

## Darya Moroz – Erasmus story.

Nazwa uczelni partnerskiej	Universidad Europea de Madrid
Imię i nazwisko studenta	Darya Moroz
Kierunek studiów na WSiIZ	Grafika Komputerowa i Produkcja Multimedialna
e-mail*	W66037@student.wsiz.edu.pl

Hey, buddy! Some incredible things have happened to me in these 5 months and I would like to share them with you. From September 2023 to the end of January 2024 I studied and lived in wonderful and incredibly sunny Madrid on the Erasmus+ exchange program at the European University of Madrid. How did this happen? At some point we all want something new, some experimentation - that was mine. It was very anxious, it was not without stress somewhere, sometimes too active, but I have to assure you that it was worth it. But let's start in order so that we don't forget or mistake anything.

Let's start with the university. At the European University of Madrid (hereafter simply EUM) I studied



Social Sciences and Communication. It may not sound like much fun, but it turned out to be something I really needed. During the classes we learned how to work in a team, studied different theories on human behavior, gave a lot of presentations thus overcoming the possible fear of public speaking. It was something new for me. But at some point I realized that it was something I was missing. I had always been afraid of public speaking, I felt inhibited and didn't understand where to put myself and how to prepare for such "events". After practicing this at university, many people began to tell me that I was very good at public speaking. Such upgrades warm the soul, don't they? Especially in the future I will have to defend my diploma and I want to connect my life

with creativity, and artists very often appear at various events, so skills not to be lost will always be useful in life!

Another interesting experience for me was volunteering. During the course "International Marketing" we analyzed an organization called Fundebe. This Spanish organization built a school and a hospital in Benin (a city in Africa) and exists to benefit children who have no educational opportunities. On one of the days we were volunteers! We were given products of this organization, which can often be found in different markets, and we offered them to the students while telling the story of the organization! In the end, we collected about one thousand euros during the sales day, which I think is a great result.

The university itself is huge, honestly! At first it seemed that I would never get used to these buildings and classrooms numbered E1.132, but after a while I could walk the whole



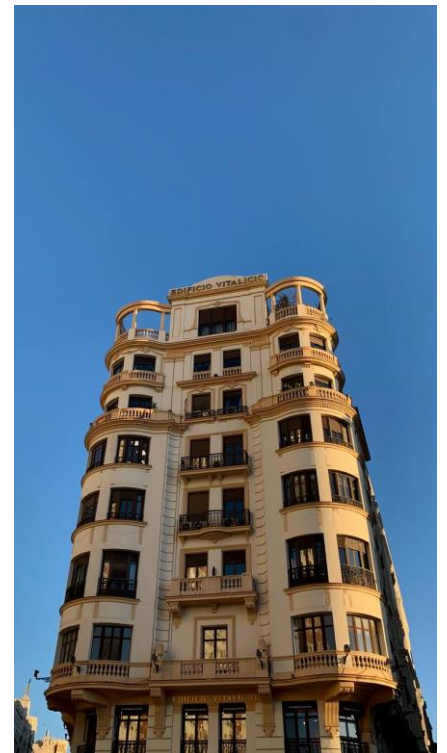


territory with my eyes closed, knowing every corner and every step. We even had our own lake with carp and a waterfall! And the frequent palm trees along the path gave the university an American high school vibe. Each building has a cafe, a bar with drinks and vending machines with snacks, water and sodas. I must tell you, dear reader, that all my friends have always called this university a school because it has always had an atmosphere of calmness. You walk on the huge and green territory of the university, and around you there are students sitting on plaids or on benches/chairs and doing their own things or just relaxing. Sometimes we had outdoor games on display and everyone could participate and have some fun.

Now let's move on to something equally important - my housing.

As an experienced traveler, I started looking for options as soon as I was told I was going. And it's not an easy task! After spending a few days on various rental sites, I came across the site [aluni.net](http://aluni.net) - here you can rent accommodation only to students and most often girls live with girls and guys with guys. Very reliable, safe and you always have your own manager to answer any questions. I rented a room for 460 euros + 50 euros for utilities and cleaning of common areas once a week.

One of the biggest pluses of my room was the private bathroom, which I didn't share with anyone. But where there are pluses, there are also minuses - I lived 2 - 2.5 hours away from the university. First of all, the university itself is not in Madrid, it is not even in a city near Madrid, so it is a long drive. Secondly, during the whole search I came across only one offer with a room near the university, but it was not suitable for me according to certain parameters, so I settled on the option where I lived all this time. The owner of the apartment is the nicest 83-year-old man who took us out for dinner and treated us to paella and tried to learn all the languages little by little. I lived in a quiet inner-city neighborhood with a few cafes, stores and a metro station 5 minutes away, so it was never a problem to get anywhere. If you're in Madrid, don't be afraid to look outside the center - public transportation, which costs 8 euros a month for anyone under 26, is very well developed and will get you anywhere in the city!



And we very smoothly moved on to the most interesting part - my life in Madrid as a foreign student who came on an exchange program. At university you feel awkward at first, and my awkwardness increased tenfold when I saw how everyone was organized into groups by nationality, and I never heard a single Slavic language for the whole five months at university - I automatically stepped out of my comfort zone. I did several presentations on Slavic cultures and some assignments on the same topics alone, but it didn't bother me much, because I always thought that I could sometimes explain myself in English even better than in my native Russian/Belarusian. The most interesting thing started after the





self-presentations, when I prepared a whole video with a mini story about my student life in Poland, my hobbies and interests, graphic design and so on. I will be 21 in May, and I have already managed to make myself a nice portfolio, which I never mind to show.

For people who are not in that creative bubble this presentation was something wow. I got a lot of positive feedback (one of the procedures everyone goes through when responding to presentations) and even made a friend. His name is Benny and he is from

Canada. I wouldn't be lying if I said that this person helped me feel better about myself throughout my university experience. In general, during this whole trip I realized that I enjoy people. We are all insanely different, and the experience on an exchange program allows you to not only meet new people, but also learn about their culture, life and traditions. Already after a month at university I had a lot of acquaintances - from Sweden, Canada, America, Mexico, Brazil, France, Italy and so on. My head was spinning with how cool it was, really cool to be surrounded by people gathered from all over the world.



Madrid fell into my soul - I'm a lover of big cities, where you can breathe easily and never think too much. There are so many beautiful places, wonderful architecture and winter.... oh this is my favorite part because the coldest day in winter was at +6. I love feeling like a foreigner, which is exactly how you feel when you venture into such experiments (I'm talking about the exchange program). You go to little stores to get water, saying loud Ola, or slowly but eagerly trying to construct a proper sentence in Spanish in some café during breakfast. You feel something warm when you hear your mother language, and you think about life every time you just stop for a second and realize everything that is happening to you.

Being in a completely different country in your 20s, alone, trying to study at two universities at the same time while working and somehow developing yourself is crazy. You know what else is crazy? How much I've grown as a person in these 5 months. How confident I have become in myself and my abilities. How I was communicating in English 24/7 and at some point I realized that my brain wasn't even wired to do that. How many people I met during that time. How with many I was able to put a small check mark in life that will remain in my memory. How I found a friend who even now is already breaking my heart for living on another continent. How I was able to open up to the world and just be. It's so hard to just be

nowadays, but I did it. I found out that I am a person who opens up more and more over time and attracts people more and more, like a great big magnet (my friend told me this, I tend to believe him).

I am very glad that I did not give up at some point and had this experience. Definitely such a period will always be in my memory and I am very glad that it will remain in the internet as well, where I periodically share my moments. A huge thank you to Erasmus and the coordinator at my university, Aldona Dzidzik, for the support and such a small but insanely interesting and fulfilling life. And for all those who want it but haven't quite decided whether they need it or not, I can only say one thing - you need it and it's worth it. Good luck!

Link with pictures: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12Cj2uuNIL30y0RicXwRY8-Ex5HLSvJHN?usp=sharing>



