

CULTURAL SURPRISES IN EUROPE

After living in Latvia for two and a half years, I thought I understood European culture.



I used to think Latvian people were quite reserved or distant.



During a BIP project group work.

Hey, do you need help with this part?



But I met a Latvian participant who completely changed my impression.



This project is exciting! Let's make it creative!



Yes! And we can share ideas openly — no pressure!



I was amazed by how open, expressive, and welcoming they were.



This experience broadened my perspective and showed me how diverse European cultures truly are.



THE CHALLENGE OF WORKING ACROSS CULTURES

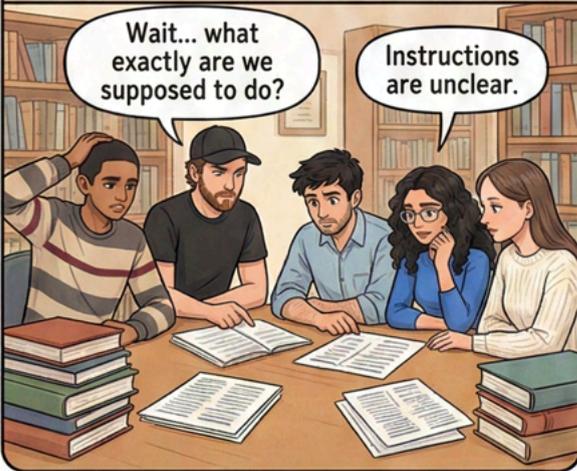
The most challenging part of this experience was working in a multicultural team. An first time.



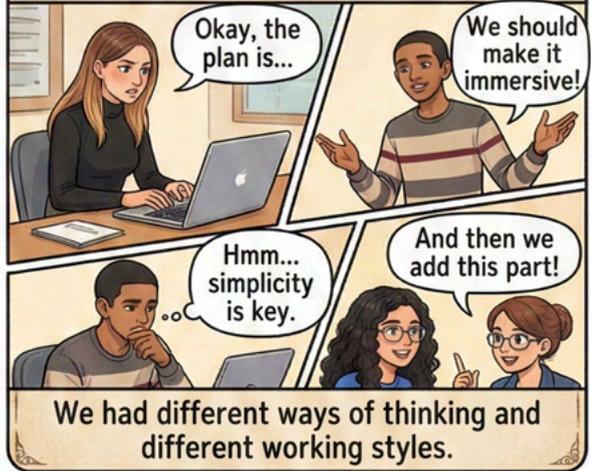
Strangers at First.
We did not know each other beforehand.



Confusion About Tasks.



Different Working Styles.



There were even age gaps and cultural differences that created barriers.



We're running out of time.

Let's try to understand each other first.



Despite everything, we worked together on three small projects.



It was not always easy, but it became one of the most valuable learning experiences.



Most Valuable Lesson: Encouraging Every Voice

Even though I was already speaking from the beginning, I noticed something.



Many of us were holding back our ideas.



If we all stay quiet, we won't reach our full potential.



What does everyone think? I'd really like to hear your ideas.



You had a good point earlier — can you share it?



Once someone creates a safe space, others begin to speak.



Open communication transformed our teamwork.



The most valuable lesson I learned was not just to speak — but to encourage every voice to be heard.



What have been the most significant cultural differences or surprises you have encountered?

As a Vietnamese student who has been living in Latvia for two and a half years, I used to feel that Latvian people were quite reserved or distant. However, during this project, I met a Latvian participant who was very warm and friendly, which completely changed my previous impression. I was also positively surprised by how open, expressive, and welcoming the Italian and Cypriot participants were. This experience truly broadened my perspective and helped me see the diversity within European cultures.

What was the most challenging part of this experience?

The most challenging part was working in a team composed of people from different cultural backgrounds who did not know each other beforehand. In my team, there was me (Vietnamese), an Indian teammate (both of us representing Latvia), a Portuguese and a Russian teammate (representing Germany), a Bulgarian participant, two participants from Cyprus, and our Italian team leader. We were all strangers at first, and sometimes we did not fully understand the tasks. We had different ways of thinking, different working styles, and even age gaps, which created additional barriers. Despite these challenges, we had to collaborate on three small projects together. It was not always easy, but it was a valuable learning experience.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the course?

I learned that I should not be shy about sharing my ideas and opinions. Open communication is essential in teamwork. I also really enjoyed learning about different cultures and experiencing new technologies, especially trying VR for the first time and exploring various AI tools. These experiences made the project even more meaningful for me.

Which skill (not necessarily academic) did you develop the most during your Erasmus stay?

I believe I developed my communication skills the most. I realized that I need to be more open, approachable, and active in teamwork. I also learned the importance of being clear about assigned tasks and responsibilities to avoid misunderstandings.

What else would you like to tell us?

I am truly grateful for this opportunity and for everything you have given me throughout this experience. It has been meaningful, eye-opening, and unforgettable.