

Erasmus+ Program: Personal Experience of SPbPU Student. The University of the Basque Country (Part II)

Under the program Erasmus+ a Master's degree student of the Institute of Civil Engineering of SPbPU Alexander HARSEEV has studied at the University of the Basque Country (Spain) for a semester and on arrival shared his impressions with the representatives of SPbPU International Office. Read more details in our interview!

- Alexander, we are glad to see you! Tell us, have there been any difficulties in preparing for the trip?

There haven't been particular difficulties, except that it took me a while to understand what kind of health insurance I have to take. The web site of the host University seemed to me somewhat complicated to find the necessary information: most of the sections of the website are presented only in Spanish and Basque language. A big thank to our Mobility department at Polytech - the coordinators helped me a lot.



- What were your impressions when you arrived in Spain?

Upon the arrival we were very impressed. We arrived in the city of San Sebastian. The city itself is small, but its architecture is very balanced, all the buildings together create a single picture that pleases the eye.

- What do you remember the most about the University?

The University of the Basque Country has well-equipped classrooms - there are everywhere interactive whiteboards, sockets for laptops on every table. The library is large, and is also equipped to work with a laptop at any time. Each building of the University campus is designed in a unique style. There are a lot of exchange students at the University - I think this is very common for European universities.



- Have you adapted easily to the new place of study?

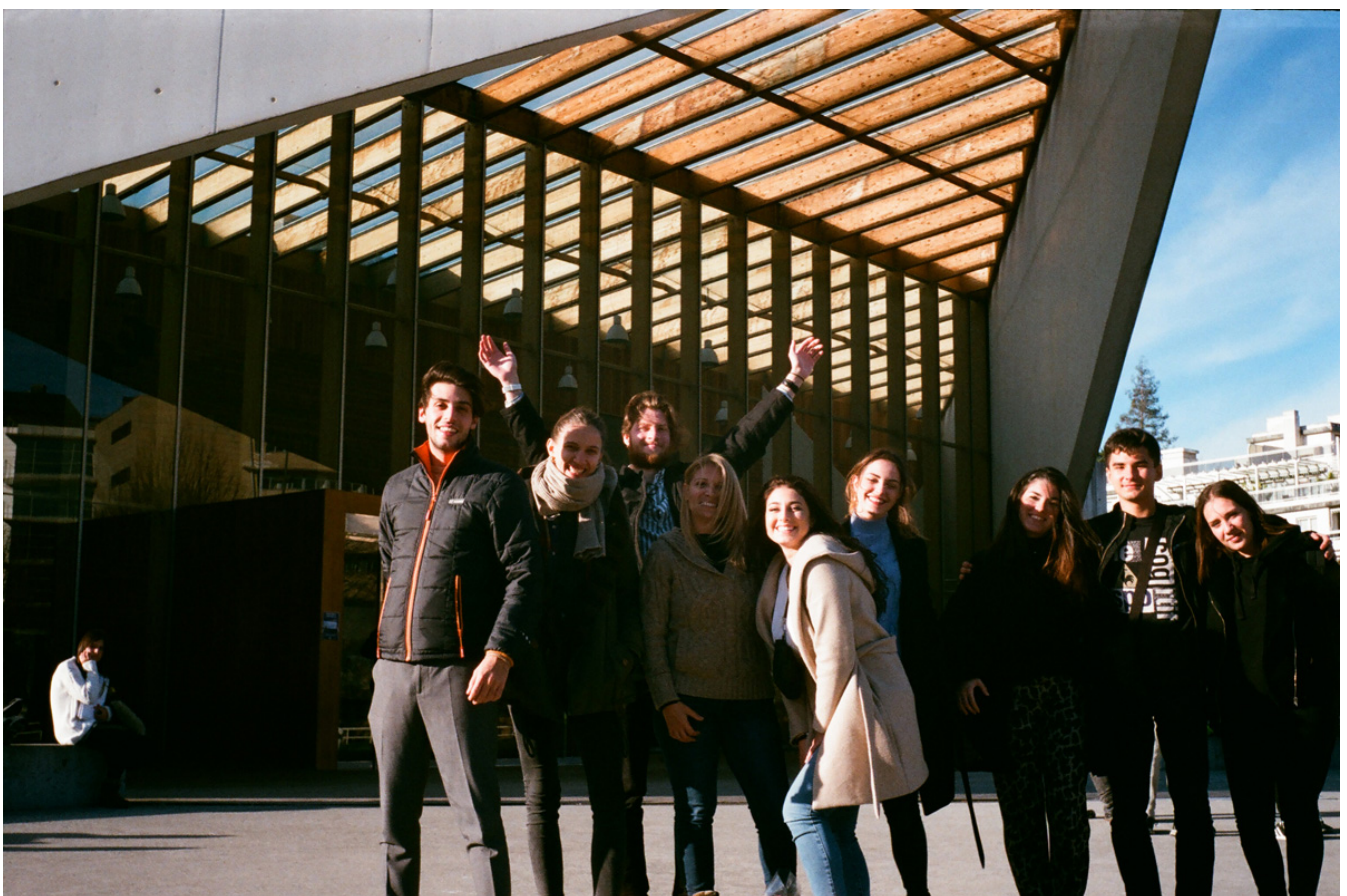
Yes! And I am very grateful to the international office of the University for this. Two weeks before the beginning of the semester we took an intensive course in Spanish, and the professors also told us about the city and culture. At first I lived a while in a hostel, but then I found with the other students from Russia an apartment for six months. I felt so much better there. Well, getting used to the ocean, the communication with other foreigners and the local culture was quite easy!

- What are your impressions from your studies?

I would like to tell a lot about the studies, I will try to highlight the main points. For earning credits in almost all of the courses you have to present a specific project. Tasks are assigned to groups of 3-5 people, and the emphasis is placed not on personal ability to work, but on the ability to work as a team. But keep in mind that the team is usually international, and each participant is used to a certain method of work and training.

The next point: in the first month of study, students have a free choice of subjects. You can try everything and make a schedule from the suggested options. There are more than enough courses in English, and you can adjust the entire semester to your own preferences, which is very useful in senior year of studies.

And the third point: most subjects are not limited to theory. For example, you modeled an object in the program, and then you need to build it across different levels of scale using different devices. And the devices, imagine, are available to all students, not only for educational purposes, but for personal purposes!



- Is there an assignment you remember the most?

Of course! Students had to present their vision of the architecture of the future. Then they should use architectural forms to express the proposed concept and explain every detail, and finally build a model and present it. The work on this project lasted 4 months. During this time, I have improved my skill to logically

develop the project from the concept stage to the implementation, while explaining my idea to the professor and other students in the group. It was very useful that the professor gave reasonable criticism during the process. At the end of the project, I received a lot of positive emotions and so-called soft skills, which are very much appreciated today.

- And what can you say about Spain in general?

Spain is a large country and has a very broad and diverse architecture. Barcelona impresses with its sights – it seems that there are more of them than residential buildings. Madrid is a city full of squares, museums, and park areas. The Basque country, which is located in the North-East of Spain near the border with France, is an absolutely unique place. The Basque language is still a mystery to the philologists! Bars with local snacks -pinchos - are literally on every street corner. There are often holidays, people dress up in costumes and go out in crowds to parades. Every day surfers with boards run barefoot to catch the dawn. Elderly couples who are over 70 years old dance tango on the squares, cheer for their favorite football club in bars, drink wine and enjoy life. In this six months in San Sebastian, I have not been able to get to know and feel even half of what the Basque Country alone can offer!



- What advice would you give to other students who are going to study under the Erasmus+program?

My advice is to learn the local language and spend more time with people. And you will come back with a sea of unforgettable impressions!

- Alexander, thank you very much for a very interesting interview! Wish you good luck and new achievements!

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