

(I am) Erasmus Generation



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ERASMUS FOR STUDENTS

Looking back in time, participating in Erasmus programme was one of my best years at the university. I did it during my 5th year while working on my dissertation. Without a second thought, I applied for a year abroad in a small Swedish town called Falun. I knew little about this place at that time, only that it was famous for ski jumping and my university was just in the neighborhood of ski jumping facilities. To cut a very long story short, living in Sweden was a breakthrough year for me. For the very first time I felt I was studying, not memorizing. I met amazing lecturers with whom we discussed English literature and methodology and each of us was free to express their opinions, no matter how controversial they were. There was not much to study by heart, we were taught to understand and to feel everything. What's more, we were all encouraged to study and to dive into the language. I felt I was able to live, breathe, dream and think in English, despite being surrounded by Swedish language-speakers on a daily basis. I met new people and we became friends for life. 15 years later we still keep in touch and visit each other. Of course, I learnt some Swedish but now I say Jag pratar lite Svenska which means I speak Swedish a little. I experienced Swedish hospitality and food such as lax, köttbullar, kräfter. Since then I have been returning to Sweden with great pleasure.

As my experience was wonderful, during my classes I encourage my students to go abroad as a part of the Erasmus programme as it is always a life-changing journey during which students can experience something extraordinary, learn a brand new language or master the language they already know and make friends from all over the world. Undoubtedly, Erasmus has changed me, allowed me to experience other cultures, to become more open and definitely broadened my mind. I returned to Poland feeling more confident as a student and as a person. I started feeling that I am not only Polish, but I am also a citizen of the European Union and of the world.

ERASMUS FOR EMPLOYEES

This summer when I received an email from our International Office about Erasmus+ Staff Mobility programme and the

opportunity to go abroad, I didn't think for too long. I started the procedure by choosing the country (in my case Ireland), the course (a course for teachers) and the school (the Linguaviva Center in Dublin). Several documents and many emails later, I got the approval! I sent the last e-mail to the school in Dublin (Anna and Caroline – thank you for replying to my countless emails) and all was confirmed. I was on cloud nine! I booked my accommodation and flights; finally, I was ready to go.

I felt very excited about going to Dublin which for me is like second home. I was happy that I would also be able to see some of my Irish friends. However, I must admit that being a teacher for almost 20 years (with more than 8 years at our university) I was wondering (maybe quite boldly) how much I could learn from the course and in what way it would affect my own teaching methods. I decided not to expect anything and just to go with the (Irish) flow.

Our two-week programme was well-planned and packed with a variety of classes and activities. The day was divided into morning sessions (in the classroom) and afternoon session (somewhere else in Dublin). My group was very small – only 4 of us – me, Agnieszka and Beata from Kraków and Ilona from the Czech Republic. We were all very experienced and sociable teachers and we got 4 amazing tutors: Ian, Aidan, John and Stuart. From day one I felt that this course would be very special and I looked forward to getting up early, walking to school and attending classes every day. Together with the girls we had our routine for the next 2 weeks – morning classes, coffee break at our favourite place – Perch Kiosk (best baristas who after 2 days knew which coffee each of us wanted), classes, lunch



The last day of school (graduation) with Aidan, Stuart and John in the background, and Ilona, Agnieszka, Beata and Anna



Anne's Lane just off South Anne Street in the city centre – the installation of colourful umbrellas outside Zozimus bar makes the street look brighter

break, afternoon session. Every day was different and filled with classes that were extremely engaging. The course was a great mixture of methodology and Irish culture. We discussed things such as teaching vocabulary, speaking or pronunciation as well as story mapping, the history of English language and different educational systems. We also covered methods such as CLIL (content and language integrated learning), PBL (project-based learning) and CBL (content-based learning). It was really fascinating to discover that we all perceive education in a similar way and despite coming from different countries and backgrounds, we all share the same ideas, methods and principles. Since all of us were really interested in Ireland, the course also consisted of topics such as Irish history, literature, mythology, and of course Gaelic language.

Although I know Dublin quite well, I really enjoyed our afternoon classes during which I rediscovered some of Dublin's landmarks. Among many places, we visited Dublin Castle which once used to be a Viking settlement and later headquarters of the English/British administration, Chester Beatty Museum with its amazing collection of exhibits from all over the world, National Museum of Ireland with a display of Old Croghan Man – a well-preserved Irish Iron Age bog body or Collins Barracks which guided us through the Easter Rising, Irish War of Independence and the biography of Michael Collins. We also took the opportunity to travel outside Dublin and visited Newgrange which is a prehistoric monument, a grand passage tomb from 3200 BC making it older than Stonehenge and the pyramids in Egypt.

HOW DID I BENEFIT FROM STAFF MOBILITY?

As a teacher, having a second experience of the Erasmus programme was great for me. I returned to Gdańsk truly inspired and motivated, 100% ready to start a new academic year, with new energy and positive sparks. Staff Mobility in Du-

blin, meeting outstanding teachers and classmates opened my mind even more, gave me this much needed “kick” and good vibes which online teaching took away for a while.

I had a chance to rediscover Dublin and I fell in love with the city even more. But more importantly, I also rediscovered and redefined myself as a teacher – I became more confident in my teaching techniques and methods and I know that if you put your heart and soul into this profession, you will do it well. We all agreed that being a teacher is an amazing job as we help others to pursue their dreams and we make all other professions possible.

WOULD I GO AGAIN?

Definitely, without any doubts. I am sure all teachers (and especially language teachers) should go abroad and participate in teachers' training courses as a part of their self-development. It is a great chance to meet colleagues from other countries and share some of our best ideas with each other.

WERE THERE ANY DRAWBACKS?

Well, maybe just the rain. However, when travelling to Ireland one should always have an umbrella or a raincoat and be ready for weather changes.

And finally *go raibh míle maith agat* to all the people who made this experience possible: Dawid and Ewa – thank you for giving me this amazing opportunity; Ian, Aidan, John and Stuart – you are my teaching super stars and thank you for bringing all the Irish craic to the classroom; Agnieszka, Beata, Ilona – August in Dublin wasn't our last meeting – see you in Kraków and the Czech Republic! ■

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Dublin Castle and the Fleeting Sculpture exhibition by an Irish sculptor Daniel Doyle