



Bildung und Kultur

# Sokrates Erasmus



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## **1. About Me**

My name is Lukas Narowski and I am an exchange student.

I am 25 years old and live in Germany near Bonn in the lovely city Bad Neuenahr Ahrweiler.

Originally I am from Poland but I moved 13 years ago to Germany.

I am studying Business Administration ( Betriebswirtschaft ) in the FH – Nordhausen which is approximately 420km far away from my current living place near Bad Neuenahr Ahrweiler.

It is a small town with approximately 50 000 inhabitants and about 2000 students.

The university I am enrolled in is in the centre of city and has a nice big campus.

## **2. My decision for ERASMUS and Finland**

Before that I was thinking where to go and why go abroad, would it be too difficult to study in English? I had lot of questions and was not sure about that idea and after the first semester I totally forgot about it.

Well everything started when I met some exchange ERASMUS students in my own university. They changed my opinion and brought me back to the idea to go on an exchange abroad.

I also met later on some other students from my university who had already been on exchange. The experience they had and shared with me totally fascinated me and I really started to think seriously about going abroad.

So I went to the International office in my school to get some answers about my question and also in general how to do it, where I can do it and so on.

After that the idea and the whole project of going abroad started to become a structure and become more clear to me.

I looked through the list of universities my home university cooperated with. First my idea was to go to Poland. I dropped that idea quite soon because I decided that my English would not improve so much because I will speak Polish in free time. I was in Poland often enough and it would not be a proper experience for me like it should be when you go on exchange – in my opinion. What dose not mean that Poland is a bad country for exchange.

My second idea was Finland. Why Finland? – That question I heard so many times that I can not even count it. Nevertheless it is a good question but I could not answer it really in the beginning. It was a gut feeling first of all that let me decide to choose Finland.

Then I also read before that Finland has a good education system and is leading in the PISA trial. Also the fact that I have to speak a lot English because I do not know the Finnish language. So it would definitely improve my English.

During the international project week in my home university I also met Eija who is responsible for international relationship and exchange students in Helsinki Metropolia University.

I had a conversation with her and it helped me a lot. The international project week which was held in English also showed me that there is nothing to worry about my English skills and that after week or two there will be no problem to speak English. Well it took me one month in reality but the point is that I made my decision then.

And that is how it started and what influenced me and my decision to go on ERASMUS exchange to Finland.

So I started to do the whole paper work, fill forms and started to prepare my self mentally also to go on exchange. I had still some worries and was still a little bit unsure about doing the exchange but my decision and will to do it was stronger.

### **3. How I prepared my self**

First of all I got more in contact with students who had already been on their exchange and asked them about things that I needed to handle. The international office in my home university also helped me a lot of course. They told me what to do and how and when do my paper work.

The combination of information from the students who already did their exchange, the students that were in my university and the support from the staff covered all my questions and information needs.

I also started to watch more movies in English to prepare my English skills for daily use and to lower the language shock. It really help me to get used to hearing English so it was not so bad that I hade to switch in to English from one day to other.

## **4. The Helsinki Metropolia University in Vantaa**

It is the first year of the Metropolia University, before that it was the EVTEK University. However it is a quite new and modern school and well resourced with technical equipment and also lecturers from many different countries.

The big classes like the auditorium are very nice and comfortable, but also the other lecture rooms are comfortable. I only missed windows in some of those.

The library has many interesting and good books. Also the opportunity of magazines and news papers is something I liked.

What I also like is that the printing is for free and less complicated than in my university.

Sports opportunities are good and I often used them. I liked very much that there is a free gym and sauna in the school. It is quite unusual to have a sauna in the school but well I think it shows how important and typical sauna is for the Finish culture.

However, the fact that you can use all that and have some sport activities is good because it give you a variety of studying.

In my home university we have also those opportunities that I like, we have even dance courses.

The only point I have to complain is the food in the school. It is, according to the price level on average in Finland, cheap but the quality is pretty often really bad. Only plus is that water is free, there is always salad and bread that you can take to your meal. And the meal quality improved during the week mostly so the best meal is on Friday.

I tried to chose the same courses I would have in the third semester in my home university, to cover the program for that semester. Unfortunately some courses has not been offered in that period but that ware only two.

On the other side the variety of courses in the host university was really good and interesting. I took some extra courses that I was interested in.

Here are all courses I took:

Corporate Finance, International Marketing, Corporate Strategy, Economic, Study skills in English, Marketing practices, Spain and Latin America as a Business Area, Spanish for beginners, English Conversation & presentation, Finnish Culture and History.

## **5. The Apartment**

Something I am not really happy with. Actually it is as far I consider the only thing. The problem is that the HOAS company increased the price only for exchange students.

Everybody has to pay the same no matter how big or small their room or apartment will be. Also the service is not so good. No one cleaned my apartment after the students from the semester before.

Also the heating is not as warm as it should be according to the HOAS information about the temperature in the apartments. The whole customer policy looked and felt really customer unfriendly, many other people shared that opinion.

The bad thing is that you can not influence it.

Only thing I liked is the view from my room and balcony because we were living on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and so we could enjoy the free view.

Also the fact about the common room and gym and of course sauna is a positive aspect of living here. Because the use of those is for free.

## **6. The Finnish Culture**

Yes, the Finish culture... well it is different then other cultures I met until now. You can describe the Finish culture in many ways actually. Of course the main thing in Finland is Sauna and Santa I would say.

The Finns are very kind and fallow mostly the rules. They are quite shy and like their free space and privacy. It is difficult to become their friend, it takes time but after a while if they know you, you will basically see that they are very nice people.

That is the moment where you learning the other side of the finish people. The opposite site actually.

To get in contact with them during the week is not so easy but they become more open minded and are more willing to talk on the weekend while partying.

Most of the students are working while they study but they still have time for school and also social life like party.

The fact is that Finland is quite expensive so that is I think a reason to pay their social life and living standard.

In Finland everything is on time, every bus or train is punctual in 99,9% everything is well organised and has a system.

What is also interesting is the atmosphere that is here. I really can not feel the rush and hurry and stress that I feel in other places. It is something I really like.

I also like the fact that even if the Finns are drunk they do not start to be violently or aggressive. It is definitely something I like and admire here too. Going out and having a party is fun then because everyone has good time and fun without making any trouble.

But it is an issue as well. I am missing the expression in feelings by these people. Everyone has that poker face the whole time. It is something really typical but it fit in the cultural behaviour quite well. Not everyone is like that but many people are.

So not showing feelings have as many other aspects, advantages and disadvantages.

Nevertheless I like the atmosphere here and if you get to know the Finns better then you will discover their open minded and friendly side including some feeling and expressions like smiling and laughing 😊

## **7. My opinion and Conclusion**

Well now I was here and made this experience and make used of ERASMUS, I rally have to tell that I would be unhappy and sad not doing so.

I had many doubts but now I can only laugh about them. I know that it was a right choice to go for one semester abroad. Actually I am really sad that it already ends.

It was such a great experience, I met so many people and had such a great time with them and to be here that I can only recommend everyone to take that step.

Finland is definitive a country with many attitudes and aspect that is definitely worth visiting, it is quite expensive what might be a disadvantage but all other aspect are good or even excellent.

I like the interactive and more practical way of studying. Sometime it is lot of work but I realise that the effectiveness of learning is much higher thanks to that. Lot of project and group work let me enjoy the study time here much better then in my home university. But not all of them, some courses was not better.

However, ERASMUS is something that I definitely recommend, Finland as well. The fact is that every semester and country is unique and really worth taking the challenge to face it and go for a exchange.

At least you can not describe that feeling, time and experience you had during the exchange, you have to go and get your own!