

Erasmus case study

Nursing in Cyprus: overcoming the language barrier

Working in a Cypriot hospital with a limited knowledge of Greek would be a challenging situation for most people. Gillian Murray, a nursing student from Glasgow, explains how Erasmus helped her overcome the language barrier and feel like one of the locals.

In the summer of 2012 I jetted off with my best friend, and fellow nursing student, to the beautiful island of Cyprus. I still remember the buzz of meeting at Glasgow airport, laden with suitcases and a healthy amount of nerves.

When we arrived, we knew we were in paradise by the rush of hot air, the beaming sun and the sound of the waves. Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) helped us settle into our apartment and showed us around the amazing city of Limassol, our new home.

We had the next couple of days to relax and familiarise ourselves with the area before commencing our nursing placement in the hospital. Being the first nursing students from Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) to go on an exchange to CUT, we knew we were ambassadors of our university and to nursing students back home.

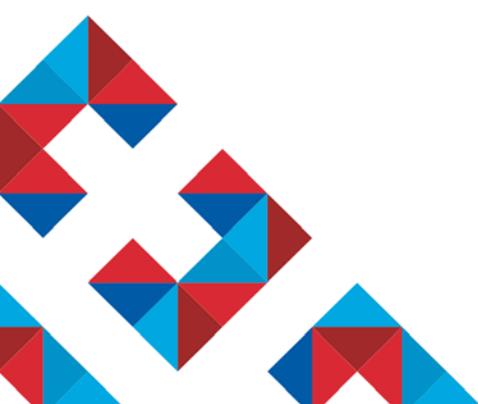
On arrival at the hospital, we were greeted by friendly staff and a mentor from CUT who happily showed us around the departments and introduced us to members of the nursing and medical staff. We were shown the ward where we would be working and after some orientation we began to help with caring for the patients.

What became evident very quickly was that although the majority of the staff had a good understanding of English, many of the patients did not. Immediately I felt guilty about my limited Greek and, although staff assisted in translating, I felt that it was my duty as a nurse to understand my patients' needs. I realised that I had taken having English as my first language for granted and I regretted not learning more Greek before arriving.

With those thoughts in mind, I was really looking forward to the Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) which CUT had arranged for us. Throughout the next four weeks our teacher, Costas, took us through the basics of Greek, then onto more complex grammar. In Scotland my high school did not make taking a language subject compulsory and so learning a new language from scratch was challenging.

Costas was excellent and explained words and phrases in scenarios which we could use in everyday life. We also met other Erasmus students and travelled all over Cyprus, visiting temples, amphitheatres, monasteries, markets and mountains; all whilst incorporating our learning and conversing with locals.

After the course I returned to my placement in the Cypriot hospital where I used my new language



skills. I now understood essential requests, like when a patient needed some water, pain relief or to sit up in bed. I even started to teach some patients a few Scottish words. People were so happy when I spoke to them in Greek and I went so brown they often mistook me for a local. Yes, Scottish people can tan!

On return to Scotland I felt like a new person. Glasgow is particularly diverse, and in the hospital where I work, I regularly come into contact with patients whose first language is not English. In particular I have found my non-verbal communication skills have improved from the time I worked in the Greek hospital, prior to learning the language. I have even met a few Greek patients who me.

It gives me great pride to say that earlier this year I was offered a place for the MSc in Public Health/Environmental Health at both GCU and CUT, achieving a fully paid scholarship at GCU. Throughout my interviews and application, my Erasmus experience shined through. It has had an impact on every part of my life, both personally and professionally, and my enthusiasm for it was evident in every interview and personal statement. Without it, I would not be where I am today.

Although I have mainly focused on the language side of Erasmus, the whole experience was truly amazing. Living independently; making new friends all over the world; learning to budget; understanding health issues in another country; learning new nursing techniques; immersing yourself in a new culture... I could honestly go on for days.

At the end of my time in Cyprus I felt like a real local! I will never forget the day I had to leave my Erasmus family, my new brothers and sisters, but one year on and we are still as close as ever. To anyone reading this that hasn't been on Erasmus - DO IT! It will be the best experience of your life.

Comenius case study

Belfast Boys' Model School

When pupils from inner city Belfast embarked on a European partnership, they discovered a whole new world of employment opportunities.

Finding a job after finishing school is the main concern of most final year pupils. All the more so when they are socially and economically disadvantaged students from an area, like Belfast, of high unemployment.

'Go on employ ME! was life changing for many of our students,' says Ian Patterson, Head of Learning Technology at Belfast Boys' Model School. 'It let students realise they could look at Europe as a whole when it comes to employment, instead of only looking inwards at their local area. They could now open up their job searching to other European countries.'

The project focused on employment skills and opportunities, by introducing pupils to the concept of a European job market. Along with partners from Spain, Germany and Norway, students looked at local and European job markets and investigated what was required to gain employment in each country.

They researched local companies and focused on specific roles within these companies to see what skills were required. At project meetings they used their findings to formulate standardised interview questions and conducted mock interviews. They gathered phrases in each other's languages to produce a 'survival guide' that could be used when moving abroad to work.

'The project stimulated a common approach to search for employment. The fact that students worked with other Europeans during project meetings gave them a better understanding of what it means to work with people from other countries.'

Ian decided to register the project on the eTwinning portal, so the project's Twinspace could act as both a project website and a means of communicating with partners.

'Our Twinspace was a fast and efficient way of transferring and sharing information between all partners. The students could also upload personal profiles, so fellow students from partner countries could get a better feeling for who they were working with.'

While the project focussed on employment opportunities, Ian feels the impact is far more wide-reaching. 'It enabled the students to feel more European. It gave them a European perspective by raising awareness of the opportunities that are available. It also encouraged them to be more sympathetic to those coming to their country to find work. So it hopefully achieved greater intercultural understanding and tolerance too.'

Youth in Action case study

Hijacking the Radiowaves

A group of young people from a small mining town in Leeds, hijacked a schools online community, Radiowaves, and took on the role of new correspondents connecting Europe digitally.

At a time of economic troubles, social mobility is a huge problem across Europe. For a group of young people in Leeds, who are from single parent or low-income families, the chance of coming into contact with young people from other European countries is a rare occurrence. For many, due to the resentment of migrant workers, particularly from Eastern Europe, the desire to mix has never appealed.

With funding from the Youth in Action programme, DigitalMe, a not-for-profit digital technology organisation, partnered with schools in the UK, Slovenia, Latvia, Poland and Germany and offered 60 young people a chance to meet online and learn new media skills, whilst exploring another part of Europe.

Working with an online mentor these young people were given the role of news reporters and tasked with reporting on themes of national and EU identity, democracy, culture and conflict. Young people developed research skills and interview techniques when they collected opinions from the wider public and politicians in their local areas.

The project culminated in Network News Week, which allowed young people a chance to put their country on the map and share their work with their European peers. Hosted on the social network for schools, Radiowaves (which reaches an audience of 40,000 young people), reporters in each country shared their stories with the world. From the UK there was coverage of the Royal Wedding and tuition fees and in Latvia, the harsh winter conditions.

Through participating in this project, young people learned new communication and social media skills. For many, it was the first time they had planned, produced and edited their own films, sharing them with an online community. They also learned to upload and promote their articles, as well as writing captivating and engaging blogs allowing young people from as far away as New Zealand to comment on their work.

Alison Booth, from DigitalMe, explains the importance of this project: “Not only has this project tackled the problems around social mobility but it has equipped these young people with transferable skills, from researching to writing to communicating with other people from different backgrounds, allowing them to become more culturally aware. They have gained a wealth of skills in new media which they can use not only in their education but also their future careers.”

Youth Democracy Projects support young people’s participation in democratic life. It aims to encourage the active participation of young people within their local, regional or national communities or at international level.

Leonardo case study

100% increase in employment and education opportunities for students on mobility

European mobility is the foundation on which the LLP has been built, providing opportunities for millions of people of all ages, to develop skills and competencies, increasing their employability in today's labour market. The LLP offers another dimension to education and training in the UK, enabling lifelong learning through the sharing and exchanging of educational practices across Europe. Mobility opportunities will continue to be a key feature in the new programme under Key Action 1 Learning Mobility for Individuals for more than 4 million people, with an organisation led approach similar to those currently offered in the Leonardo and Erasmus Mobility projects.

Change Agents UK have run a number of successful mobility projects since 2007. An environmental charity, the organisation has specialised in helping young people and graduates to find employment mainly in the fields of conservation and sustainable development. With an organisational-led approach to mobility, their organisation links their Leonardo project to the strategic vision and environmental priorities of the organisation. Change Agents UK also tracks their mobility participants, and where 86% of participants had been looking for employment for a minimum of three to six months, after their placement 100% of participants found relevant employment or entered into further education within three months of their placement. Their mobility project also won the 2013 National Council for Work Experience Award for Best Internship for the quality, added-value, innovation and positive impact demonstrated by the programme.

In a recent Leonardo Mobility project, young people were able to undertake work placements with seven different partners in five countries including Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, and the Azores, Portugal. The twelve week placements took the form of internships with a variety of organisations including higher education institutions, organisations with a local or national scope and those working at a European level. Emma's placement at vocational training centre for the construction trades, Ausbildungszentrum-Bau, (AZB) in Hamburg placed a particular emphasis on the development of sustainable building practices. Emma's brief was to support the AZB project management team in the analysis and development of modules for vocational training in sustainable building education in the sector.

Whilst on her placement, Emma undertook a City and Guilds accredited professional development award in project management offered by Change Agents UK. This allowed her to obtain national validation of her skills which she could show to employers in the UK. She was assigned a mentor who supported her remotely during her placement and was successful in achieving her reward as a result. Following the placement Emma gained employment at a leading environmental consultancy in the UK as a sustainable business officer.

Grundtvig case study

Opening doors to Europe's older generations

The Grundtvig programme brings together partnerships of adult learners from across Europe in a range of activities from Workshops and Visits and Exchanges, to Senior Volunteering Partnerships. With today's increasing older population and people living excluded from society, lifelong learning is essential to providing the skills and support needed to keep communities connected and doors open to all Europe's generations.

Claudia Mollzahn is one example of how individual mobility can provide both professional and personal benefits for participants and support social cohesion at the same time. Through Grundtvig Visits and Exchanges funding she was able to undertake a job shadow at Die Macherei, the education and occupation provision of the Evangelisches Johannesstift organisation in Berlin. The department's provision is aimed at adults who wish to be active outside their home environment and also provides a wide range of services for those with special needs. This focus on inclusiveness, with disability defined as a social rather than an individual issue, was one which Claudia was keen to learn more about from her European colleagues. In particular, the approach to the training of staff providing adult education for learners with special needs with Germany was recognised for its well-structured apprenticeship and training systems.

Claudia works at the Touch Trust charity in Cardiff which provides unique creative movement programmes for individuals with learning disabilities. The trust provides a structured programme of hourly sessions which have proved to work well with people with profound and multiple disabilities and people on the autistic spectrum. In her role, Claudia is responsible for provision in the Touch Trust College of the Arts, which uses a more flexible approach to treatments including music and dance projects, whilst also ensuring participants are given consistency in their individual programmes. During her job shadowing, she took part in a range of activities to compare working practices and strategic development in Die Macherei with her work at the Touch Trust College of the Arts. Claudia met with the head of the social technical school which provides vocational qualifications in the field of disability working with the elderly, which complements theory modules with on-the-job-training.

In Berlin, Claudia was able to improve a number of competencies around her own professional development. Developing her language skills, Claudia felt encouraged to read up on the latest research in her field and has been motivated to continue developing her skills in the future. One of her main learning outcomes was linked to staff management and communication. As a result of her visit, post 19 provision for participants is becoming a more separate entity within her organisation. Claudia and her colleagues are aiming to set up a project which will extend the current three day college and provide the opportunity for participants to join a Touch Trust Ensemble. This will work in an inclusive way and make use of participant's individual strengths to provide more intensive learning provision towards performance, music and dance.

In the future, Claudia also hopes she will be able to extend the work done by Touch Trust into the field of traumatic brain injury, and develop the potential for joint work with a newly opened stroke rehabilitation unit at Llandough Hospital in Cardiff .

Transversal case study

Competing in the maths Olympics

The Transversal programme has enabled more than 1500 UK participants to benefit from a European Study Visit. Professionals from the education and training sector across the UK have taken the opportunity to share knowledge and develop their expertise from visiting institutions in another European country, informing and making a change to the policies and practices within their own organisations.

Justin Kerr is a Staff Officer at the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland and works within the Skills Policy Branch on the production and implementation of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Strategy for Northern Ireland known as 'Success through Skills'. His recent European Study Visit to Sofia, Bulgaria, was an opportunity to enhance his skills, knowledge and professionalism in this area by gaining greater experience and knowledge from another country.

From his Visit, Justin was able to take away a number of successful outcomes. These ranged from developing a network of key contacts from other European regions to gaining more knowledge of the education systems in Bulgaria and other regions, all whilst building both his personal and professional development.

The participants from nine different European countries, including several Heads of Schools, were looking to learn from European colleagues, focusing on the development of key competencies and good practices of teaching mathematics and science in comprehensive schools.

Justin wanted to achieve departmental objectives which included developing links with other European regions to help implement recommendations in its STEM strategy and to gain enhanced knowledge of educational systems throughout Europe. Participants gave presentations with background knowledge of the key priorities of each country allowing the group to speak about the issues in their organisations and to raise questions.

In Sofia the participants had the chance to visit both primary and secondary schools to see how theory is put into practice. The group saw how gifted children were encouraged in science and maths as they visited a secondary school to learn how staff worked with the most able students. They learned staff did this by holding various specialist maths competitions known as 'Maths Olympics' to stretch pupils' ability.

Across Bulgaria extracurricular maths classes are also offered to more gifted students, especially for those taking part in such competitions. All students are given the opportunity to stay in school in the afternoon for additional studies, and the group visited a primary school where 95% of pupils took advantage of extra maths classes.

The group also went to the National Science and Mathematics High School, a secondary school which specialised in Science and Mathematics. This was particularly useful as all of the participants felt this level of specialism could not be found in schools in their own countries.

Now that he has returned to the UK, Justin has shared what he has learned with departmental colleagues, and disseminated his knowledge to the relevant STEM delivery groups.