



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

<b>Field of study in Wageningen</b>	Health and Society
<b>Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	01/09/2021 until 14/12/2021
<b>Country (exchange)</b>	Finland
<b>City (exchange)</b>	Kuopio
<b>University (exchange)</b>	University of Eastern Finland
<b>Faculty (exchange)</b>	Public Health

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I really liked the stories of other students about their study abroad and therefore I started to look at some options. Also, it is out of my comfort zone and therefore a big step for me. But the more I talked about it with others, the more I looked forward to this new experience. I was very excited to live in another country and meet new people. Also, I wanted to improve my English speaking and writing.

### What is the reason you chose for this country/university?

I have never been to Scandinavia and especially Finland. Therefore, I was very interested in a university over there. When searching for appropriate courses the courses at the University of Eastern Finland were the most interesting. Due to the COVID-19 situation it was also a good choice to go to Scandinavia because there were not many infections, and the rules were therefore not the strict. I really liked the university of Eastern Finland! Also, when I looked more into Finland as a country, I started to like it more and more.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination? (E.g. bus, train, etc.)

The University of Eastern Finland has two campuses, one in Kuopio and one in Joensuu. I studied at the campus in Kuopio. This is quite a big city, but it is located literally in the middle of nowhere. There is an airport, but the flights were quite expensive and therefore it is better to fly to Helsinki and from there take the train to Kuopio. The trains are very comfortable, but it is quite a long ride of 4,5 hours. In the city itself it is easy to take a bus. There are a lot of bus stops and the prices for students are good. Besides the winter it is also possible to get a free bike which you can place in the appropriate stops and rent with your mobile phone.

## 4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Public Health in Humanitarian Crises	5	In this course the focus was on the causes, natural or man-made, of humanitarian crises and disasters and their impact on people's health.	3	This course was very interesting, especially now with COVID-19. It very topical and therefore fun to learn more about this.
2	Public Health Nutrition	5	In this course we analysed the associations between dietary factors and chronic diseases. This was done by the identification of the determinants for dietary habits.	4	I really liked this course and the way it was taught. There was also quite a lot of self-reflection which I did not have much experience with.
3	Comparison of International Health and Welfare Systems	5	From specific points of view the health and social care systems of countries are compared in this course. With this the strengths and weaknesses of the systems in the different countries are analysed.	4	This course was very nice, and I really liked the lectures about the different healthcare systems in different countries. I learned a lot of new things, which is really nice.
4	Health Promotion and Management	5	In this course evidence-based knowledge is used in health promotion management and strategy implementation. This is done by assessing the importance of networking at different levels in health promotion management.	3	This course was a self-study course which means that I had to read a book and make an exam about that. So, the course itself was not what I hoped but I thought the book was very interesting.
5	Community Based Health Promotion	5	In this course there is an international, national, and regional perspective to community-based health promotion. Also, there is looked at the impacts of	3	In this course it is was interesting to work together with other international students so you learned more about their health promotion programmes.

			interventions and quality assessment in evidence-based health promotion.		
6	Introduction to Finnish Health and Social Services System	5	In this course I learned to analyse the service system of the Finnish social welfare and health services and the reforming directions which are related to it and reforming aims. With this the identification and the interpretation of the legislation and steering which directs central social welfare and health services.	4	I really enjoyed this course, because I lived in Finland and wanted to know more about the health care system. It was quite an independent course, but I think this was a good fit. This allowed me to do my own research for more information about the system.

**How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)**

I really liked the way of teaching at the University of Eastern Finland. First, I struggled a bit with the courses because there were a few changes of time schedule and therefore I could not follow all the courses I wanted. After that there were also a few courses that had overlap in their schedules but eventually I could arrange something with the teachers. The teachers were very compassionate and tried to help us the best they could. There was a lot of freedom and room for own interpretation on the assignments. I had to make just one exam of all the six courses I followed. Therefore, I had to do a lot of assignments, like writing essays or make presentations. This was quite a lot of work, but I think it was a good way of learning about the content of the courses. Because when you are taking a lot of time writing such an assignment you really need to understand it. The academic level was quite the same or a little bit less than in Wageningen. But I think the workload was a bit higher than in Wageningen because the courses were scheduled in quite a short time, but it was not too high. As a said the examination was mainly in the form of assignments instead of exams. The lesson material was quite like the materials in Wageningen, such as scientific papers and reports.

**What is the culture of the university? (E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with the WUR?)**

I think that the culture at the university was very nice. The campus was very nice and right next to a beautiful lake. There was a big group of exchange students that were almost daily at the campus. Also, the students in the courses I followed were mainly exchange students. The Finnish students followed the courses mostly online and therefore I did not engage much with the local students. This I did pity, but I knew in advance that the Finns were very closed and self-contained. The teachers of the courses were all very nice and good approachable. There was therefore not much distance between the students and the teachers. I think there was not much difference between UEF and WUR. They are both quite small universities with small classes. Also, at the WUR there is not a big distance to the teachers. I really liked the culture and atmosphere at

UEF. Also, there was a big cafeteria where everyone ate lunch every day. This was very nice and a good way to meet new people. Also, the teachers ate their lunch here and this makes clear that there was almost no distance from them.

**What does the university offer the student additionally? (E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?)**

As I mentioned above, there was a very nice catering facility at the university. There were multiple in a few buildings on the campus. It was a warm meal with a salad and daily there was a choice between meat/fish or vegetarian. The meals were also almost always gluten and lactose free, which was very nice. The best thing about the meals is that they were just between €1,60 and €2,40. We asked our teacher and she told us that the government finances and facilitates these meals, so that every student can eat a healthy and affordable lunch. Also, like in Wageningen there was an association which provided sport classes. These were really fun to do, and the teachers were also very nice. There was also a small gym and sports hall at the campus. Also, there was an action for students to be able to do fun things in the dark days (which is quite common in the winter in Finland). For example, I won a free ticket to an ice hockey game.

## 5.Housing-travelling-living

**What are the possibilities for housing? (E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?)**

A few months prior to the exchange period we were given a presentation about the university and about the housing. There was a company that rented rooms especially for exchange students and in this I could easily apply. There were several buildings available with furnished rooms and I could indicate which ones I preferred and after this I was offered a room quite quickly. I was in an apartment building near the city centre and on walk distance to the campus. When I applied there were just rooms for 2 or 3 students, so I applied for a room with 3 students. It was a quite big apartment and there was a lot of space. We all had a separate bedroom, and we shared a kitchen, living room and bathroom. The apartment was very neat, and everything looked well taken care of. Because my apartment was quite big and near the city centre, it was a little bit more expensive than others. But still the rent rate was quite good for students and with my grant it was well affordable.

**What is the culture of the country like? (E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?)**

The culture of Finland has both differences and similarities with the culture of the Netherlands. Finns are very introverted and do not make contact with others very easily. Also, the Finns are very obedient and tidy. This came out mainly in the measures around COVID-19. While the Finns are introverts, they are very friendly and polite. For example, everyone adapted quickly to English as soon as they realized I didn't speak Finnish. A funny habit I learned immediately on the first day, namely that everyone takes their

shoes off when they enter a home. Later I learned with the snow it is a good thing that everyone takes them off. The cuisine in Finland is mainly about the reindeers and fish. Also, they put dill over every dish. All in all, it is quite different from the Netherlands, but the difference is not huge.

**Could you give a general price indication of the place of residence compared to living in Wageningen?**

The rent of my room in Wageningen was like my room in Finland. But life itself was a bit more expensive, such as groceries and the fun trips. So, I think I spent around €700 a month which is around €200 more than I would spend in Wageningen.

**Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure? (E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)**

The public transport infrastructure is very good in Kuopio. You can download an application for your mobile phone in which you can buy the tickets but also see the timetable for the buses. There was also a monthly bus card for students, which only cost around €37. A single bus ticket was €3, and I was travelling quite a lot by bus, so it was more beneficial to buy a monthly pass. My apartment was near the campus so I could walk, but the other students just took the bus to the campus.

## **6. Free time**

**What are must-sees in the area? (E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?)**

Because Kuopio is literally in the middle of nowhere, the nature is nearby. Also, there is an observation tower which gives a really nice view over the city and the lakes in the area. In the city of Kuopio itself you must visit Saana, which is a nice sauna next to a lake. Another must-see is Tahko, in winter it is a ski resort and in summer it is a nice area to do some hikes. On top of the hill there is a beautiful view over Tahko and the lakes. It is not that far away from Kuopio, it is about 50 minutes by car. There is a nice national park Koli, which is around a 2-hour drive by car from Kuopio. But it is more than worth the drive, because also here the view is amazing. In winter is a beautiful white world, but also in autumn it is very pretty with all the different colours. Of course, Helsinki is also a nice city to visit by train. In the city of Kuopio itself

**What does not appear in the travel guide, but is worth a visit?**

In the area there are a lot of nice routes to walk in summer and autumn. They are just in Kuopio and all reachable by bus.

**Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time (E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?)**

Having dinner at a restaurant is quite expensive but at Food & Joy dinner is very nice and affordable. Also, bar Nousu in the city centre is a really nice place for going out. And on Thursday the beers at Ale Pubi are very cheap, so that's a good one to keep in mind.

## 7.Challenges & best moment abroad

### What was a challenge you have experienced?

Everything was very well organized, both with the university and with housing. So, I did not really experience that much challenges. The only challenge was the change of a few courses and therefore chooses new courses. This resulted in overlap between the courses which was a bit of a struggle. But eventually that was also fixed with the teachers.

### What was your best memory abroad?

I think the studying abroad in general was such a nice experience. I lived in a beautiful country, get to know a lot of new people, and learned new things about Finland and public health. I have been on nice trips to other cities and countries. You become very independent and self-sufficient.

## 8. Contact details (optional)

<b>Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?</b>	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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