

IEREST

Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers

Module 2 - Introduction

The three activities collected in the second module are designed to be taught when students are abroad. They aim to help them make sense of what they are experiencing, as well as engage with the place where they live and its various communities. The activities are titled:

1. 24h Erasmus life;
2. Intercultural geography;
3. Experiencing (interculturality through) volunteering.

This module has two central ideas, and two methodological orientations. On the one hand it invites students to reflect on their own lives abroad in terms of emotions, relationships, and appraisal of their pre-departure expectations; on the other hand it creates opportunities to explore the new environment and meet different people. Methodologically this means that the activity integrates a more self-oriented analysis conducted through the writing of personal journals with forms of field work variously inspired by ethnography. Overall, the driving themes of ‘non-essentialism’ and ‘multiple identities’ assume here a new relevance, as they are introduced to students on the basis of their first-hand experiences.

Students’ writing of their personal journals is the leitmotiv of 24h Erasmus life, which encourages students to reflect on their actual experiences of: (1) the emotional dimension of living abroad, linked to the concept of ‘culture shock’; (2) students’ social contacts in the light of their felt or imposed needs (e.g., the need to have ‘local’ friends); (3) the academic life in the host institution; and (4) the language experiences, including identity-related aspects of language proficiency. Teachers are invited to choose one or more of the suggested topics, in any order, to better address their students’ interests and needs. They may also wish to refer to Exploring narrative in intercultural mobility contexts, to expand the reflections on journal writing with broader considerations about ‘non-essentialising’ narratives.

Intercultural geography creates original opportunities for students to become acquainted with the host environment - the place or region, its neighbourhoods, the university. Thanks to an ethnography-based approach, students are encouraged to go beyond dominant and simplified representations of the place they live in, and to see the host environment through the eyes of others (both other mobile students and more permanent residents).

Field work is also included in Experiencing (interculturality through) volunteering. Here students are invited to explore the host society from a different perspective, that of volunteering. Volunteering presents students with opportunities to engage with goal-oriented local communities, and to practice their language, social, and job skills. By balancing field-based and in-class tasks, this activity provides students with the chance to experience intercultural communication in the workplace, while also benefiting from a safe class environment. As in the case of 24h Erasmus life, journal writing is used again to link experience and reflection, field-work and class work.

This second module includes the following learning objectives and corresponding outcomes. As for module 1, only the relevant objectives and outcomes are reported for the single activities.

	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
1	Reflect on each person's uniqueness but also similarities, and on the fact that difference is not necessarily negative and that sameness is not necessarily positive either.	Recognise and explain the variety and complexity that exist among individuals in social groups.
2	Understand how different types of identities (gender, age, racial, ethnic, national, geographical, historical, linguistic, etc.) impact on communication with others.	Be able to explain ways in which different types of identities (gender, age, racial, ethnic, national, geographical, historical, linguistic, etc.) impact on communication with others.
3	Reflect on how communication in academic communities is shaped by differing histories, expectations and attitudes towards learning.	Interpret their opinions on the academic systems also in the light of their awareness of how communication in academic communities is shaped by differing histories, expectations and attitudes towards learning.
4	Explore and reflect on their emotional reactions (positive or negative) towards living abroad, going beyond easy attributions of their emotional states to cultural differences.	Analyse and describe their own emotional states and reactions and assign reasons to them beyond easy attributions to cultural differences.
5	Develop curiosity towards and further	Demonstrate willingness to engage with

	knowledge about the new environment and the people who inhabit it.	the local environment and the people who inhabit it.
6	Examine how using another language can affect one's self-image (and capacity to project an image) and feeling of belonging.	Interpret how their capabilities in using another language affects their self-image (and their capacity to project it), as well as their feelings of belonging.