
ERASMUS - Hidden Meaning in Each Letter of This Word

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Adriána Peťková, who wrote the following essay to celebrate the 30 years anniversary of the Erasmus programme, is an Erasmus student of Journalism from Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. In summer semester 2016/2017, she is hosted by Charles University's Faculty of Social Sciences.

The European exchange student programme, Erasmus, has reached an excellent age! It is old enough to look around the world, but still young enough to continue. And even though it is already grown-up, I am sure that its existence brings a lot of joy to a slightly younger generation. The programme has been a part of university students' lives, and of course not just theirs, since 1987 and it currently takes place in thirty-three countries. The "Plus", which belongs to the Erasmus programme since 2014, has enriched me during my stay in the capital of the Czech Republic in various ways. I have connected a few words with the Erasmus experience so that every expression begins with one letter of the word Erasmus:

Encouragement – the Erasmus programme has shown me that everything is possible and I can handle anything. It has giving me courage in everyday challenges. I don't write just about the fact that I have learnt to jump to the right side of the escalator in the underground to make space to those passing or now knowing my way around The Old Town without getting lost. I have learnt to be more self-confident, self-sufficient and brave with the knowledge that every single day can bring new and exciting experiences and possibilities. Erasmus has encouraged me to spend time in another city, situated in the neighbouring country, while simultaneously strengthening my passion for travelling. I believe that it is very important to be in touch with the world in this way. It is a great opportunity, especially when I have a chance to stay longer than a few days.

Responsibility – to be part of the Erasmus programme doesn't just mean 'have fun all the time' (however this might depend on the personality, certainly). At least sometimes there is a need for one to take some responsibility and learn to rely on yourself. From acceptance to the programme until the end, you find yourself filling in many documents and that requires attention. I have realized that this is a necessity, which is reinforced during this period of time. This is because you must make your own decisions and fulfil obligations and responsibilities by yourself.

Art - Prague offers a wide variety of art. For example, the National Gallery fulfils its important role by presenting Czech, and world, art pieces; from famous creations to those by not very well known artists. The National Gallery is not only attractive for tourists, but for everyone who is interested in various kinds of art, even for someone who is a mere spectator. On the other hand, thanks to the many galleries of contemporary art we can get to know interesting reflections of today's time sketched from another angle or we can simply become familiar with modern art. And the theatre! Unfortunately, I have not had the chance to get acquainted with the National Theatre building from the inside yet, but I have fallen in love with The Estates Theatre because of its magnificent appearance, and also by artistic performances held there. Lucerna (cinema, café, dancing hall, etc.) is a great place for enjoying the historical atmosphere of the city, too. There are endless places where one can experience art in the city! This makes the city rich in events because there is always something to do. If the word Erasmus contained one more "e", one can almost guarantee it would stand for events.

Study – I attended courses of Media and Communications Studies and I am so thankful for them. Although my time at Charles University is going to finish in a short while, it has given me a lot of skills and knowledge.

Moments – too many to talk about in just a few short pages but to mention a few: pleasant times of walking around the city; looking around from the tram window and seeing the Charles's Bridge; watching the sun shining while having a picnic in a park. Watching people pedalling a water bike on the Vltava River. The atmosphere of Prague cafés. The innovations of Czech design presented in showrooms. Dancing to my favourite music at parties. Quiet time in libraries. Relaxing at the dormitory. The list goes on and on, and is specific for every person. They are unrepeatable moments, which I have had the chance to enjoy for a few months thanks to Erasmus.

Understanding - I think that it is a generally applicable premise that people have a chance to grow through attending the Erasmus programme. Understanding is connected with individual people but it can apply also to groups or entire cultures. It is very important to learn about someone else's culture, not just to gain a general knowledge but also to enable the transfer of information and the convergence of cultures.

Summer semester (my Erasmus period) – it includes learning a new place, new people and creating new friendships. It includes being in this beautiful city, which is loved not only by tourists – but by everyone who lives here because I definitely don't feel like a tourist here anymore.

So, Erasmus, as you celebrate your 30's birthday I would like to wish you success for the future, and hope it lasts for a long time! I hope you remain an imaginal bridge which connects people and cultures! I think that it is a great opportunity for each of us to be a part of, even if it may only be for a short time. This essay won the first place of Charles University's competition "30 years of the Erasmus programme", category "Your Erasmus Story."

Molly Young is a student of History and Politics from the University of Northumbria in the U.K. She is currently studying at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. She enjoys reading about World affairs and international relation studies. Living in a new city has brought her new experiences and taught her to go for every opportunity presented to her and this why she joined the iForum.

