

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

European Cultures and Society (EUCS)

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?

The preparation was rather easy and I did not have that much to do. The application process was well organized, so the next thing I had to do was organize the ferry ride to Finland and the accommodation in Turku. I applied for an apartment at the student dorm TYS. The apartments were assigned to the students using a first come first serve principle so I applied as soon as the application period started and got an apartment offer about one month before the semester started. I did not look for other apartments because I was sure to get my favoured apartment since there were less applications for student dorm apartments due to Corona than it would be normally the case. Shortly before travelling to Finland my tutor contacted me and offered her help regarding pick up for the apartment key and a starting package that included a lot of useful things, finding the best connection from the harbour in Helsinki to Turku, and so on. The tutor programme is very well organized!

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

Because I lived in a student dorm on a floor with eleven other students sharing one kitchen it was rather easy to get in contact with other international students. Because of Corona and online lectures it was not possible to get to know other people at the university or locals, so this situation might be very different for students going abroad in other semesters.

What I would have liked to know before going abroad?

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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?

One semester has two periods. So, there are two examination periods and I would recommend to distribute the courses evenly on these two periods if possible, otherwise it could get stressful to do all the exams. I think the workload is really fair and doable. I took two self study courses that you can start with in whatever period you want. I underestimated the workload of these courses a little (its usually a lot of reading and writing essays on the basis of the literature) and started some of them too late so I got a little stressed about them in the end. All the lectures were given online because of Corona in English language and

materials were accessible on the moodle platform. All my examinations were essays of about 5 pages, but there are also other examination forms depending on the courses you choose.

What intercultural encounters/competencies shaped your stay?

Because of the Corona situation and the fact that I lived in a student dorm for internationals only, there were only few opportunities to get in touch with local people and other students. I think this is very different when there is no pandemic going on and when you actually have lectures at the campus and the campus sports club is open. But it was possible to make some short trips to different cities, the archipelago of Turku (it's really beautiful there to go for a hiking tour, it is best to go there in the summer months when there are frequent ferry and bus connections) and national parks (really nice in autumn when you can pick some berries) with a group of friends and go to sauna, of course. The trip to Lapland with a travel group of students from Turku and other cities was one of my personal highlights and I would definitely recommend to go there!

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

I did not know much about the Finnish people and their culture before, so I was just excited to explore Turku and the Finnish country a little without any expectations.

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

One of the first things I did was to buy a used bicycle. It made grocery shopping, exploring the city or getting to IKEA much easier and saved some bus tickets which are about 3 € (single fare ticket). Because of the online lectures I spent a lot of time in my apartment and also went to the public library or to the Arken campus that has some really nice reading and seatwork corners to do the readings and prepare lectures. The river Aurajoki was nearby the student dorm and I really got into a stroll/walking routine. I often went to the student's restaurants (there are about 6 different ones) together with some friends to have lunch. There are also some nice cafés in the city that are not too expensive (I can recommend Fabbes and Kirjakahvila). Besides grocery shopping at Lidl or sometimes Prisma and K-citymarket which are open 24/7 there are many thrift shops and even cafés for clothes but also household items and other things to discover.

How did you manage with the money?

I spent 375€ monthly on the student dorm rent and 150-230€ on food and other essential supplies per month. I think in non-Corona-times you would spend definitely more because I did not attend many events or any parties. To save some money, I recommend to do the grocery shopping at Lidl.

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

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3. Photos

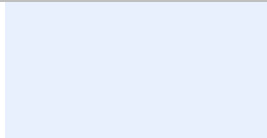
Finally, you can upload photos here, which visualize/imagine your stay abroad well. If necessary, add a description. The following reflection questions can help you choose an appropriate photo:

- 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?

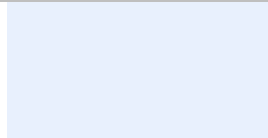
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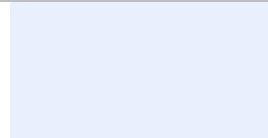
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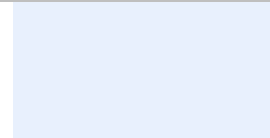
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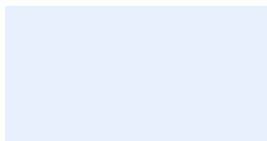
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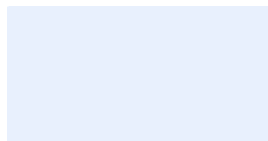
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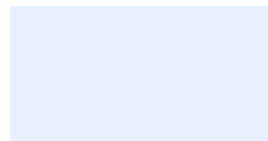
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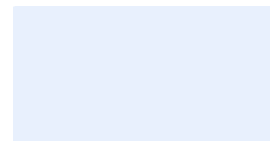
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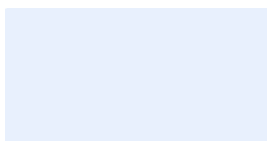
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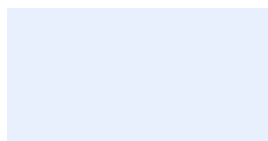
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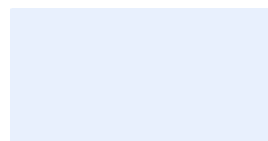
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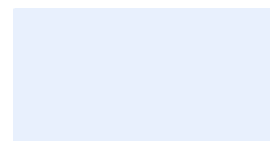
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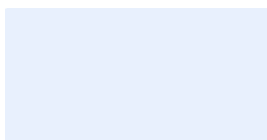
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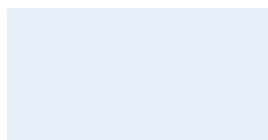
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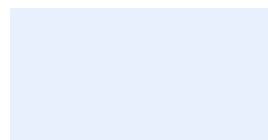
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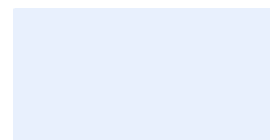
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Many thanks for your assistance!