Participant: Gints Graudins

Sending Institution: Luther Academy

Host Country: Estonia

Host Institution: Eesti Evangeeliumi Kristlaste ja Baptistide Koguduste Liidu Kõrgem

Usuteaduslik Seminar/Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary

Mobility Duration: 5 days.

Motivation to participate in Erasmus study mobility

My motivation for participating in the Erasmus+ mobility programme in Tallin was grounded in a professional and academic interest in mental health and pastoral counselling, as well as in the broader goal of strengthening international academic cooperation. My aim was to attend seminar presentations focusing on the relationship between Christianity and mental health. These sessions provided valuable insights into practical approaches to mental health challenges, especially as they relate to pastoral care and spiritual formation.

Cooperation with the sending and receiving institutions

The cooperation with both the sending and the receiving institutions was excellent throughout all stages of the Erasmus+ mobility. The sending institution, the Luther Academy, provided clear guidance, timely communication and professional administrative support before and during the mobility period. Likewise, the receiving institution, the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary offered strong academic and practical support. The staff were welcoming, well-organized and highly cooperative in facilitating integration into the host's activities.

Academic and personal achievements

The Erasmus+ mobility contributed significantly to both my academic and personal development. Academically, the mobility enabled me to gain new pedagogical perspectives and teaching approaches within theological education, particularly in the field of mental health and pastoral formation. Through engagement with faculty members and participation in seminars and presentations I acquired practical examples of how mental health topics are integrated into theological curricula in Estonia, which can be meaningfully adapted and applied in my teaching at the Luther Academy.

Most memorable impressions

One of my most memorable impressions from the Erasmus+ mobility was the exceptional hospitality and kindness shown by the host institution and its staff. From the very beginning I felt genuinely welcomed, which created an open and supportive atmosphere for academic exchange and personal interaction. I was particularly positively surprised by the growing recognition of mental health issues within Estonian church communities. It was encouraging to observe how openly these topics are now being addressed and integrated into theological and pastoral discussions. Equally inspiring was the interaction with other participants from various European countries and Christian denominations. Many of them have already moved beyond mere recognition of mental health challenges and have begun developing and implementing training programmes for Christian counsellors within congregational contexts, offering valuable models for future development. The warm and thoughtful care shown in everyday details also left a lasting impression. Throughout the programme, coffee was always available, accompanied by a welcoming atmosphere, shared tables with refreshments, and on several occasions even freshly baked cakes prepared by local staff, which greatly contributed to a sense of community and fellowship. Despite the very cold winter weather in Tallinn (around –10°C), the organisers also arranged a guided visit to Tallinn's Old Town, which provided a meaningful cultural experience and highlighted the careful balance between academic content and cultural enrichment.

Practical advice for future Erasmus+ participants

I recommend to actively engage in discussions with both faculty members and fellow participants. Informal conversations during breaks, shared meals, and networking events often provide valuable insights and practical ideas that are not always captured in formal sessions. Participants should also take time to learn about the host institution's academic and cultural context before arrival. Familiarity with the local educational environment and cultural background facilitates deeper understanding and more fruitful cooperation. From a practical perspective, participants should be well prepared for seasonal weather conditions, particularly in winter, and plan accordingly.

Additional reflections

It was a very pleasant and inspiring experience!