

# HOW STUDYING ABROAD CHANGED MY LIFE!

*By Evans Arinaitwe, Erasmus+ student at Powislanski University*

## **Introduction**

Have you ever dreamed of studying in another country? If so, you are not alone. According to the latest statistics from UNESCO, more than 5 million students worldwide were enrolled in tertiary education outside their country of origin. Studying abroad is the single most effective way of changing the way we view the world. It exposes us to new cultures, languages, and perspectives that enrich our personal and professional growth. I learned this first-hand when I participated in the Erasmus mobility program at Powislanska University in Poland.

Erasmus+ Programme is a European Union program that offers scholarships for students to study in European countries for a semester or a year. It aims to promote intercultural dialogue, academic excellence, and social inclusion among young people. It also provides opportunities for students to develop their skills and competencies in various fields of study and research.

In this article, I will share my Erasmus experience and how it changed my life. I will describe the academic, cultural, and social aspects of studying abroad. I will also explain the benefits and challenges of living and learning in a different environment. Finally, I will express my gratitude to the Erasmus coordinators and friends who made this experience possible and memorable.

## **My Erasmus Experience**

I was a student at Mbarara University of Science and Technology when I applied for the Erasmus program, which offers scholarships for students to study in European countries for a semester or a year. I was accepted to study at Powislanski University, a prestigious institution in the field of health, economics and social sciences.

I was nervous and excited at the same time. I had never been to Poland before, and I didn't speak any Polish. But I was eager to learn and explore a new country. And then I realized adventure is the best way to learn.

From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed and supported by the Erasmus coordinators. They helped me with the paperwork, accommodation, orientation, and academic matters. They also organized various activities and events for the Erasmus students, such as trips, conferences and workshops.

I enjoyed attending the courses offered by the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Powislanski University. The professors and lecturers were knowledgeable and engaging, and the fellow students were friendly and collaborative. I learned a lot from them about the European higher education system, the Polish economy and society, and the current issues and challenges facing the region.

One of the highlights of my Erasmus experience was participating in the V International Student Conference, where I presented a paper on inflation as a global problem with a great emphasis on Uganda. It was a great opportunity to showcase my research skills, network with other students and experts, and receive valuable feedback on my work.

Studying abroad was not only an academic adventure but also a personal one. I had a wonderful time exploring Poland, discovering its rich history and art. I visited many beautiful places, such as Warsaw, Krakow, Gdansk, Kwidzyn, and Sopot. I also tried many delicious dishes, such as pierogi, bigos, zurek, and paczki.



Fig. 1. Delegates to the International week at the main campus of Powislanski University, Kwidzyn

Poland has a fascinating history that spans more than a thousand years. It has witnessed many wars, invasions, partitions, rebellions, and transformations. It has also produced many famous figures in literature ,art ,science ,and politics ,such as Nicolaus Copernicus, Marie Curie, Adam Mickiewicz, Frederic Chopin, and Lech Walesa .Poland is also known for its rich cultural heritage ,such as its folk music, dance, costumes and traditions.



Fig. 2. Taking dinner at Kwidzyn castle

One of the most interesting aspects of Polish culture is its language. Polish is a Slavic language that belongs to the Indo-European language family. It has a complex grammar system ,a rich vocabulary ,and a distinctive pronunciation .It also has many loanwords from other languages ,such as Latin ,German ,French ,English ,and Russian .Learning Polish was challenging but rewarding. I took a Polish language course at the university and practiced with my Polish friends. I also watched some Polish movies and listened to some Polish songs. I learned some basic phrases, such as "Dzień dobry" (Good morning/afternoon) , "Jak się masz?" (How are you?) and "Dziękuję" (Thank you) .

Socially, I made many friends from different backgrounds and cultures. I met people from Poland, Algeria, Italy, Bangladesh, Armenia, Turkey, Palestine, Jordan, Spain and many other

countries. We shared our stories, opinions, values, and dreams. We learned from one another's differences and similarities. We had fun together and supported each other through challenges.

As one of my Erasmus friends said; "One of the best things about Erasmus is meeting people from different countries and cultures. It makes you more open-minded and tolerant. You learn to appreciate diversity and respect differences.



Fig. 3. Me and my Erasmus friends after the lecture

Erasmus is not only a program but also a community .It connects people who share a common passion for learning and exploring .It creates bonds that last beyond the mobility period .It fosters a sense of belonging and identity .It inspires people to become global citizens and agents of change .

### **The Benefits of Studying Abroad**

Personally, studying abroad has broadened my horizons and improved my language skills, intercultural competence, critical thinking, problem-solving adaptability, and self-confidence. It has also opened my eyes to new opportunities and possibilities for my future career.

By living and studying in a different country, I gained a new perspective on the world and myself. I learned to appreciate the beauty and diversity of different cultures and languages. I also learned to respect the differences and similarities among people. I became more aware of the global issues and challenges that affect us all. I also became more curious and eager to learn more about other countries and regions.

By learning a new language, I improved my communication skills and expanded my vocabulary. I also enhanced my cognitive abilities, such as memory, attention, and creativity. Learning a new language also helped me to understand the culture and mentality of the people who speak it. It also gave me access to more information and resources that are available in that language.

By studying in a different academic system, I developed my critical thinking and problem-solving skills. I learned to analyse information from different sources and perspectives. I also learned to apply theory to practice and to find solutions to real-world problems. Studying in a different academic system also challenged me to adapt to different expectations and standards. It also exposed me to different methods and approaches that are used in different fields of study and research.

By facing various challenges and difficulties, I increased my self-confidence and resilience. I learned to cope with stress and uncertainty. I also learned to overcome obstacles and difficulties. Facing various challenges and difficulties also taught me to be flexible and adaptable. It also taught me to be independent and responsible for my own decisions and actions.

Professionally, studying abroad has opened my eyes to new opportunities and possibilities for my future career. It has given me new knowledge ,skills ,experiences ,friends ,memories ,and perspectives that will help me in my professional development. I have improved my employability and career prospects. I gained valuable skills and competencies that are sought after by employers in the global market. I also gained international experience that demonstrates my ability to work in diverse environments and teams. Studying abroad also expanded my professional network and contacts. It also increased my chances of finding a job or pursuing further education in another country.

By studying abroad, I discovered new interests and passions that will guide my career choices. I explored different fields of study and research that sparked my curiosity and enthusiasm. I also discovered new aspects of myself that revealed my strengths and weaknesses. Studying abroad also inspired me to pursue my goals and dreams. It also motivated me to make a positive difference in the world.

## **A Thank You Note**

Dear Erasmus coordinators,

I take this great opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you for the support and guidance during my Erasmus mobility period that started on 1st March and ended on 30th June at Powislanski University Poland. It was a truly enriching and rewarding experience.

I am very thankful for the opportunity to study at Powislanski University, one of the best institutions in the field of economics and sciences. I learned a lot from the professors and lecturers, who were knowledgeable and engaging, and from the fellow students, who were friendly and collaborative. I also enjoyed participating in the V International Student Conference, where I presented a paper on inflation as a global problem with a great emphasis on Uganda.

I also appreciate all the activities and events that you organized for the Erasmus students, such as trips, workshops and conferences. They helped me to explore Poland, discover its rich history and art, and try its delicious cuisine. But more importantly, they helped me to make many friends from different backgrounds and cultures. We shared our stories, opinions, values, and dreams. We learned from one another's differences and similarities. We had fun together and supported each other through challenges.

Studying abroad has broadened my horizons and improved my language skills, intercultural competence, critical thinking, problem-solving adaptability and self-confidence. It has also opened my eyes to new opportunities and possibilities for my future career.

I will always cherish this experience and remember it fondly. I hope to keep in touch with you and the Erasmus community.

Yours sincerely,

Evans Arinaitwe