



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student Information

<b>Field of study in Wageningen</b>	Health and Society
<b>Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	31/08/2021 until 23/12/2021
<b>Country (exchange)</b>	Finland
<b>City (exchange)</b>	Helsinki
<b>University (exchange)</b>	University of Helsinki
<b>Faculty (exchange)</b>	Social Sciences

## 2. Motivation for exchange

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

I have always been interested in other countries and cultures. I love travelling and discovering new places. I also wanted to discover whether I was capable of building a new life in a new place where you don't know anyone.

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

I have an attraction to the northern countries. I love snow and winter. In addition, the school system in Finland is known to be very good. I then chose Helsinki because I found the best subjects there. And I also thought it would be nice to study in a bigger city.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I made a stopover in Tallinn (Estonia) on the way there. From there, I went by boat. On the way back, I travelled together with a friend via Stockholm and Copenhagen back to the Netherlands. I really enjoyed not going straight to and from Helsinki. Because of this you see as much as possible beautiful and nice places. I also consciously chose not to fly on the way back. If possible, I would go by train! But this doesn't always work out well of course.

## 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	Sociology of Health, Illness and Medicine	5	The aim of the course is to introduce students to current discussions, debates	4	

			and theories in fields of sociology of health and illness and sociology of medicine. The topics include new conceptions of care and patienthood, personalized and preventive medicine and new health technologies.		
<b>2</b>	Comparative regional ethnography I	5	This study unit is concerned with the anthropological research topics and traditions that have evolved in a particular ethnographic area. I did the Latin America area. In addition to introducing core topics that arise in the anthropological literature on a specific geographic area, it aims at learning to think about these topics comparatively.	5	I loved this course. But that is also because I am very interested in Latin America.
<b>3</b>	The Land Question and Sustainable Urban Development	5	Recent urbanization has made the use of urban land a key social issue that does not only concern the access to land, but rising land prices and land-based revenues that are playing an increasing role in inequality. Focusing on the land question, the course investigates the diverse types of ownership and management of urban land, and their effects on land use, land prices, housing, community integration and citizens' rights.	4	
<b>4</b>	Introduction to Sustainability Science	5	The course introduces basic principles of	2	It was too much basic information for me. There

			sustainability science with special reference to its interdisciplinary and systemic dimensions. The theoretical and methodological orientation is clarified through addressing real world sustainability problems like food security, energy production, climate change, access to clean water and other complex or wicked problems.		was not a lot of depth within the course.
<b>5</b>	Introduction to Migration, Ethnicity and (Anti-)Racism	5	Conceptualization of ethnicity and nationalism, colonial/racial histories, race and racism, whiteness, migration and borders, intersectionality, and anti-racism.	2	
<b>6</b>	Sociology of Migration	5	The aim of the course is to gain a critical understanding of the classic and contemporary approaches to migration from a sociological perspective. Lectures cover both key concepts in migration studies and theoretical approaches to migration as a phenomenon and deal with specific themes related to migration.	4	

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

I didn't find the study load enormously high. In Helsinki, they are very focused on self-learning. You are generally obliged to be present in lessons and to participate actively. Discussion moments are used a lot. In general, you don't have exams but only a final assignment such as an essay. I didn't think the academic level was as high as it was in the Netherlands. I did take all master's subjects, which did challenge me a bit.

**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 was in Helsinki during Corona. I had everything online. I did not have much contact with the local students. In general, I liked the teachers very much. They thought along with you and they were easy to approach. I find it difficult to compare with WUR since I had everything online.

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

In Helsinki you have UniCafe. Here you can eat for 2.50 euros if you are a student. You can also take a subscription to the UniSport. I didn't do this myself but a lot of people did and they were positive!

## 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?)**

Finland is an expensive country. So keep in mind that rooms are not very cheap either. When you apply at the university you can also apply for accommodation. You can indicate your preference for a shared room or a studio. Please note that the majority of foreign students end up in studios. And register in time! Otherwise, your chance has gone, because the sooner you register, the greater the chance of being offered a room. Otherwise, you will have to look for yourself and I think there are quite a few other options.

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

Finns are very closed-minded. They like their privacy and will not approach you easily. Also, for example at a bus stop, you should not stand too close because that is not appreciated. However, if you speak to someone, they are always friendly and will always help you. So they are not unfriendly people but just very much like themselves. Furthermore, I don't find the culture very different from the Netherlands.

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

As I said before, Finland is not cheap, just like the rest of the Northern countries. Assume that life will be a lot more expensive. Especially the more luxurious products will be much

more expensive, for example alcohol. But it is not unaffordable. As a student you often get discounts at all kinds of museums, swimming pools etc. So never forget to ask :)

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

Public transport is very well organised. Helsinki has an enormous number of buses, metros, trains and trams. Where I lived, there was a tram to the centre every 5 minutes (although I lived very cheaply). But also friends who lived a bit further away could easily take the bus until late. You can get a discount coupon in Helsinki as a student. This allows you to travel freely within a certain zone. Long-distance trains and buses are also well organised. You can also get a student discount here.

## 6. Free time

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

Lapland in any case. I went there together with ESN. Highly recommended. This was the coolest experience. I also went to Stockholm on the night boat. But also closer, smaller towns are beautiful, like Porvoo. In autumn I would visit a national park. The autumn is beautiful there. Often the connections by train and bus are good. The bus is generally a bit cheaper than the train.

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

A difficult question really. I swam a lot in Helsinki. There is a beautiful old swimming pool, right in the centre. It is called Yrjönkatu Swimming Hall. And also Sompasauna! A great place for a quick sauna and it is free!

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

Just go for a walk through the city without knowing where you are going. You will often discover the most beautiful and enjoyable places at those moments. Helsinki also has a long coastline, so that's nice too. Furthermore, Café Regatta is very nice. A cute cafe by the water.

## 7.Challenges & best moment abroad

**What was a challenge you have experienced?**

I was very homesick at the beginning of my exchange. I found it difficult to find my place in a new city with all these unfamiliar people. I would have preferred to take the plane back home. By talking a lot about it with my parents but also with the people there, I finally got over it. It will surprise you how many people also suffer from homesickness. But homesickness can last a very long time and sometimes be hopeless. I was advised to stay away for at least one month to get over my homesickness. In the end, I am very glad that I stayed and I look back on it only positively.

**What was your best memory abroad?**

Making new friends and all the gifts trips can give you. Especially my trip to Lapland was unforgettable. But it was also so much fun because of the nice and friendly people around me. It's special how quickly you can become so close to people because you depend on each other.

### 8. Contact details (optional)

<b>Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?</b>	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Name/e-mail</b>	Sari van der Meer	