

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 and what you need to know. 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

Study program at EUF

European Cultures and Society

Subject combination (if BABW)

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Host country

Finland

Host university

Åbo Akademi, Turku

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

Spring semester 2021

2. Your Experience Abroad

At this point you can share the experience you made abroad. Sometimes it is not so easy to report on such experiences in such a compressed way. We have therefore prepared some 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?

Thanks to Erasmus+, organization is really not that hard. I basically just had to make sure to get my apartment in Germany passed onto someone else and to secure a new place in Finland. In Finland it is quite normal to live in dorms, so the availability is quite good and basically guaranteed for exchange students.

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

When living in the student dorms, it is quite easy to meet others. But it is not that easy to meet locals as courses in English are mostly only chosen by international students.

Did you learn the local language, respectively how important did you think it was for your stay?

Before going to Finland, I completed a beginner's course in Finnish. For many day-to-day situations this is nice, but most Finns speak English so well that it is not necessary. When speaking German or English the bilingual signs in Swedish can also help you to guess your way through. Speaking Swedish will not get you very far though.

**How was the study program at the partner university structured? (e.g. premises, workload, language of instruction, examination forms, accessibility)
What intercultural encounters/competencies shaped your stay?**

As I was abroad during the pandemic, all courses were organized online via Zoom. Universities in Finland are much more like a school with many intermediate exams and extra course work. The workload is higher than in Germany, but it is doable.

What intercultural encounters/competencies shaped your stay?

Vappu (May 1) is the holiday of the students. It's a good occasion to grab a beer with some local students as well. Generally you should not be shy to approach Finns, as they are generally much more open than Germans if you get to know them.

Which perspectives on the host country/country of origin have changed and why?

Finland is a country that I did not know much about before. But it really does have a lot to offer in terms of culture and landscape. It is a shame that some people think it is only dark and cold.

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

Daily life in Finland is not too different compared to Germany. Public transport is good and also sometimes late. You can even shop at the same grocery store chains as in Germany if you want. But Finland is significantly more expensive than Germany, that is something to keep in mind.

What are the unique or special issues in the host country and what were the opportunities for engaging with these issues?

The pandemic was of course also the most important topic in Finland. It can be possible to teach a language course in your native language at the University to earn some money on the side.

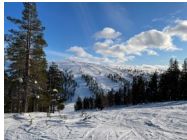
Is there anything else you would like to share? (e.g. anecdotes, criticism, etc.)

„Hello“ is „Moi“ in Finnish, so as a Student from Flesburg you are already set. The TYS dorm in Varissou can be a bit „nerve-racking“ as a place to stay.

3. Photos

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

- 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?



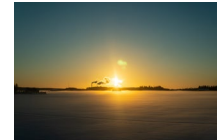
In Finland you can also go skiing – unfortunately this is not that cheap.



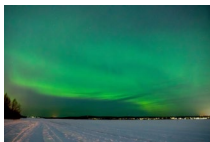
The coast town of Naantali near Turku is definitely worth a bike tour.



The university buildings make you notice that Finland spends a lot on education.



Yes, sunrise is quite late in the winter – but where can you take such shots?



With a bit of luck you can also get to see the northern lights, even if it is less beautiful in person.



The Santa Claus village is very touristy, but you definitely have to see it.



In Lapland you can also meet reindeers.



The Aura river in the city center of Turku with the cathedral in the background.

Many thanks for your support!