



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	Gezondheid en Maatschappij
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	31-08-2021 until 23-12-2021
Country (exchange)	Finland
City (exchange)	Helsinki
University (exchange)	University of Helsinki
Faculty (exchange)	Social sciences

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I mostly choose to go on study exchange because I really like to be in a new environment where you can discover a new country with its culture and language. It is also a great way to meet new people from all over the world, and it helps you to become more independent. Furthermore, I find it interesting and worthy to experience a different study system that I am used to in the Netherlands.

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

I choose University of Helsinki because of the courses that I found in the course catalogue beforehand and the impression that I got from Helsinki as a vibrant city that has a lot of activities to offer.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

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

I travelled by plane from Amsterdam to Helsinki, which is not the most sustainable way, but it was the fastest and easiest way to get there with all my luggage.

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	Gender, Politics and Society	5	The course will introduce students to central trends and research findings of gender studies in the field of social sciences. The annually organised course with changing topics will familiarise students with mutual connections between gender, politics and society through various concrete thematic perspectives (such as politics, domestic life, working life, economy, science, social policy and international activity).	3	The English of the professor was not so easy to follow, which made it sometimes hard to stay focused during the online lectures.
2	Introduction to Migration, Ethnicity and (Anti-)Racism	5	This course provides an introduction to questions of ethnicity, race, whiteness, migration and anti-racism from a social science perspective. After the course, the students - can identify reasons and consequences of migration - are familiar with key concepts such as ethnicity, race, nation, whiteness and intersectionality - understand the interrelations between embodied experiences, group and identity formations, structural and cultural processes, and global relations - recognize different kinds of racisms and anti-racisms	4	The topics were very interesting and the way of assessment through a 'learning journal' was new to me, but I liked it a lot since it made me reflect more on the subjects during the course than through an exam.
3	Sociology of Health, Illness and Medicine	5	Health and disease are not only biological or medical phenomena. They are socially produced and experienced. Class, gender, ethnicity, work and politics influence who becomes ill. The topics include introduction to classical theories of sociology of health and illness as well as new conceptions of care and patienthood. We discuss paradigm changes such as personalized genomics and preventive medicine	4	This course was a master course and went deeper into subjects that I already knew something about due to my bachelor courses of Health and Society at the WUR. I really liked it, and the teacher was very enthusiastic.

			as well as new health technologies and their implications to patients, health care and sociology.		
4	Welfare state	5	The course outlines the history and development of European and global welfare states and presents theoretical tools for analysing them. The context of welfare state models is used to understand policy and policy instruments by giving a background for summarising issues, policy options, and how they fit into different regimes.	3	With this course I sometimes also had problems with concentrating on the online lectures due to the way our teacher spoke English. The articles however that we had to read for the essay were interesting and I could make a good connection with actualities.
5	Finnish beginner's course for exchange students	3	The topics of the course include introducing and talking about yourself and your family, greetings, getting to know useful phrases when shopping or eating, telling the time and talking about the weather. The topics also include daily activities, living, transport and the immediate surroundings. The goal of the course is to learn to understand simple conversations and short texts about common everyday life topics in Finnish, and to learn to tell the basic things about yourself and your life. Another goal is to learn about the Finnish culture, habits and celebrations.	4	I really enjoyed the Finnish class, since it addressed the language with topics that were very useful in daily life, and every week we also learned something about the Finnish culture. Finnish is a really hard language to learn, but I had fun with trying it!
6	X				

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

Compared to my study at the WUR, I thought that the workload and stress that sometimes occurs with studying was way less here at Helsinki University. The only course that had an exam, was the Finnish course, and the rest of the courses were assessed by one or two essays or a learning journal. I really liked this way of learning, since it is more a constant process instead of studying really hard for an exam in the end of a period. I also liked it better that there was less group work than I usually have with my study in Wageningen.

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?)

The culture of the university is very informal. Just like at the WUR, you can approach lecturers with their first name. A difference with the WUR is that at Helsinki University you get permission easier to hand in your essay later when there are personal issues. I feel like at Helsinki University they have more trust in their students that they don't abuse this possibility, whereas at the WUR this is more strict and you need a very good reason in order to get extension.

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

The University of Helsinki offers a big variety in sport classes and gyms on different locations in the centre and also in the neighbourhoods around it where there are also campuses. They also have 'unicafe' which is a canteen where you can eat lunch and dinner for €2,60 during weekdays. You always have 3 different options for main the main course and there are side dishes you can choose from.

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?)

There are two student housing organisations; HOAS and UniHome. Before coming to Helsinki, you can apply for a room and you get only one room offer which you need to accept. If not, you have to find a room yourself on the private market. I was very lucky with my room close to the centre, since my faculty was also accommodated at the city centre campus. However, you can give a room preference, but you don't have a choice of where you are going to live eventually.

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

Compared to Dutch people, Finnish people are very reserved and don't like to do small talks with strangers and they don't come to sit next to you in the bus or train very fast. Although it may kind of be a stereotype that Finnish people are shy, some (mostly older) people do confirm this. My Finnish teacher also mentioned that this still applies. I also noted that every single person I met, young or old, speaks perfectly English, which is

mostly not the case in the Netherlands. I do realise that this is the case in Helsinki, which is the capital city, and that it is probably not always the same in smaller villages.

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

It is hard to say how much prices differ in general, but overall Finland is definitely more expensive than the Netherlands. You can keep groceries relatively cheap by going to Lidl, but there will always be (random) stuff that is more expensive, such as cucumber and bread. Alcohol is one thing that is for sure way more expensive, especially when you go out for a drink. Also having a coffee in a café is not cheap. I usually paid around €4 for a cappuccino.

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

I lived in close to the centre, so since Helsinki is a very compact city I could do most things by walking. However, I did have a public transport pass for zone A and B, which was €34 a month for students. I think this is a very good deal, since public transport in Helsinki is perfectly organized. You can use it for the train, tram, bus, metro, and ferry. If you want to go to a national park or the airport, you need to pay for zone C, but that doesn't cost very much.

6. Free time

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

Nuoksio national park, Sippoonkorpi national park, Allas sea pool, Sompa sauna, Oodi library, the Old national library, the Island Suomenlinna, café regatta at the sea side, and the senate square with Helsinki cathedral are definitely must sees in and around Helsinki. Some of these things are good to plan for a full day during the weekend, but other things like the sauna you can also just do on an evening during the week.

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

I didn't use a travel guide, so I wouldn't know what is missing :)

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

My tip would be to walk a lot around in the city, because that way you really get to know the way and every time you will discover something new. I always really like to search for small and unique cafés, instead of going to the big chains like starbucks or espresso house. Here are some of my favorite cafés:

- Ihana kahvilla baari
- Johan & Nyström
- Roberts coffee jugend
- Round punavuori

And some nice restaurants:

- Momotoko
- Haru sushi (sushi buffet for only €17 including desert and soft drinks)
- Niska Helsinki
- Fala's = good falafel

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

A challenge I experienced was to sometimes say no to activities when people asked me to join, because you would like to do everything, but sometimes you need to think about yourself and your studies as well. So sometimes it was good to just take some time to work on that and take an evening without so much socializing.

What was your best memory abroad?

I cannot pick just one best memory, since the whole 4 months were amazing. The trips that I made to the Baltic states, Finnish Lapland and Norway were incredible, but also the smaller activities in the city were things I really enjoyed, and of course, all the friendships that I made during the exchange made the whole experience unforgettable.

8. Contact details (optional)

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