



Who is the 3 000 000th Erasmus student?

26 years after the launch of Erasmus, the programme has reached its goal of offering 3 million students the chance to study abroad or to take up a traineeship with a foreign company.

To mark the milestone, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) invited students from the 2012-2013 intake to apply to represent the 3 millionth Erasmus student. 1 800 students applied and, from among them, ESN and the European Commission selected one per country, choosing those whose stories highlighted the breadth of possibilities offered by the programme and its impact.

Erasmus provides a wealth of new experiences for young people. For some, it is a passport to a first-ever trip abroad. Erasmus is about learning how to live in a multicultural environment, dealing with unfamiliar problems and coping with pressure. It introduces students to new teaching methods and topics, widening their horizons about how and what to study, and what career path to pursue. The international experience and skills they gain improves their self-confidence and job prospects. Erasmus is also about making friendships and feeling part of an international 'family' – something which unites all of the students featured in this special supplement.

Among the achievements of the 3 million students are:

- A student-based design consultancy set up after developing a product with an entrepreneur;
- A new website to help future Erasmus students settle into their new host city and institution;
- Social and environmental activities under the *ESNSocial* banner. Examples include: visiting orphanages, cleaning cities and beaches, teaching at local schools, and promoting the programme with the 'Erasmus back to school' campaign.

Here are the personal stories told by students from all across Europe about their unforgettable Erasmus experience.

Testimonials

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- **Luxembourg** Djuna Bernard
- **Malta** Roderick Muscat
- **Austria** Jakob Schröger
- **Portugal** Tiago Lima
- **Slovenia** Suzana Puhar
- **Finland** Tuomas Nurminen
- **United Kingdom** Robert Bye
- **Turkey** Gül Ziba Akarcalı
- **Norway** Stine Soltvedt Fossdal
- **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** Leutrim Mehmedi

Austria



Jakob Schröger, 24. Home institution: Johannes Kepler Universität, Linz. Did his Erasmus at Högskolan in Skövde, Sweden, where he studied business informatics for 10 months.

*"My Erasmus experience beat everything. I think the best part of this international experience is not necessarily the courses you attend, but your personal development. Living in a new country, meeting new people, **finding your own way to succeed** and speaking in another language are just a few things which **develop your personality**. I learned about **what is important in life**.*

*You also make a lot of international friends. **Friends for life!** You learn a lot about different cultures and different countries. You learn about different traditions, different meals, different ways to express things in other languages, and more.*

*To summarize, I was fully satisfied with my year in Sweden. I learned that **starting a new life is not as hard** as I expected and that living in another country is fun and exciting. I have friends from all over the world who I will definitely visit soon and **I will always remember my Erasmus year as one of the best years I ever had.**"*

Belgium



Niels Bulkmans, 23, Artesis Hogeschool, Antwerp. Did his Erasmus at Escola politècnica superior d'enginyeria de vilanova i la geltrú, Spain, where he studied engineering for 5 months.

"If university stands for intellectual and professional development, Erasmus should stand for social and personal development. These are courses no normal university could teach you, yet they are so important throughout life. It should be something everybody does once in their lifetime, I feel it would bring us all a little closer together.

*I took part in the European Project Semester, which meant I did not do a standard Erasmus semester. Instead of this, I worked in an **international multidisciplinary team to create an engineering project, connected to a local business**. The entire experience was amazing. We had **classes with different teachers from all over Europe**, in various subjects related to the project, which was extremely interesting; seeing how different the school culture can be, even in Europe, was a surprise to me. All of the international students were like one big family, who you could always rely on. When you are away from all of your own family, this is a nice thing to have.*

*I hoped to learn a new language, meet new interesting people and travel in a foreign country, and I was not disappointed. In the past five months I have met so many people, both locals and international, visited so many different places and I even learned some Spanish on the way. **I would definitely do it again if I ever had the chance**. I feel **I have become more self-reliant, more able to find my own way in life**, and also more sure of myself. I don't feel the need to prove to everybody that I am better at something; I became more aware that I don't need all that approval. On an academic level, I learned a lot. Because of the nature of the project, I got involved in a lot of different new subjects, which I never studied at school. **I also got to learn how to work in a professional team, working with different languages and cultures**. I feel that this will be a **big advantage in the job market of today**, as the world keeps getting smaller."*

Bulgaria



Ivelina Zlateva, 22, University of National and World Economy, Sofia. Did her Erasmus at VIA University College, Horsens, Denmark, where she studied global business for 5 months.

*"My first inspiration to go on Erasmus was the travel. **I had never lived in another country before** and I really wanted an intercultural experience. As this was my last semester of my bachelor degree, I decided that I was definitely going to take the opportunity to widen my educational experience and explore my abilities.*

*I consider myself fortunate to be able to live my dream. Coming from Eastern Europe I had high expectations about the course and the institution in Denmark; the experience more **than met my expectations – indeed, it far exceeded them**. My host university puts a lot of emphasis on people and the courses include a lot of team work. The first week of the semester was dedicated to team building, with group games, entertainment and socialising. As I came to this country alone, I can say that there was no better welcome than this. I got to know a lot of Erasmus people who later became my friends and project teammates.*

***My home university had prepared me well for studying abroad.** I had no problems following the classes and the programme was academically challenging. Of course a big part of this was the teachers. **What students may not expect when going on Erasmus is the huge difference in teaching practices.** In my host university the teachers did not use their titles and insisted on being called by their first names. However small it may seem, this made interaction between us much more free and personal. Receiving an answer from your teacher at 11pm felt nothing but natural.*

*An interesting aspect of my studies was the **opportunity to work on a project for creating a web platform for investors and entrepreneurs with a team of other Erasmus students from four different countries.** That experience made me appreciate the **importance of diversity in the development of ideas.** In addition to new technical and business knowledge, I developed my communication skills which I consider to be the best outcome of the programme.*

This experience opened my mind and heart.** Being part of VIA was fun and useful. While abroad I tried to represent my country as well as I could and also tried to break down my own stereotypes of other nations. I love my new friends because, no matter which part of Europe they come from, we all share the same motivation and desire to learn, travel and explore. For anybody thinking whether it's the right time to go abroad - **DO it! The Erasmus programme is your chance to explore Europe

and yourself. You will gain experience in an international environment and learn tolerance and respect for other cultures.

I think that Erasmus has helped me to **become better qualified for starting my future career.** Both through studies and outside activities I learned how to interact with people of different nations and **became more sensitive to cultural issues** and humour. It was a pleasure for me to share my experience. Thank you, EU!"

Croatia



Barbara Purić, 25, University of Rijeka. Did her Erasmus at the University of Bergamo, Italy, where she studied law for 3 months.

*"My Erasmus exchange was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It was the **first long period I spent away from my home** but I can honestly say that it will not be the last. Once you start to improve your education, there is not enough time to learn everything that you're interested in.*

I went to Bergamo as an average student with average expectations, and came back as a half-Italian girl with a bunch of beautiful memories. The main goal was to write my final thesis in international law and to try to pick up as much Italian as I could. Instead, I've learned Italian fluently and with solid grammar. The course was for free so that's another great thing, but also the teacher was amazing. So, compliments to the university!

Not to repeat other Erasmus exchange students, the crowd was great if you're into going out and meeting other people. Italians are my kind of people - easy-going, relaxed and with so much to talk about. Also, my two young roommates were Italian, so I had to speak in their language which was great for my Italian progression.

*Regarding professional development, **I finished my final thesis** which isn't so hard if you are doing it in your own language. Instead, I was writing in English with parallel Italian learning lessons. It was quite a task!*

If you're lucky enough to go on Erasmus, you'll have at least a thousand stories to tell your friends. To sum up, if you get the chance to go abroad with the Erasmus exchange programme, don't miss it!"

Cyprus



Petros Tsiapinis, 22, Frederick University. Did his Erasmus at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland, where he studied cost engineering for 5 months.

"My life was focused on Cyprus. I had not had an opportunity or money to travel, but when I got the opportunity, I grabbed it with no second thoughts. The main reason I chose to go on Erasmus in my last study year was to live experiences that I have never lived before; to meet interesting people, different cultures, and live different kinds of life.

Of course, it was even better than I expected! It was great! Every time when I was in Finland, I was laughing with my heart. I felt like I was in paradise!

*When I began on the Erasmus programme, my feelings were confused. One part of me wanted to stay in Cyprus, because Cypriots are very close to each other. But my feelings were wrong. I can take care of myself; I was cooking, cleaning and washing my own clothes. **I have grown up. I absolutely changed.***

I have great memories of Finland, and I have a great memory from when we went to Sweden for a boat party organised by ESN Finland. All Seinäjoki Erasmus students were sitting in the restaurant, and we started to sing "Everywhere We Go".

*But the most wonderful memories that will stay with me my whole life are the friends that I met from all over the world. If I have the chance, I will visit each one of them. Personally, **this experience has also helped to develop my character** and I no longer have problems talking to people who are from another country. My conversation and social skills have improved a great deal.*

To all students who are considering Erasmus, I want to say that my experience, especially with Seinäjoki, was more than a programme and a new city, but a condition of my soul! I wish the Erasmus programme a long life!"

Czech Republic



Vojtěch Zrůst, 24, University of Economics, Prague. Did his Erasmus at Reykjavík University, Iceland, where he studied computer sciences for 5 months.

"The thought of studying abroad came to my mind in my second bachelor year when I visited my sister in Switzerland. She was there as an exchange student and it totally amazed me – not only the country, but also the system. This is a great opportunity to try something 'different', something challenging and something to remember.

I started fulfilling the requirements of my university so that I could apply for Erasmus. To my surprise, I did pretty well and I managed to get to Iceland, the land of fire and ice!

I had imagined it a lot and thought it would be amazing, but the truth stunned me. This was definitely the best five months of my life.

When I was leaving home I was curious if I could survive on my own. I moved from my home several years ago, but my family lived close and they had always been my back-up. But now, everything was up to me – to solve the usual living problems as well as new situations in an unknown environment. You know what? I made it!

*The school in Reykjavik was really impressive. **All the courses I attended were so interesting that I even tried to apply the knowledge I gained from them in my spare time.** It was not easy to study and pass all of the exams, but I did it and I was really happy.*

***It was amazing to see how my personal skills improved.** My English advanced really quickly and the thing that was originally unimaginable to me became reality: I started thinking and dreaming in English and, in the end, the language became so natural to me that I sometimes spoke in English, even when talking to Czechs. I have become faster at solving unusual problems and more relaxed when dealing with situations under pressure.*

Another big part of exchange studies is meeting people like you. And it counts twice if you are going to Iceland, a country so distant and mysterious to many. In a considerably short time I met people who were on the same wavelength, people that became my family there. We did everything together

– activities, eating, studying, almost everything that comes to mind. In the end, we spent so much time together you almost couldn't recognize who was local and who was a 'guest'.

Now I must return back to my old life. But Iceland is still alive in me. **Iceland changed me.** Now I need to be active, to meet people, to absorb more knowledge and I do it with enthusiasm and joy. I have friends all around Europe (and I want to visit them all). Iceland was the best five months of my life, now there is a new challenge: to experience even better parts of my life. Thank you, Erasmus!”

Denmark



Nick Larsen, 21, Aalborg Universitet. He is studying German and is halfway through his four-month Erasmus period at Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, Bonn.

"I went on Erasmus to Bonn because I wanted to improve my verbal competences. They were not as developed as I wanted them to be and the best way to learn a language, in my case German, is to live in the country of the spoken language.

I had high expectations for my Erasmus: I would meet so many Germans and my verbal competences would improve a lot. That was not initially the case because a lot of the Erasmus students here don't speak German!. Of course I have naturally met a lot of Germans and my verbal competences have improved over the two months I have been here so far in Germany. My room is five minutes away from the city centre and the university, so I could not have asked for a better location.

During my stay in Bonn I have participated in different kinds of activities; both serious activities, for example, an international fair for Germans who want to go abroad, and more relaxed events, such as a night-out for the Scandinavian countries with food, information and music from Scandinavia.

The classes are all in German: it is good for me to hear the language, to learn how to pronounce words and to help develop my abilities.

I have not only learned about the Germans and their language, but also about other countries and their cultures. *I have met my neighbours from Norway and Sweden and students from more or less the whole of Europe. Asia and the United States are also represented here in Bonn. The whole gathering of Europe and the world is fascinating and through our exchanges we are able to destroy all kinds of stereotypes and get a more genuine view of our fellow students.*

I have never for one second doubted that I did the right thing going on an Erasmus. It is a great experience like no other and since you have reached the 3 000 000th Erasmus student, I have no doubt that you will reach another million.

If I had to sum up my Erasmus in just one word it would be: invaluable."

Estonia



Pille-Riin Lillepalu, 22, University of Tartu. Did her Erasmus at Amsterdam School of Arts, Netherlands, where she studied production and stage management for 5 months.

*"I went on an Erasmus student exchange because I want to succeed in the future. I haven't seen enough different kinds of theatre or different ways of studying in my field. Theatre is a very specific field and it tends to become too small at one point. I really wanted to prevent that happening. For me, Erasmus was not supposed to be a stereotypical party year. **It was to be a time for myself, to see my weakest points and to discover my strong points** – that's often only possible when you go to a totally new environment. Most importantly, **I wanted to learn and see new perspectives of making theatre and open the door to international theatre for myself and maybe even for others.***

I have to say – at the time of writing this I still have two weeks left in Amsterdam – all of my expectations have been fulfilled. Of course, time flew faster than ever. But every exchange student has this problem. My semester was amazing because, firstly, the quality of my school is very high. I must admit that after graduation most of the students here are very competitive, independent thinking, professional young producers, who want to matter and make a difference. It's impossible to describe the high competence of the teachers, who are not only professionals in their field, but who are also famous for their work and collaborate with the biggest theatres in the world.

On the other hand, I learned to love my own school again. Because it's small, all the students know each other and interact, an excellent environment for amazing creative teams to be born. I like to think that I also belong in one of these small idealistic groups and they can't wait for me to come back to help them create.

Amsterdam as a city has been a total inspiration with its hectic atmosphere, amazing architecture and spectacular amounts of culture. Every day there is something valuable and educational going on. Big city life has never been so close to the small town girl I've been all my life.

*I must confess that probably I am not a typical exchange student – **I am the only exchange student in my school**, so I don't have any big Erasmus events or Erasmus organised parties to go to. Also, the school at first wasn't on the list of possibilities provided in Estonia and after I found it, I just kept sending these enthusiastic e-mails to attend the school for at least a while. Surprisingly, I got an answer. **I have become very independent**, made amazing Dutch friends, and I think I have really 'melted' in and discovered a lot thanks to my amazing schoolmates and the crazy work hours. We have faced difficulties together, celebrated our successes and partied together and - most important - **we have learned so much from each other**. I really hope that this influence hasn't only been one-sided.*

Hopefully, thanks to my exchange period, at least some people I've connected with will start to look more towards Eastern Europe as an interesting destination to develop cultural relations. I believe the connections I've made have had a great influence on me and my future, so I could be one of the small but important links in cultural relations between Estonia and The Netherlands. But why not with the rest of the world? Dream big, right?"

Finland



Tuomas Nurminen, 23, HAMK University of Applied Sciences. Did an Erasmus placement at trivago GmbH, Germany, with a 6-month traineeship in online marketing.

*"Since my studies were coming to an end and I realised I was getting older and older - well, 23 is not that old yet I suppose - I realised this might be my last chance to go abroad and decide what to do and where to do it. So, I started to search for an internship place abroad. I had a couple of countries in mind, Germany and Latvia. I had studied German but my skills were a bit rusty, which is why I eventually decided to seek a job in Germany. Because I have always been interested in marketing and travelling, **I luckily found an internship with trivago (the world's biggest hotel price comparison site).***

*I got a place in the Nordic team and **I took care of the Finnish platform.** I really enjoyed my time in Germany. I learned a lot of new and interesting things but what's most important is that I met amazing people and **created contacts from all around the world.***

If you are sitting on your sofa and thinking if you should go abroad, I can make the decision easy for you: do it. You will have the time of your life, you will meet people who will teach you new things about life and, above all, you will get to know yourself better. When you are sitting on your sofa 50 years from now and you look back at this moment, you can easily say that I was right. After all, it's not the things we do that we regret, it's the things we don't do."

France



Julien Maries, 23, Montpellier Supagro. Did his Erasmus at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, where he studied agronomy for 5 months.

"I went on Erasmus because it was a nice opportunity to travel and at the same time see other ways of working and learning. It was also a great way to improve my English!"

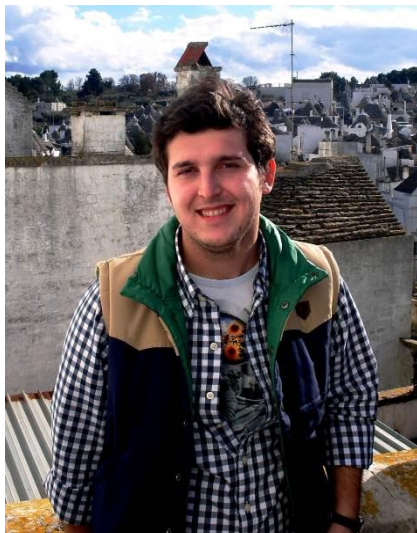
I was expecting a lot from the course I chose to follow, but it was even better than I expected. The teachers were really nice, and my relationship with them was very good. In addition to the academic aspect, Erasmus was a great chance to discover another country, another culture, and to make great friends. It also taught me how to survive in another country: it's not that easy in the beginning but, after a while, you start to adapt and behave like a local.

*I stayed in the very small campus of SLU Alnarp close to Malmö and there were not many Erasmus events. However, the students' union sometimes organised events for the exchange students, to help them get to know each other. **I also tried to help people coming to Sweden in future by creating a website:** <http://studentinsweden.jimdo.com>. I will continue improving it with the help of other Erasmus students from the campus.*

*From a professional point of view, I think **I've developed my sense of belonging in a team** (I was often working in a research group), and **this will be useful for my future job**. I also met lots of contacts who will be important for my future career. This has already helped me find an internship in New Zealand!*

Nobody should hesitate to go abroad on Erasmus. It really is the chance of a lifetime!"

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



Leutrim Mehmedi, 24, South East European University. Did an Erasmus at Università degli Studi di Foggia, Italy, where he studied economics for 5 months.

"I went on Erasmus for professional development and to broaden my horizons on European thought, mentality and well-being.

It surpassed my expectations. The ESN body in the University of Foggia could not do enough to make us feel at home at the university. The most important thing was that they embraced diversity; they really showed their love for the international movement and accepted ideas from all nationalities.

I have engaged in 'SocialErasmus' throughout my stay in Italy, particularly when I wanted to understand the true spirit of Italian hospitality. I love the way they want to be hospitable to everyone! I was part of a project created by ex-Erasmus students called the Feeland Group. It was an excursion project involving villages in the province of Campania - Irpinia, Senerchia, Teora, Caposele. We had to do an essay on what we saw and how we understood the village. It won me first place, which was incredible. The promoter said, 'the prize will be given to the person who had understood the true spirit of Italians and internationals'. All in all, I experienced the world through my stay and it will be remembered as the time when I got rid of my stereotypes and prejudices about other nations."

- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is participating in Erasmus as a part of a pilot project financed by the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

Germany



Nadine Bretz, 24, University of Trier. Did her Erasmus at the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu, where she studied business economics for 5 months.

"To go to Joensuu was the best decision I ever made in my life - and it was more or less by accident. When I finished my regular studies, I wanted to start working and applied for jobs. Unfortunately I was not successful, because I lacked the qualifications, experience and characteristics which would separate me from my competitors. So I decided to start my Master's degree and I promised myself that I would take every chance I had to study further. Then I found out in our daily newsletter that there were still some places left for Erasmus 2012-13. I applied and I got the chance to go to Finland.

At the same time, I also received a good job offer and, up to the last moment, I was not sure if I should take the job or go to Finland. I didn't make up my mind until two weeks before I was due to leave. But I finally made the decision and, without much preparation, I flew to Joensuu.

I had no big expectations of Finland, my studies, the people or Erasmus. I was quite nervous, but in a positive way. A lot of friends told me their Erasmus stories. That made me excited, but still nervous. I expected to meet a lot of Finns, to learn the language and to get to know different ways of studying. But then, it began ...

My stay in Joensuu was the best time of my life. When I heard this kind of thing before, I always thought that the people who did Erasmus must have had a totally boring life! To say that something 'was the best time of my life' means that you never experienced something better than Erasmus. I thought that was impossible because my life was already amazing. I am from the most beautiful area in Germany and Europe (if you ask me). I have an amazing family and I have great friends. Now, when I am back home again, I feel this even more than before, but Erasmus is still amazing and special.

*My time in Joensuu was the most important time for my personal development and the beginning of my professional career. It made me **more self-confident, more open minded and more attentive**. You are part of a special community, something really big - we called our Erasmus friends 'family'.*

*But also from the professional point of view, Erasmus gave me much more than everything before. **It made me more aware of myself, my type of education, my strengths.** I got know what many Europeans think of Germany and our position as a leader of Europe.*

***I learned a lot from others, but I could also really teach a lot of things to people for the first time. Erasmus spread my wings,** to learn and experience more, with different people, with different cultures and with different economies. Erasmus made me big.”*

Greece



Sofia Emmanouela Theodorou, 24, University of the Aegean. Did her Erasmus at the Polytechnic University of Turin, Italy, where she pursued a 6-month traineeship in 'Indoor Environment and Energy Management Competence Centre'.

"I had two aims with Erasmus: to gain practical knowledge for my thesis and to develop long-term relationships with great minds for my future career. I accomplished both.

*I met great minds, like Professor Socolow from the University of Princeton, and I participated in a great meeting of professors from all over the world. These gave me the **opportunities to create personal relationships with experts in my field.***

I participated in a four-day Spring School in Smart Energy Solutions in Urban Environment, organised through the EU project CLAIRE. There I met the next generation of professors and senior researchers. These meetings will help me to make connections between my academic knowledge and businesses.

The whole experience was good for my personal development and now I am willing to participate in any programme which will help my future.

*My advice to any student is to be willing to change their life. Change your mind-set. And do it now. By participating in **Erasmus placements**, you **expand your horizons**, you **test your limits**, you **learn about yourself**, you gain knowledge. You make your life worth living. Take advantage of Erasmus and go for it!"*

Hungary



Lilla Nyisalovits, 25, Corvinus University of Budapest. Did her Erasmus at Robert Bosch Brussels, Belgium, where she undertook a 7-month traineeship in investment analysis.

"First of all, I was really happy to participate in this 7-month Erasmus programme, and spend more than half a year in the centre of Europe, in Brussels. My first motivation for this internship was to refresh my English and German, and study some Dutch and French. My new friends could speak a lot of languages and, after my first working day at Bosch, I signed up for an intensive French language course. My second motivation for coming to Brussels was to learn more about the European institutions and expand my knowledge of economics, since my thesis was about the euro-crisis.

I received a really nice reference letter from the company. I also obtained a lot of financial experience and my language skills developed significantly.

*I also completed the Brussels half marathon with a lovely German friend who inspired me with a lot of positive energy. Unfortunately, I couldn't come home during the Christmas break to celebrate with my family. Instead, **I visited an orphanage**, with a Dutch friend. By the end of my internship, I successfully completed my French language course, and, through my work, I developed a broad picture of the Benelux states in terms of lifestyles, people's habits and opinion which really can differ from people to people and nation to nation. All in all, I am grateful for the opportunity that the Erasmus scholarship gave me. I will never forget the seven beautiful months I spent in Brussels, as it was the best period of my life for sure!"*

Iceland



Silja Lind Haraldsdóttir, 25, University of Iceland. Did her Erasmus at Charles University, Czech Republic, where she studied anthropology for 5 months.

"I had always dreamed about doing an Erasmus exchange but I never quite plucked up the courage. In my third and final year I decided it was time to make my dream come true and go to Eastern Europe and start the first year of my Master's studies in the Czech Republic.

I decided to live with Czech people instead of living at the university with other Erasmus students. Although I might have missed out on the international party scene, I feel I got more out of my stay because I got to know locals and learned about the Czech Republic and Czech culture. I tried to take every opportunity to see and learn by going on trips offered by the Erasmus community, where I also met some great people and made some really good friends.

Being able to go as an Erasmus student to this area, which I had always wanted to visit and get to know, gave me so much more than if I had visited the country as a tourist.

*Regarding my studies, I had expected the teachers at Charles University to be more impersonal, because it is a larger institute than my home university, but this couldnt have been further from the truth. I had the most amazing teachers who really made an effort to get to know their students. I formed a professional relationship with one of my professors; **she showed me the possibilities of anthropology and gave me the inspiration to focus on this in my Master's thesis.***

My stay in Prague gave me the chance to travel more in Central and Eastern Europe and to connect my studies and research at home with this interesting area."

Ireland



Aoife Dooley, 21, University of Limerick. Did her Erasmus with the Grupos Organizados in Spain where she followed a four-month traineeship in psychology and sociology, and then continued her studies at the University of Groningen, Netherlands, for 5 months.

*"I went on an Erasmus mobility for both studies and a placement. **It was even better than I expected** for a number of reasons. In regard to my placement in Spain, which was teaching Spanish students English in a camp environment, I did not anticipate how great the people I met would be, how amazing the company were and how unbelievable the whole experience was. **I gained such a great sense of achievement in teaching and interacting with people I would never have otherwise met. I was involved in all aspects of the company.** I became incredibly culturally aware and in addition to that I created strong bonds with my fellow employees, as far as to call us a family.*

After the incredible experience of the placement I thought that nothing would compare to it, until I went to study in Groningen. I had the most amazing experience there too, met people I will never forget, travelled to many European cities and got to interact with students from all over the world. I wouldn't exchange that experience for anything!

In Groningen, I was very involved in activities run by the ESN, the Erasmus Social Network. It is a fantastic organisation which provides events, trips and many other things for international students. I also participated in events run by the university.

I developed as a person during both my Erasmus experiences. As well as the good times, I dealt with hardships and struggles in both countries which made me a stronger, more independent person and I am very grateful for the experience that was offered to me."

Italy



Ilaria Severi, 22, University of Siena. She did her Erasmus at St. Mary's University College, United Kingdom, where she studied languages for 4 months.

"Since I was a child I always dreamt about being able to communicate with as many people as possible all around the world. My ambition has always been to be a citizen of the world. For this reason, one of my biggest passions has been studying languages. That's why, when I finished high school, I decided to enrol on a language course at university. I am currently studying English, Spanish and French. I have always believed that studying a language from a book is not sufficient. What I mean is that a language is not just about words or grammar; it is also about customs, culture and way of life. This is why I decided to apply for the Erasmus studies scholarship (and I am actually thinking about applying for an Erasmus placement too) at St Mary's University College in London. I felt that I needed to improve my English, not only from the linguistic point of view but also from the cultural one.

I must confess that, at the start, it was not easy to get used to my new life, because there is no doubt that the Erasmus experience means starting a new life. Initially, it is not easy to cope with the impact of a totally different and new country. You are alone and you can only rely on yourself, but this is actually the best part because your self-esteem and self-confidence will increase enormously after doing your Erasmus. Another important aspect is the College experience. The school system in the UK is completely different from the one we have in Italy so you have to learn how it works.

*It has been one of the most beautiful and exciting experiences of my life. I have had the chance to get to know many new people, some of whom have become my best friends and with whom I still keep in touch, despite the distance which separates us. Every day turned out to be unexpected as I discovered new things, saw amazing places and **met people from all over the world who shared their knowledge, their customs and their lives.** And since I speak three languages, I could talk with many of them in their mother tongue and thus practice my skills and knowledge of those languages.*

If I had the chance, I would do it again and again because I had never felt so many emotions as when I was on my Erasmus. I would advise everyone to take the opportunity to participate in this amazing experience; you will not regret it."

Latvia



Linda Usane, 20, Latvian Academy of Culture. She is doing her Erasmus at Anadolu University, Turkey, where she is studying communication sciences for 9 months.

"At the time of writing this, I am still in Turkey, finishing the second term of my Erasmus study exchange. What can I say - Erasmus is the best thing that happened in my life so far! Before going on Erasmus I supposed that I would see a different culture and a different country but when I came here I got so much more.

*Firstly, my studies are really interesting and all the teachers are experts in their fields. Because of them and their attitude to teaching I love every part of my courses and **I have gained a lot of knowledge which I couldn't have learnt in my home country.***

*Secondly, I made so many friends. Some of them are nice people I hang out with, others have become so close to me that I cannot understand how I could have lived without them before! The Erasmus Study Network has proposed a lot of projects and trips, like **cultural awareness projects with children in villages, teaching English in schools, cleaning our city** in Eskisehir and a lot more. We have become like a family. If someone is in a trouble, the others help; if someone has something to celebrate, we celebrate together. We learn from each other all the time.*

We learn how to cook each other's national dishes, we learn different languages: for example, I learnt a little bit of Albanian. Before I met my Albanian friends I didn't even know exactly where their country is! This cultural diversity is just great. It opens your mind, it crashes and smashes all your prejudices and stereotypes because you meet people and see how good they are. Erasmus makes you a better person and makes you a better citizen of the world."

Liechtenstein



Anna-Lydia Capaul, 27, University of Liechtenstein. Did her Erasmus at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts – Architecture School in Copenhagen, where she studied architecture for 5 months.

*"Here in Liechtenstein it is part of the Master programme to spend at least one semester abroad. This gave me the opportunity to **gain experience in a different academic environment**. I chose Copenhagen, because I am fascinated by the Nordic countries. I would not want to miss this experience!*

I met a lot of new friends from all over the world, with whom I will definitely stay in touch. It is great to have a bigger network and I learned a lot from other cultures. I think this was very important for my personal development. My stay in Denmark was perfectly organised by the international office here in Liechtenstein. I would say that the semester in Copenhagen was the most exiting one in my life and I will return as soon as possible to visit my friends."

Lithuania



Gabija Cijunaityte, 21, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. Did her Erasmus at VIA University College, Denmark, where she studied ICT engineering for 5 months and then applied for an Erasmus traineeship at SYSTEMATIC A/S, Denmark

*"I did Erasmus studies and an internship, both in Denmark. Before my first Erasmus experience (the study semester) I had really high expectations - I thought I would learn a lot about new cultures, people, gain knowledge on my subject from a different perspective, learn some words in a new language, make friends. And so I did - all of it! However there is one thing that I hadn't thought about - **how much I would learn about myself**. I have come **back from the study semester wiser, way more experienced and confident**. This gave me the push to go for an Erasmus internship afterwards.*

*During the study semester I participated in every possible event, club and get-together - it was my goal from the start to take full advantage of the opportunity. During the semester I also had the chance to do **some volunteering work**. We also worked on many group projects, including work with a company on a real problem - that was a new and very interesting practical experience.*

*My Erasmus internship has just started in Aarhus. I work in one of the biggest IT companies in the country. I do JAVA Android programming which is exactly what I wanted to work on. I want to experience this in order to have more knowledge and **a better understanding of what I want to do professionally after I graduate.**"*

Luxembourg



Djuna Bernard, 21, University of Luxembourg. Did her Erasmus at Freie Universität Berlin, where she studied history for 5 months.

"I went to Berlin because I wanted to discover life in a world city. As I come from one of the smallest countries in Europe, this was very special to me. Not only the size of the city, the distances, the anonymity, but also the university worked completely differently. This made my Erasmus experience even more attractive and made me discover something new every day. I wanted to melt in a big flow of unknown people to discover myself. At the same time, I learned to appreciate my life back home even more.

I got to know many people from all over the world through the many Erasmus activities offered by my host university, which made it easy to make new friends. Also culturally, Berlin and the Erasmus team offered more things to discover than would normally be possible in a short period of time.

Historically Berlin showed me many things I didn't know such as the history of the DDR.

This experience is worth more than all the hours of learning during one year. It makes you grow, it broadens your horizons, it makes you appreciate your home, and it creates friendships over the world."

Malta



Roderick Muscat, 26, University of Malta. Did his Erasmus at the University of Warsaw, Poland, where he spent 4 months following a European studies course.

"Erasmus offered me a great opportunity to experience life in Central and Eastern Europe. It was also a chance for me to live the great experiences that I had heard about from other students who had gone on an Erasmus.

*Erasmus exceeded my expectations. Meeting students from all over the world is a great way to break down barriers between different languages and cultures. Staying for a long time in a new country gave me the chance to learn about the culture of the host country, their food, their way of living, their nightlife, etc. I have to say that I was really impressed by the beautiful library that I found in Warsaw. Academically, **I had the chance to learn about topics which were not available at my home university.***

*I had the chance to give a presentation about my home country to Polish students and, **at Christmas, I visited children in an orphanage.** I can say that Erasmus as a whole has certainly helped my personal development. Living in a new country, where you do not understand a word is not easy; doing so for four months is a great achievement."*

The Netherlands



Sharon Lubbers, 22, Zuyd University. Did a 6-month traineeship in European studies at EuCham – European Chamber, Budapest, Hungary.

*"As a traveller, I love being abroad to learn about new cultures, and to teach others about my own, and my experiences. At EuCham, I had the opportunity every day to meet new people from other cultures, and to work with my colleagues, all of different nationalities. My internship as an Erasmus student definitely exceeded my expectations, as I was able to learn not only about Hungarian culture, but also about many other things, while improving my intercultural communication and language skills at the same time. I was lucky enough to work with people from countries such as the UK, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania and others. As a person and a professional, I was able to develop, not only in how to do the job I studied for, but also by **learning how to function in a multicultural environment**. Like my prior study period abroad in Prague, Budapest was an amazing experience and it really provided me with new insights into the world we live in.*

*I highly recommend the Erasmus programme. It helps everyone to **develop new skills**, to **become more mature** (finally living on your own!), to **communicate with people from different cultures** (maybe even in different languages) and to learn how to integrate in a society which is completely different from yours. For me, **the Erasmus programme added great value to my personal life, but also to my international career**. It is wonderful to learn that 3 million people have experienced this, a number which I hope will keep on growing in the future! Please check out my travel blog: <http://sharonlubbers.waarben jij.nu/>"*

Norway



Stine Soltvedt Fossdal, 23, Høgskolen Stord / Haugesund HSH. Did a 3-month Erasmus placement in nursing at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, United Kingdom.

*"I wanted to go with Erasmus because there were so many benefits. I knew I was going to meet students from other countries through the programme. I wanted to experience something new, to see how the nursing profession works in another country and to learn. I got involved in many student events. In addition to the placement and classes, I went on trips and enjoyed some parties. I lived with five other Erasmus students, two from Norway and three from France. **Going on an exchange was so much better than I had expected.** It was amazing and I recommend it to everyone."*

Poland



Magdalena Kawczyńska, 21, Adam Mickiewicz University. Did her Erasmus at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, studying international relations for 5 months.

"I have been dreaming of visiting Finland since I was a child. I have no idea why this country... I learnt about it from watching TV and reading magazines and completely fell in love. My primary school teacher once asked: 'If you had lots of money and could go wherever you want, which country would you choose and why?' My answer was 'Finland! This cold country, full of reindeer, totally covered by snow; get ready for living in an igloo!' - I didn't fit in with most kids, who prefer sunny beaches.

I'd had this impossible dream for such a long time. Then I discovered Erasmus. I loved the idea and immediately decided to take part. As an international relations student, I was determined to discover the world, to compare different cultures, to see how they function. I travelled a bit before and therefore became interested in topics such as national and European identity, multiculturalism, EU perspectives, policies and so on. I knew that participating in Erasmus would be a great opportunity to get to know those areas better. Studying abroad was also a chance to improve my language skills and to become more competitive on the labour market. So I applied for a scholarship.

I had to choose the country I wanted to study in. I saw Finland on the list and everything was set. I realised that this would probably be my first and last chance to go up to the North and find out whether I was right to adore a place I had never visited.

As for my expectations, I have to admit that they were high. I expected both a high level of education and a lot of additional activities which would help me to become part of my new environment. The experience and the benefits were outstanding. I never guessed that Erasmus would change my life to the extent it has.

*Firstly, tertiary education in Finland is completely different to Poland. Not only did lectures and workshops vary a lot, but the relationship between lecturers and students differed as well. In Finland they can be called partners. **This sort of equality made my studies more efficient and fruitful.** I had the freedom to choose the subjects related to my major. I followed very demanding internet courses which taught me how to organise myself and be fully responsible.*

I attended workshops which focused on group work, too. Working on presentations in an international group, dividing tasks, discussing viewpoints and presenting the topic in a foreign language were tough challenges. A little bit of fear at the beginning was replaced by pride and satisfaction at the end.

*My host university offered me plenty of possibilities. I could spend my free time discovering Finnish habits and culture, the things I liked the most. Various workshops and events were held to show Erasmus students what Finland is like. **I appreciate that my time abroad taught me not only new skills and responsibility but also intercultural competence.***

*All in all, going on Erasmus was the best decision I've ever made. My dream came true. I was right. Finland is a splendid country. When I close my eyes, I still see myself sitting by the lake and admiring the Northern lights ... I'll never forget all those beautiful landscapes and all the fantastic people I've met. **Erasmus has changed my life. I gained something unique which cannot be bought: experience.***"

Portugal



Tiago Lima, 22, Universidade do Porto. Did his Erasmus at Universiteit Gent, Belgium, studying engineering physics for 5 months.

*"To do an Erasmus was always a secret dream. **Having never travelled outside of Portugal, Erasmus seemed like the perfect excuse to go and explore the world.** And this year, it was time!*

The idea was also down to my friends - we wanted to do our Erasmus together. In the end, this didn't happen and we went to different places: 3 people, 3 countries and 3 amazing Erasmus stories.

*My expectations from Erasmus were big: I wanted to get to know the world, learn to speak another language, meet new people - international people - and to live like they do in another country. **I also wanted to expand my professional connections and to learn how physics is taught outside my faculty and country.***

So I went to Belgium, right in the centre of Europe. And you know what they say about Belgium: Boring! But, hey, I'm Portuguese, and it was incredible!

I met a lot of different of people, from all over the world (mainly Europe, but not exclusively), visited lots of cities, made fantastic friends, expanded my horizons.

I discovered a lot in me I didn't know I had: a passion for travelling, meeting people, exploring nature and architecture, taking risks and that being a little crazy is healthy. Oh, and a passion for cooking!

*From the academic point of view, my Erasmus was not very different from my student life in Portugal: a lot of work and studying. Although the classes and professors were very good, I wouldn't say this was the highlight of my Erasmus, **except for the amazing field trips to companies and to the world of entrepreneurship.***

My Erasmus made me a better person, with more insight and a broader view of life. Erasmus is an opportunity to get out of your little shell!"

Romania



Alina Mihaela Cioata, 22, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest. Did her Erasmus at the University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovak Republic, studying economics and management for 9 months.

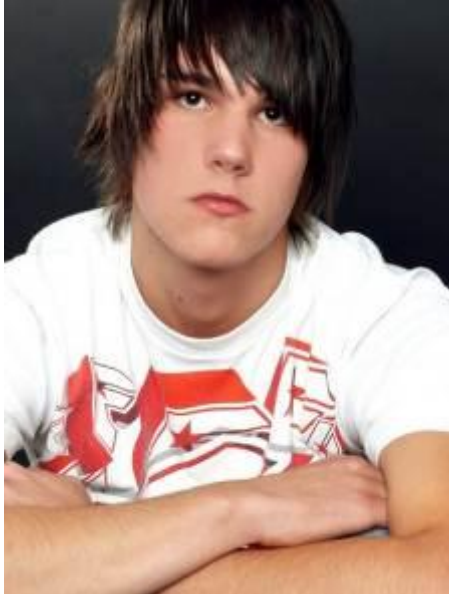
*"I had dreamed about being an Erasmus student in Porto for more than six months. Then the news arrived: Nitra, Slovakia. I had two days to make up my mind whether or not to go. When I first heard about Nitra I couldn't even find it on a map and there were no flights there from Romania. **In spite of this I decided to go and it turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life.***

*I chose to participate in as many activities as I could. I attended an intensive macroeconomics course about the V4 countries, **shared my Erasmus experiences in local high schools through the ESN 'Erasmus in school' week**, travelled throughout Slovakia and tried to immerse myself in Slovak culture. I was outside my comfort zone on many occasions!*

There were a lot of barriers to overcome. The first and probably biggest barrier was the language. Every time I had to interact with the people, I was praying that someone spoke English. But I often found this was not the case. This was frustrating at times but I also discovered that I can speak with more hand gestures and emotions than an Italian!

*All in all, deciding to participate in the Erasmus programme was a very enriching experience and it has had a powerful impact on me as a person. Also, **my online testimonial encouraged more students from my faculty to take advantage of this opportunity.***

Slovak Republic



Viktor Fazekaš, 23, University of Economics in Bratislava. Did his Erasmus at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Poland, studying taxation and tax consultancy for 5 months.

"After boarding the train to Warsaw, to my new home for five months, I felt a mixture of fear and sadness, but also excitement about the upcoming period. It was my first time abroad for a longish period and I would be totally dependent on myself. I expected fun, parties, trips, occasional homework and many new experiences. But the school and Warsaw gave me much more. It gave me best friends from all around the world and I had the time of my life. There were opportunities for personal and social development and many other things that will be useful for my future life.

*I decided to take courses at the economic faculty. The **way of studying surprised me the most. Interactive classes associated with study tours and interesting trips gave me not only theoretical, but also practical information.** The teachers were encouraging all the students to 'spread their wings and fly out of the nest' - and gave them a solid basis to do so. **I decided to develop the research from my bio-based bachelor thesis to the master thesis and to dedicate myself to this area in the future.***

I am delighted and very grateful that I was given the opportunity to study in Warsaw. It was a hard ride from the tough start to the emotional finish. Two things that I know are that I found my new international family and I'm now looking forward to doing an Erasmus internship. And remember, Warsaw is the place to be!"

Slovenia



Suzana Puhar, 24, archaeology student at the University of Ljubljana. Did a 3-month Erasmus placement at the Museum of Ancient Glass in Zadar, Croatia.

"Since we only have two weeks of practice as a part of our studies, I seized the opportunity to apply for an Erasmus placement. Before that I had already been on few exchanges (Erasmus and other programmes) which were great, so the Erasmus placement was a logical choice to get to know another country, language and culture, and, of course, to get some practical knowledge for my future career as an archaeologist. I went to Croatia, this time to Zadar - I had already done an exchange in Zagreb.

I had chosen the Museum of Ancient Glass but I didn't know too much about it. So I had no big expectations. It turned out to be the best internship I could ever imagine!

*Before the internship I just had one wish - to practise drawing small archaeological finds, since there are not many people in our field who do this. And this was actually the main thing I did on my Erasmus placement. The **director and employees of the museum respected my wish and my previous experiences and put me in the position of a museum 'documentarian'.***

The time spent in the Museum felt like being at home. I was received very nicely by the employees, and I wanted to stay much longer. The atmosphere was relaxing, not only in the Museum but also in the city itself, since it's located on the beautiful Croatian coast. Zadar has the most beautiful sunsets! ;-)

But I wasn't just working; I also had a great time with friends. I visited a few archaeological sites and went roller-blading along the coast.

This Erasmus placement couldn't be better; it's the cherry on the cream of my exchanges. Thank you Erasmus for enabling me to discover this new world of different cultures, awesome people and new knowledge!"

Spain



Carlos Pena Rodriguez, 25, Universidade de Vigo. Did an Erasmus at the Institut Français de Mécanique Avancée, Clermont Ferrand, France, where he studied industrial engineering for 8 months.

*"**My life was changed by Erasmus.** When I first arrived in Clermont Ferrand, everything was new and different. The place, the people, the language, the way they do things. I realised that I had to be independent. My stay there was encouraged by positive feedback from previous Erasmus students and friends. It was easy meeting new people and making new friends; it was the same at the university, thanks the teachers who helped us to adapt.*

*At the university, I started to use a new design software, managed the language, and I learned a lot about the French. They are the most polite people I know; they are professional in their work and always punctual. **I accomplished my project goal - improving the performance of a robot arm by using natural fibre composite materials, which will be used extensively in the future. The success of the project will really help my transition to the world of work.***

However, the most enriching part of this experience was on the personal level, thanks to all my friends and everything they taught me. I met people from many different countries: Chinese people who showed me how to cook typical Chinese meals, Lebanese friends who told me about the variety of religions and customs in their country, and Colombians, Germans, Irish, Moroccans ... and a lot of French and Spanish people as well.

*I also got the chance to mix with people of different disciplines and interests. This allowed me to open my mind about art and about the beauty and variety of music. I started to enjoy photography. Each person shared something special and unique about them, and now **I know things I would have never known if it weren't for this life-changing experience.***

Leaving all this behind was the worst thing. When I returned home I found myself almost depressed because I knew that it had been the best experience of my life until now. I can only hope that future students will benefit from this kind of experience too. The city where you spend your Erasmus doesn't matter - it's all about the group of people that you get to know. In my case, it was all marvellous."

Sweden



Caroline Ivarsson, 24, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden. Did her Erasmus at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zürich, Switzerland, studying geomatics for 6 months.

"I decided to go on an Erasmus exchange since it is a great opportunity to go to live in another country and to experience another culture. Although Switzerland is not so very different from my home country, I had some great experiences there.

First of all, I met so many amazing friends from all over the world! It is fantastic that we all came here for the same reason and how open and friendly everyone is.

*The studying experience at ETH was amazing. **I have gained a new perspective on research, what I can do when I finish my studies and I now feel that everything is possible.** Without this opportunity of studying at ETH, I don't know where I would have ended up, but I have a clearer idea of the future thanks to Erasmus.*

*During my semester I participated in a few Erasmus events such as hiking, city tour etc. I am grateful for how well they organised everything in order to make our exchange semester **a great experience.**"*

Switzerland



Sophie Kasser, 25, University of Lausanne. Did her Erasmus at the University of Hannover, Germany, where she studied medicine for 10 months.

"I wanted to get out of my small world and try something new. I didn't care where, but I had no interest in some fancy city or cliché. I went to a quiet city and, while some aspects were difficult, I learned so much and soon saw how much fun I had every day.

*The language and people's attitudes were a challenge for me at first. I was expecting an easy situation, but in a big hospital it doesn't work that way. I had to do my very best, and it paid off. I made some real friends, Germans and Erasmus students as well. I had profound conversations about the history of European cultures and I opened up my knowledge of the entire world. Now I notice when I'm stuck on something, I can work on it and test another way. The first thing you've learned isn't always the best one. It's just the only one you know until you discover something new and more valuable. **I've learned to be stronger** and keep 'sometimes' my mouth shut! I've learned to encourage and appreciate certain behaviour. **I'm a better clinician than I was before** and I feel impressed by so many other minds, characters and experiments ... it's overwhelming!*

Erasmus is 'a little Europe' with a common goal: to learn and know other ways of doing things, to listen to ideas that are different or similar, to cook and laugh, to run and study, to drink and dance. Go abroad. Live. Enjoy this new life. Come back with some new insights. Erasmus = an update of yourself. Erasmus is an opportunity to get out of your shell."

Turkey



Gül Ziba Akarcalı, 21, Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi. Did her Erasmus at the Universidad de Alicante, Spain, studying architecture for 10 months.

"I decided to do an Erasmus because of the personal and social benefits that it could provide me, as well as from the academic aspect. I came to Universidad de Alicante in September 2012. When making the decision, I paid attention to the academic reputation of the university, as well as the standard of living in the city and the experiences of former Erasmus students.

*I came here with my best friend, Elif. The first challenge we faced was living with a Korean and two German girls, who were strangers to us. As time passed, I realised that the cultural differences don't create a problem if you respect them, and they can add good things to your personality. **Respect and tolerance** are what we all learned in the first place; we had to learn how to share, of course, and to take our responsibilities. They were my first friends here and although I moved from that house and my German 'sisters' returned home, we're still good friends. It's good to know that I have a home in Germany and I have cool friends who'll visit me in the future for sure.*

For the first time in my life I celebrated Hallowe'en, Christmas and Easter here; these were amazing experiences. And living through them with a multicultural group of friends made those experiences twice as interesting.

*The Spanish culture is one of the most important things that I got to know during my Erasmus. I saw how alike Turkish and Spanish people actually are - and yet how different. **I learned how to speak Spanish.** My discipline, architecture, has a lot of technical terms which show, for instance, distances differently. However, I had a lot of support from my Spanish friends on this which will help me in the future; in return I showed them how to use English technically.*

I went to Athens to study the social situation in Greece with 33 Spaniards and a professor. It was a great week. I saw that the Greek people are similar to Turkish people – the opposite of what we've been told all these years.

*In summary, what makes the Erasmus experience unforgettable is the people you're with. Friends, teachers, neighbours, waiters... they're all a part of your Erasmus, even if they don't know it. I don't think that I'll ever forget my talkative landlady and the cashier Paqui from the school cafe, the Argentinian friend who helped me a lot in Spanish, the barmaids and barmen that I got to know. **I'll never forget my first day at the school, without any Spanish, and my last submission of the year, which I wrote in fluent Spanish.** All the people I met, every step I took, will be in my memory as the best part of my life so far and every single word in Spanish will remind me of them.*

This is what all students need: a new angle on life, new people, new opportunities and - to be honest - a new beginning. Erasmus can provide all of this if you take the chance. I believe I took all the opportunities I could, so I'm proud of my experience. I hope everybody can do the same thing."

United Kingdom



Robert Bye, 21, Brunel University. Did his Erasmus at Delft University of Technology, Netherlands, studying industrial design for 10 months.

"This year's Erasmus has been easily the best year of my degree so far. I decided to participate in an Erasmus exchange after a student came on an Erasmus from TU Delft to my university and encouraged me a huge amount to do the same. I also spoke to some people who had done the exchange the previous year and, after even more positive feedback, hearing a bit more about the University and seeing some pictures, I couldn't wait to get on board.

Initially I was concerned about it being difficult to organise, but it was incredibly easy and within a matter of weeks I was fully signed up to spend a year at TU Delft.

With another student from my university, I managed to arrange to live with a group of Dutch students close to the university. On arrival, we were amazed to find out it was a house of over 20 people! As we had never lived anywhere like this before we were already excited about the prospects for the year. This only continued after meeting more international students and seeing the campus first hand. TU Delft is a huge university and the design faculty is so much bigger than what we were used to at Brunel; we were almost overwhelmed by this. However, after a few introduction lectures and making contact with the exchange coordinator, everything settled into place.

*The education side of things was also great. **Studying at another university let me see how similar subjects can be taught differently and helped me broaden my scope in my field of study more than ever before. Focusing on subjects that were not taught at my home university again gave me an experience which very few people have.***

*The best part of the experience was in fact **gaining international business contacts** and meeting a lot of people who I am sure to work with in the future. There are so many opportunities to meet new people and, through friends and lecturers, you quickly build up a collection of people in the industry who you can easily reach out to.*

An example of this is an entrepreneur I met who was from Amsterdam but is now based in Shanghai. To begin with I helped him design a product which was to be launched in China and then became the lead designer on developing the brand identity for the start-up. This then moved onto other business opportunities and **we are now currently in the process of working together to launch a student-based design consultancy that will work on a global level.**

These in themselves were great experiences, **but now he is helping me launch a product of mine in Europe through the contacts he has in China.** Meeting people such as this would never have happened at my home university and working abroad instantly gives you a chance to work on an international level with great people. I cannot recommend doing an exchange enough. I know I'm likely to look back on this year as one of the most important and memorable years of my life."