

2014-2015

Report 1

faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Cultural Studies

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The application process was very stressful for me because I heard from the possibility of doing an exchange period the first time at the introduction day of my study, so the official deadlines already had formally past. But I thought it was worth it because an exchange is always a very good learning process for a student. After some differences with the international office at first everything went on smoothly and I got a lot of help from everyone and the University of Turku was eager and very fast of helping me to make this exchange possible.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The international office at the university Utrecht was very helpful and did their best to prepare me and help me with the whole application process and helped me wherever they could.
academic preparation	I read about Finland to be able to understand the culture and study process at the university of Turku.
language preparation	I worked on my English skills in my personal free time with self study of English Grammar books and Writing Skills with the Cambridge Advanced Study book. I also did an English Assessment with my tutor who then gave me tips how I can improve my English and where I have to improve it.
finances	Without the Erasmus grant I wouldn't have been able to make this trip. Further finances I got from help of my parents and my personal savings. Finland is much more expensive than the Netherlands so it was a challenge but possible.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	I had the problem that some of the courses I wanted to do were already full because the inscription period was already over when I arrived but with help of the international office from the University of Turku and the professors who were teaching there it was no problem.
academic quality of education activities	The academic and also educational quality of the University of Turku was excellent. Everything made sense, went smoothly and it was a very interesting time where I learned a lot. The academic quality of the professors were excellent in their special fields and they didn't get tired of explaining and were open for discussions from an international background.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	Very good! The whole staff of the University of Turku from all departments were excellent and helped wherever they could!

transfer of credits

They tried to help me as quick as possible with everything.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

I was assigned a tutor (finish student who is interested in getting to know other cultures) who picked me up from the train station and brought me to my student dormitory. She also organised that I have a food package for the first night because I arrived very late the first day and a so called started package from the study organisation that I have everything I needed to start my life in the dormitory. She checked in with me regularly to see if everything was alright and how my study was going. On the second day she gave me a city tour that I will know my way around Turku. She was very sweet and understanding for all cultural shocks and explained the finish culture very clear to me. I am still in contact with her. The orientation program was concerning content very helpful and explained everything very well. It was only in the beginning a bit hard to find the places where the orientation programs were held because the campus in Turku is huge. But a map was given right in the beginning and every student you would come across would always help you to find your way around.

accommodation

I was in a student dormitory Retrodorm. It was the cheapest option (280 euros/month) and the only one where I had the possibility to only stay for a three month period of time. It was okay for the price. We lived with 17 people on the floor but where we had to share the kitchen, washing machine, dryer, drying frame and two showers. The room was small but good for the price with an own toilet and sink. It sounds worse than it was. The atmosphere in the dormitory was great and every floor grew together like a family. Also the organisation who would use the kitchen, shower etc. came from itself and was no problem. I made a lot of friends living there from all over the world, who I will stay in contact with.

leisure & culture

The finish culture is very different to the Dutch or also for me known Austrian culture. The people are much more relaxed, reserved at first and sitting together with silences is completely normal. Although the Finish language is not easy to learn (I did a Beginners course for foreigners) there is no problem to communicate because nearly everyone speaks English on an advanced level. This can be compared to the Dutch. I really enjoyed meeting Finish people because in my experience they were very well mannered, always thought very well what they would say and when the ice was broken were very interesting conversation partners. Finland is also very open in general. I have never seen in my life so many alternative people around. I am used from the Netherlands as also Austria that the alternative scene is looked at with a lot of scepticism but Finland no one would look up if some rainbow colored hair would pass their way. I really liked this openness tolerance for different paths of life. Finland also has a lot of nature. My dormitory was located on a hill in the woods where a lot of rabbits and foxes passed my way. The public transport rides all the time (mostly on time) it doesn't matter if it is 12 or -18 degrees. The university student organisation gave a lot of possibilities for game days, nights, going out and trips not only around Finland but also Estonia and Russia. This was a good opportunity to get a good impression in a safe environment and lots of the time also cheaper than when it would be organised privately.

suggestions/tips

Try to participate in all the public holidays. It is a great experience. A tip is to inform yourself before you go there when they are and what they are about. In Finland it is very different to the Netherlands or Austrian Public Holidays. I had a lot of research to do and I heard about most of them in my Finish Language Course,

which I am very thankful for.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Definitely! It was a great adventure that I would do again in a bet of an eye! The University of Turku is a fine institution which gives the students as also exchange students the best possibilities to develop themselves and their professional skills further. They care a lot and it is a great experience to visit a country that is so different to the rest of Western Europe.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Be sure that you have some extra savings to get the possibility to go on the trips that are organised by the student organisations! It is cheaper to go with them but it is still a lot of money but totally worth it to do so!