

Saint-Petersburg State University
International Relations Office

EXCHANGE STUDENTS' REPORT

Please complete this form and send it to Scientific and Academic Cooperation/Students Exchange Dept.
nechaeva@ir.pu.ru, fax +7 /812/ 3240788. Thank you.

TO BE FILLED OUT ELECTRONICALLY

The international experience you have gained while the exchange period at St.Petersburg University is the unique practice you will remember all your life. It can also help other students when they are planning for their exchange. To make sure that prospective students have a chance to learn from your experience you are required to submit the **Exchange Students' Report**.

Please complete the form and **return by email to nechaeva@ir.pu.ru**.

When filling in the returned student report try to remember the sort of things that you wanted to know before you went on exchange, be honest in your responses and try to avoid simply giving yes/no answers.

Please do not hesitate to contact Scientific and Academic Cooperation/Students Exchange Dept. staff if there are any issues you would like to discuss regarding your exchange experience.

Name:	Elena Baranova
Home faculty at SPSU	Faculty of Sociology
Exchange Study Period	01.09.2009 – 23.12.2009
Host Institution	University of Turku, Finland

Do you give permission for prospective exchange students to contact you if they have questions? **Yes**

If yes, please give your preferred email address: radiss@rambler.ru

The Host Institution

What influenced your decision to select the host institution that you went to?

I heard a lot about opportunities to study in Finland, that they have a lot of programs in English, that it is a part of their educational strategy to involve foreign students. It is not required to know national language, like, for example, in Germany or in Spain. Moreover, a short distance from home was also important (because of family issues).

Please describe the location of the host institution.

University of Turku is situated almost in the centre of the city. All the buildings of the University are concentrated in one territory in order to have an opportunity to take courses from different faculties. It is very close to student village, so you don't have to spend a lot of time to your way to university.

Please describe the courses that you took while on exchange. What were their pros and cons?

I took courses devoted to different spheres: Finnish history, Nordic Welfare State system, European Union politics, education and equality issues. Some courses were aimed at developing language skills (English, German), they were held by native speakers.

Some of the most important pros, to my mind, are orientation to practice, present situation and opportunity to attend classes held by native speakers.

Cons – some courses provide you with not too deep knowledge (a bit superficial).

How did course content, class size, marking, etc compare with St. Petersburg State University?

Educational system in Turku differs a lot from ours. Some of the points:

1. Electiveness of the courses
2. Written exams
3. You have officially an opportunity to pass the exam 3 times if you are not satisfied with your grade.
4. About the content – sometimes it is a bit superficial, however more practice oriented
5. Relations between students and teachers are more democratic
6. Tutoring system is of great help, especially at the beginning of exchange period

Did you find the academic and international office staff helpful?

Yes, academic and international office staff was very patient and helpful.

Please describe the resources available to exchange students (i.e. computers, the library).

All such facilities were at a very good level. Exchange students can attend all libraries, there is quite a lot of resources in English and a helpful staff.

Well-equipped computer labs are available, there is wi-fi everywhere. All the rooms in student village have also access to Internet (free).

Did you experience any language or cultural difficulties at the host institution?

No. Finns are good at English and well-disposed to exchange students. Moreover, exchange students communicate perhaps even more with other exchange students, but not Finns. It doesn't provoke difficulties, it enriches your experience and knowledge about different nations.

Do you think that going on exchange contributed to your academic and personal development? If so, how?

I'm sure about it. I think that going on exchange helps to become more open to new ideas and experience, to see a wider perspective.

Practical

Accommodation

Please describe the accommodation options available to exchange students.

2 types of accommodation: shared apartment (2-3 people live in a flat, separate rooms, sharing kitchen and bathroom, on the periphery of the city, but still not far from university) and student village (separate room with bathroom, sharing only kitchen, very close to university).

How expensive were the accommodation options?

A room in student village cost about 270 euros, in shared apartment - less

What type of accommodation would you recommend?

I lived in student village, but visited some friends who lived in shared apartment. Both accommodation options are good (renovated, clean, Internet access etc.), but I'd recommend student village (closer to university, more intensive communication with other exchange students)

Food

Did you have self-catering facilities or were meals provided with your accommodation?

Usually breakfast and dinner we cooked ourselves, but during the day there was a possibility to have a lunch in university cafeterias (quite good and cheap one)

Was food expensive?

Food is quite expensive in Finland (in comparison with other European countries), but the sum of the grant was enough.

Where is the best place to shop?

A lot of people used "Lidl" or "Prisma" supermarkets: they are big, cheap, but the location is less convenient than, for example, "K-market" or "S-market" (there are a lot of them all over the city)

How much does it cost to eat out at a local restaurant/café?

It depends, but at least 10-15 euros

Transport

Please describe the local transport options.

Good bus system. A lot of students use bicycles as far as the city is not so big.

Was it expensive to use local transport? Please give an example of the costs.

The price of the ticket is 2,5 euros, you can use it for 2 hours.
It is possible to buy a student card – the price is about 30 euros.

Personal Safety

Did you find the city in which you stayed safe?

Yes

Do you have any safety advice for other exchange students?

No, I felt myself really safe there.

Highlights

Briefly describe the highlights of your exchange experience.

Knowledge in the fields that were not mentioned at home university.
Relations with people from different countries and cultures.
Language skills development.

Problems

Briefly describe any problems you experienced and any suggestions you may have to help others avoid them.

I recommend to read all the instructions carefully, not to be afraid of asking everybody (your tutor, international office etc.) in case of doubts and to make all formal procedures carefully and on time.

Other Comments

Do you have any further comments?

I think it is really worth going on exchange in spite of the difficulties you can face afterwards (for example, to pass all the exams in a short period of time)

The information given in this Report CAN BE PUBLISHED on the Internet ___ Yes _____

Thank you for taking the time to share your exchange experiences in this report.

Please save your report as a **Word document** and email a copy to nechaeva@ir.pu.ru

Date: 23.02

Name: Elena Baranova