

ERASMUS+ STAFF TRAINING MOBILITY REPORT

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Sending Higher Education Institution: Luther Academy (Lutera Akadēmija),
Latvia

Field of Activity at the HEI: Assistant Professor; Editor of the academic journal *Credimus*

Mobility Country: Belgium

Receiving Institution: Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven (ETF Leuven)

Address: Sint-Jansbergsesteenweg 97, 3001 Leuven, Belgium

Mobility Period: 17–21 August 2026

Type of Mobility: Erasmus+ Staff Training Mobility

1. Motivation to Participate in Erasmus+ Staff Training Mobility

The primary motivation for participating in the Erasmus+ Staff Training Mobility at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven was to deepen academic and pedagogical cooperation between Luther Academy and ETF Leuven, with particular attention to missiology, systematic theology, intercultural theological education, and contemporary approaches to theological formation.

An important part of the mobility was the opportunity to participate in the intensive Master's-level summer course “Mission in the Context of World Christianity”, taught by Dr. Bosco Bangura (ETF Leuven) and Prof. Dr. Benno van der Toren (Protestantse Theologische Universiteit). Participation in this course provided an opportunity to observe and experience theological education at Master's level in an explicitly international and intercultural setting.

The mobility was also motivated by the desire to gain practical insight into teaching methodology, student participation, assessment, academic discussion, and the organisation of intensive theological courses at ETF Leuven. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which students from different theological, cultural, and ecclesial backgrounds are encouraged to contribute actively to academic discussion.

A further objective was to strengthen professional relationships with ETF faculty members and lecturers from other European theological institutions, to exchange experiences concerning theological education, and to explore possibilities for future cooperation between ETF Leuven and Luther Academy.

2. Participation in Academic and Training Activities



Master's-level summer course "Mission in the Context of World Christianity" at ETF Leuven: Guntis Kalme with lecturers and participants. (Far right - Mikheil Khudoyan, a Georgian student)

A central part of the mobility was participation in the intensive Master's-level course "Mission in the Context of World Christianity", taught by Dr. Bosco Bangura (ETF Leuven) and Prof. Dr. Benno van der Toren (Protestantse Theologische Universiteit).

The course provided particularly valuable intercultural experience. Dr. Bangura's personal and academic background in Sierra Leone, combined with his position as a faculty member at ETF Leuven, contributed a distinctive perspective to the course. The international composition of the teaching and student environment created an opportunity to encounter theological questions from perspectives significantly different from those normally encountered in the Latvian theological context.

The course also demonstrated the value of bringing together lecturers and students from different European institutions. Participants represented a wider academic environment that included, among others, students and academics connected with institutions in Utrecht and elsewhere. The experience was especially relevant to understanding how theology and missiology can be taught within the context of World Christianity rather than exclusively from a Western European perspective.

The mobility also included opportunities to attend and engage with other academic activities, including:

- "Jonathan Edwards' Ecotheology, Ecospirituality, and the Witness of Creation", taught by Prof. Dr. Lisanne Winslow (ETF Leuven);

- “Suffering in the New Testament from a Perspective of Honor and Shame”, taught by Prof. Dr. Myriam Klinker-De Klerck (Theologische Universiteit Utrecht).

These activities broadened the academic experience beyond the main summer course and enabled informal discussion with lecturers and participants from other institutions.

3. Observation of Teaching Methods and Student Engagement

One of the most valuable aspects of the mobility was the opportunity to observe teaching methods and student engagement at ETF Leuven.

A particularly useful feature was the open classroom environment, in which not only enrolled students but also interested participants could attend lectures and contribute questions to the discussion. This created a more open academic environment and demonstrated how theological education can function as a space of public intellectual engagement.

Students were frequently required to prepare presentations on specific theological topics, present their findings to the group, and respond to questions from lecturers and fellow students. This format encouraged students not merely to reproduce information but to formulate arguments, defend their positions, and engage critically with alternative perspectives.

Another significant methodological observation concerned the relationship between prescribed academic tasks and creative flexibility. Lecturers assigned work based on specified academic sources, thereby maintaining academic discipline and methodological consistency, while at the same time allowing students a considerable degree of creative freedom where such approaches were properly argued and academically justified.

The high level of student engagement was particularly impressive. Students actively participated in discussion, asked questions, presented their work, and responded to challenges from both lecturers and other participants.

These observations provide valuable ideas for the further development of teaching methodology at Luther Academy, especially in relation to student-centred learning, oral presentation, discussion-based teaching, and academically responsible creativity.

4. Intercultural Communication and Academic Exchange

The intercultural dimension of the mobility was particularly significant.

The international composition of the course and the presence of lecturers and students from different theological and cultural contexts demonstrated that theological education can be significantly enriched when different experiences of Christianity are brought into dialogue.

For Luther Academy, this experience is especially relevant because Latvian theological education takes place within a specific historical, cultural, ecclesial, and post-Soviet context. The theological experience of students and lecturers from Western Europe and other parts of the world can therefore differ substantially from the experience of students in Latvia.

Rather than being an obstacle, these differences proved to be a valuable resource for academic dialogue. They require participants to articulate their assumptions more clearly and to recognise that

concepts which may appear self-evident in one cultural context may be understood differently in another.

The mobility therefore strengthened my intercultural communication skills and provided a valuable practical experience of theology as an international academic discipline.

5. Student Interaction and Promotion of Luther Academy

An additional important aspect of the mobility was interaction with students and the opportunity to introduce the work and study opportunities of Luther Academy.

Particularly significant was the contact with Mikheil Khudoyan, a Georgian student currently studying at Master's level at ETF Leuven. I introduced him to the academic opportunities and programmes offered by Luther Academy and discussed the possibility of future interest in our study programmes.

Such direct interaction is important for developing international student mobility and increasing awareness of Luther Academy beyond Latvia.

The mobility also demonstrated the potential of using international academic events and intensive courses as platforms for developing future student exchanges and institutional partnerships.

6. Professional Discussions with ETF Faculty



Guntis Kalme with the lecturers of the missiology course, Dr. Bosco Bangura and Prof. Dr. Benno van der Toren.

The mobility provided an opportunity to continue and develop professional contacts with ETF faculty members.

I met with Prof. Ron Michener, Professor of Systematic Theology, whom I had also met during my previous visit. We discussed the possibility of my teaching in the course “Protestant Theology”, potentially during the spring semester of the 2026–2027 academic year. The discussion focused on the possible academic contribution I could make and on the practical possibilities for future teaching cooperation.

I also had the opportunity to discuss future academic cooperation with Prof. Dr. Benno van der Toren of the Protestantse Theologische Universiteit. As an author of several works in apologetics, he expressed openness in principle to the possibility of teaching or presenting this subject in the context of Luther Academy. This opens an interesting perspective for future cooperation in apologetics and contemporary theological engagement.

Further discussions took place with Dr. Bosco Bangura, whose participation in the intensive course demonstrated the possibilities of cooperation in missiology and World Christianity. Dr. Bangura expressed willingness to receive representatives of Luther Academy in a similar intensive summer course the following year, thereby creating a potential opportunity for continued academic exchange.

These discussions were particularly valuable because they moved beyond general institutional networking toward concrete possibilities for teaching cooperation, visiting lecturers, student participation, and future joint academic activities.

7. Cooperation with Colleague Dr. Kristīna Ēce



Dr. Kristīna Ēce during an academic session at ETF Leuven.

The mobility was undertaken together with my colleague Dr. Kristīna Ēce, which further increased its value for Luther Academy.

Our participation together enabled us to represent different but complementary academic interests and to exchange observations concerning theological education, missiology, intercultural communication, student engagement, and possible institutional cooperation.

The shared experience also provides a stronger basis for transferring the results of the mobility to our home institution and for developing future cooperation with ETF Leuven.

8. Academic and Professional Achievements

The mobility resulted in several concrete academic and professional outcomes.

First, it provided direct experience of an international Master's-level intensive course in missiology and World Christianity.

Second, it strengthened my understanding of intercultural theological communication and demonstrated the academic value of bringing together different Christian experiences and cultural perspectives.

Third, the mobility provided practical insight into teaching methodologies that could be adapted to the Luther Academy context, particularly:

- student presentations followed by discussion and questioning;
- source-based academic assignments;
- active student participation;
- open classroom formats;
- academically justified creative approaches to assignments;
- integration of different cultural and theological perspectives into classroom discussion.

Fourth, the mobility strengthened existing professional relationships with ETF Leuven faculty and created concrete possibilities for future cooperation in teaching and academic exchange.

Fifth, it provided an opportunity to promote Luther Academy and its study programmes among international students and academics.

Finally, the mobility was a valuable opportunity for professional development through observation, discussion, informal academic exchange, and intercultural communication.

9. Most Valuable Experiences

The most valuable experience was the combination of formal academic participation and informal professional exchange.

The intensive summer course provided structured academic learning, while conversations with lecturers and students outside the formal classroom created opportunities to discuss theological education, research interests, institutional development, and possible future cooperation in a more open environment.

Particularly valuable was the experience of encountering theological questions from perspectives shaped by different cultural and ecclesial contexts. This demonstrated in practice that intercultural communication is not simply an additional element of internationalisation but can itself become an important form of academic learning.

The openness of the ETF academic environment was also noteworthy. Students were encouraged to participate actively, lecturers were accessible for discussion, and academic tasks maintained clear scholarly expectations while leaving room for independent and creative thinking.

10. Contribution to Luther Academy

The knowledge and experience gained during the mobility can be transferred to Luther Academy in several areas.

The observed teaching methods can contribute to further development of student-centred teaching and active learning. In particular, the use of student presentations, source-based assignments, structured discussion, and question-and-answer sessions can strengthen students' ability to formulate theological arguments and defend them academically.

The intercultural experience can also contribute to the internationalisation of Luther Academy's teaching environment and to greater awareness of World Christianity and intercultural theological communication.

The established contacts with ETF Leuven and other European academics provide a foundation for future guest lectures, visiting teaching, student mobility, intensive courses, and joint academic initiatives.

The possibility of involving ETF lecturers in Luther Academy teaching, as well as the potential participation of Luther Academy representatives in future ETF summer courses, represents a particularly concrete outcome of the mobility.

11. Future Cooperation

The mobility created several promising directions for future cooperation:

1. possible teaching cooperation in the course “Protestant Theology” at ETF;
2. possible involvement of Prof. Dr. Benno van der Toren in teaching or academic activities at Luther Academy, particularly in apologetics;
3. continued cooperation with Dr. Bosco Bangura in the field of missiology and World Christianity;
4. participation of Luther Academy representatives in a similar ETF intensive summer course in 2027;
5. development of further student mobility and international study opportunities;
6. continued exchange of teaching methodologies and academic practices;
7. development of broader cooperation between Luther Academy and ETF Leuven in theological education and research.

The discussions were not merely formal networking activities but resulted in concrete and mutually beneficial possibilities for continued cooperation.

12. Overall Reflection

The Erasmus+ Staff Training Mobility at ETF Leuven from 17 to 21 August 2026 was academically valuable, professionally productive, and particularly important for intercultural and international development.

The experience demonstrated the value of direct participation in an international theological learning environment. It provided not only new academic knowledge but also practical insight into teaching methods, student engagement, intercultural communication, and international academic cooperation.

The mobility confirmed that cooperation between Luther Academy and ETF Leuven has significant potential for further development. At the same time, the exchange was mutually enriching: Luther Academy can contribute its own theological, historical, and contextual experience to international academic dialogue, while ETF Leuven provides valuable opportunities for internationalisation, methodological exchange, and cooperation.

The mobility therefore contributed to my professional development as a lecturer and researcher, strengthened my intercultural communication competence, and created concrete perspectives for further cooperation between Luther Academy and ETF Leuven.

Overall, the Erasmus+ experience demonstrated that staff mobility is most valuable when it combines academic participation, observation of teaching practice, intercultural communication, professional networking, and concrete plans for future cooperation.