

My Erasmus Experience in the University of Leipzig (Universität Leipzig)

English philology BSP student`s Laura Fedotova story

My Erasmus experience started in the third year, when I applied for the exchange program with a thought: 'If not now, then most probably never'. And let me tell you, I do not regret this decision as it was an amazing experience. Truth to be told, it wasn't perfect all the way through, but then again, nothing really is.

I started my fourth year of B.A. studies in Germany, in a lovely city called Leipzig. When I first arrived there I had the pleasure of spending the first couple of days with local students, with whom I lived till I got settled in my own place. And the first surprise was how trustful and welcoming they were to me and my friend, who also came from the University of Latvia to study there as an Erasmus. Not only did they showed us around the town, but also lend us a couple of bicycles so that we would be able to explore on our own. Because if you don't go by bicycle in Leipzig – you are not a real student. The second thing I was pleasantly surprised by was how big, but uncrowned and green the city was. Even though the city is quite big, I never got the feeling that people can't even walk on the streets without bumping into each other, which is what you immediately feel when returning to Riga, for instance. The same goes for the public transportation, which I still miss quite dearly. Always on time and always you had a place to sit, not like at 7 in the morning when you want to get to Riga city centre.

The first impressions about the university I gained in the first week when the enrolment procedure was to take place. The main campus seemed huge and modern with very post-modern elements in its architecture, for instance, a glass and steel church facade adjacent to the campus as a reminder of the actual church which stood there before WW2. Later I had the pleasure of studying in the spacious amphitheatre like lecture halls and two of the biggest university libraries – Bibliotheca Albertina and the Campus Library, which was situated on 5 floors and available for studies 24h daily. However, the studying experience wouldn't have been so pleasurable without the amazing professors there. It could be clearly felt that in the Anglistik department each of the lecturers love their job immensely, they knew how to involve students, capture their interest and inspire them for doing every single task and attending every single lecture, because the subjects were very exciting. My absolute favourites were Introduction to Literary Analysis, the Four Nations: National Identities in the British Isles, Methods and Theories of Literary Analysis, and Linguistic Approaches to Humour. While attending the lectures I got the impression that each subjects is closely linked to other subjects, and that the knowledge gained in one can be further applied in the next. And it held true not only for subjects taught in the department of Anglistik, but also in other study programs, for example, regional studies, which I attended for purposes of improving my knowledge in German. However, the most valuable experience of practically using the language was when speaking with other students, both local and Erasmus.

Regarding the language use I experience a slight cultural shock, because in most of the institutions people spoke German with you, and also Erasmus students mostly were fluent in this language, so it was often used for communication, not to mention that you had to speak German in shops and on streets. Even though I

do not feel immense improvements regarding my proficiency in German, I still feel that I am much more comfortable to try and speak it in order to express myself, which I didn't have the courage to do before.