Akademi offer wonderful opportunities for studying and more. Finland is a very interesting country with a culture and nature worth exploring.

3. Photos

Finally, you can upload photos here, which visualize/imagine your stay abroad well. If necessary, add a description. The following reflection questions can help you choose an appropriate photo:

- Does the photo possibly reinforce prejudices or stereotypes about the country?
- Do you have the consensual consent of the persons depicted in the photos?
- "A picture is worth a thousand words!" What does your picture say about the country and your semester abroad?

EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG:

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass Rechte Dritter an dem/den unten näher bezeichneten Foto/s nicht bestehen und ich der EUF die Nutzung dieses/dieser Fotos gestatte

Yes No



The archipelago



Cabin at the archipelago

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The Turku Cathedral



Autumnal view at the student village

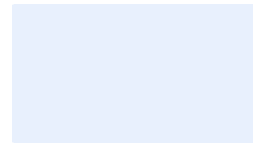
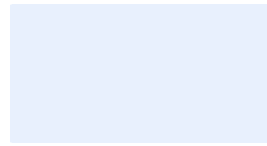


The Trainstation

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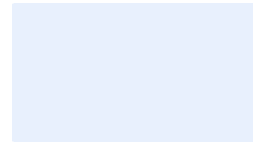
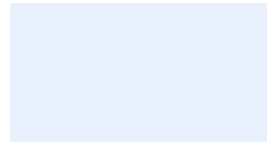
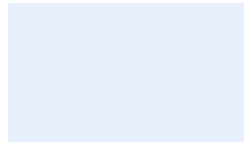
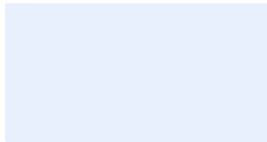
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Many thanks for your assistance!