FROM ERASMUS TO ERASMUS+
A STORY OF 30 YEARS

33 ERASMUS+ FACES
Enriching lives, opening minds.
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From Austria
To Germany, Italy & Switzerland
In 2011
>>> Youth in Action

Ali MAHLODJI – 35

Ali is the co-founder and managing director of the whatchado job-counselling platform. On it, people from across the work share their inspiring stories and provide young people with insights into their job and studies. Watchado began as a side project in 2011, and expanded after receiving financial support from the Youth in Action programme. The funding and instant access to education experts changed everything, and whatchado now employs 50 people, from 15 countries. The platform currently has 1 million visitors per month and helps young people find opportunities. Ali was nominated as an EU Youth ambassador in 2013 and as part of this role, he was invited to the European Parliament to share his story. In his speech, he mentioned the importance of people working together and not against each other.

From Belgium
To Belgium & France
In 2014-16
>>> Erasmus+ - School Education

Wassim, Alexandro and Aaliyah took part in ‘The Incredible Culinary Journey of Our European Pupils’ at their school in Brussels. The project brought together children from schools in disadvantaged areas in Bobigny, France and Belgium. The students used food as a medium through which to learn. Participating in cooking workshops, the pupils explored the cuisine of their parents’ countries of origin.

From Belgium
To Belgium & France
In 2011
>>> Youth in Action

Alexandro, Wassim & Aaliyah – 8-12

Watchado began as a side project in 2011, and expanded after receiving financial support from the Youth in Action programme. The funding and instant access to education experts changed everything, and whatchado now employs 50 people, from 15 countries. The platform currently has 1 million visitors per month and helps young people find opportunities. Ali was nominated as an EU Youth ambassador in 2013 and as part of this role, he was invited to the European Parliament to share his story. In his speech, he mentioned the importance of people working together and not against each other.
Petar is a librarian in the award-winning Koprivnica public library in Croatia. He spent 10 days on a job-shadowing visit to Helsinki and Sastamala in Finland. The experience gave him the chance to see first-hand how is it to work in another library and gained many ideas to implement back in Croatia. He received funding and training on how to write project proposals and built a positive working network with colleagues in Helsinki and Sastamala. After his ten-day stint in Finland, Petar was inspired to modernise work methods and services at his local library, resulting in his involvement of one of the first TEDxLibrary events: TEDxKoprivnicaLibrary.

Christina, Angela and Yuriy are three of the many people involved in La MANCHE, a project promoting the modernisation of higher education in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In addition to these countries, the consortium includes five EU Member States. The project has been instrumental in leading change for all countries involved. By involving students in decision-making processes, the project generated innovative ways of thinking and new approaches to management. For the students involved, it also equipped them with valuable skills which improved their employability.
Xenia’s Erasmus experience piqued her interest in European integration. While doing her thesis on the same subject, she discovered the Council of Europe Human Rights in Education programme in Budapest and promptly enrolled. She then started running communal peace activities between young Turkish and Greek Cypriots and not long after, took advantage of the Erasmus youth programme to organise exchange visits between Cypriots and other Europeans. Xenia has twice served as Vice-President of the Cyprus National Youth Council (CYC). She has also served as Vice-President of the European Youth Forum (YFJ). Since November 2014, she is Chairwoman of the Democratic Rally Women’s’ Organisation in Cyprus.

Martina is an established eTwinning Erasmus+ ambassador, organising virtual exchanges with schools throughout Europe. In 2008, she took part in a Comenius project which explored the social impact of migration. She later ran a project combining language learning and ICT. In her school in Ostrava, Martina is currently running a programme for English and Spanish teachers, which involves short-term teacher exchanges and job shadowing. In 2011 and again in 2015, Martina was awarded the European Language Label for her work. Martina is a firm believer in eTwinning as it has helped her students experience other cultures, form their own opinions and identify as European citizens.
Reelika is currently focusing on her own food service training company in Estonia. Reelika is passionate about development and modernisation in her industry, and has worked extensively within this field. For example, she was involved in the establishment of a nationwide ‘Modern Waiter’ competition in Estonia, and has been involved in restructuring vocational training and examinations in the field. Much of her inspiration builds on her experience during her mobility abroad in the UK and Norway, where Reelika was exposed to new catering methods and able to learn new languages. In her career, Reelika has continually sought to share these experiences, and has even published a book on the topic entitled The Art of Service.

Having left Iraqi Kurdistan as a child, Mina understands the importance of protecting refugee rights. In 2015, she volunteered at Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Flemish Refugee Action) for a year. The experience allowed her to develop her own skills, such as languages (she speaks five), management, leadership, and coordination. Mina is passionate about protecting the rights of refugees. She established the organisation Women Refugee Route which aims to provide information and services to women and girls during their journey, and increasing their visibility. In 2016, Mina was awarded the Voices of Courage Award by the Women’s Refugee Commission.
As Erasmus+ project manager, and voluntary tutor at a non-profit education centre in Brittany, Sylvie has experienced first-hand how work and study exchanges can improve the provision of education, broaden horizons, and reinforce cultural understanding. Having studied in London and Bruges, and been the recipient of several Grundtvig scholarships herself, Sylvie now devotes her time to helping others follow in her footsteps and experience the varied teaching and learning opportunities available throughout Europe as part of the Erasmus+ programme. She has developed several Erasmus+ projects in the fields of language learning and intercultural awareness, and pioneered groundbreaking initiatives such as bringing Greek language and cultural studies into prison education in France.
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Despite officially retiring recently, Nicolas remains committed to fostering excellence in the field of biomedical engineering and encouraging European research collaboration within Europe and beyond. As Professor Emeritus at Patras University in Greece, Nicolas continues to teach postgraduates, coordinate R&D activities and support new Erasmus+ programmes at the university. Nicolas was an early advocate of harmonising biomedical engineering curricula across Europe and beyond, and has seen first-hand the benefits to students, institutions and citizens in general of closer research collaboration in medical research. His current ambition is to strengthen synergies with universities in South America.

Rainer is a part-time professor at the University of Applied Science in Osnabrück, Germany and also runs his own company offering project management services to German and Chinese businesses. With a depth of knowledge about Chinese business culture, Rainer has been involved in the University’s Erasmus Mundus study programme MARIHE (Master in Research Innovation and Higher Education) since 2013, and is also a visiting lecturer at Beijing Normal University. Rainer has seen first-hand how international exchange can broaden minds, boost careers and forge international friendships, and the experience has also sharpened his understanding of the importance of helping students adapt to different learning environments.
Brynhildur GUDJONSDOTTIR – 44

Brynhildur is a well-known Icelandic actor and director who is currently directing a French opera in Reykjavik. She has performed in numerous countries and believes that her year spent studying in Montpellier, France as a participant in the Erasmus programme in 1993-94 opened her eyes to how language can be used not only to communicate but also to better understanding different cultures. A love of language has remained with Brynhildur throughout her life, and she believes that being multilingual has made her a better actress and director and opened doors to her that would otherwise have remained closed.

Gellért SZÓ – 28

Gellért spent his apprenticeship in France learning the tricks of the trade from pastry chefs. An avid baker since he was a teenager, Gellért used his time in France to further improve his skills and techniques, and explore new methods of work. Gellért now owns an award-winning bakery in Salgótarján, and has recently opened a second branch in Eger, Hungary. Gellért has employed the skills he learnt on his Erasmus+ traineeship, and been awarded the ‘Best Cake’ prize in Hungary for two consecutive years (2015 and 2016).
Martina was 22 when she went on an Erasmus exchange to Soria, Spain. Due to injuries from a motorcycle accident, Martina underwent a high-femoral amputation of her left leg in 2007. Living away from home for the first time pushed her far beyond her comfort zone, and boosted her self-confidence. By learning a new language, and experiencing a new culture and country, Martina discovered new ways of thinking. Two months after her Erasmus stay ended, she won a gold medal at the 2012 London Paralympic Games. At the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games she won a gold medal in the 100m sprint, and a silver medal in the long jump.

Michael is a youth worker and currently part of the National Youth Action Group in Ireland. He is a strong advocate of Erasmus+ programmes, having participated in an EVS exchange to Estonia in November 2013 and gone on to lead youth exchanges in Finland and Georgia. A member of the Irish Traveller ethnic group in Ireland, Michael believes that international exchanges help to remove prejudices and give participants opportunities they might otherwise not have known existed. He plans to study abroad next year, and his ultimate goal is to establish an NGO that helps disadvantaged youth to realise their potential.
Katja NIGSCH – 40

From Liechtenstein
To Ireland
In 1999
>>> Vocational and Educational Training (VET)

Katja completed a traineeship at the Connacht Tribune in Galway, as part of her training to become a graphic designer. She now works in Liechtenstein as an office assistant at the Ministry of Health, and on weekends at an art museum. Prior to her VET mobility, Katja felt shy when speaking English. By the end of her traineeship, however, she noticed a marked improvement in her language skills, and even felt confident in her ability to live and work internationally. Her experience also allowed Katja to appreciate the wealth of knowledge to be gained by adapting to new ways of life and being open to other cultures.

Kristīne Luīze AVOTIŅA – 33

From Latvia
To Spain
In 2008
>>> Erasmus – Higher Education

Kristīne is a graduate of the Latvian Academy of Arts and has gone on to become a renowned artist in her home country. Her paintings have been displayed in numerous sold out solo exhibitions, and she has been commissioned to carry out a diverse range of artistic projects. These include the recent installation of artwork in public trams. Kristīne cites her eight months spent in Barcelona as part of the Erasmus programme as a defining moment in her life and career. The experience provided her with the confidence to make full use of vivid colours, something that has become a consistent theme within Kristīne’s work.
Claude ENGLEBERT – 39

Claude is a specialised educator at the Collectif Dadofonic Ligue HMC in Luxembourg, a professional group of performing artists with special needs. He volunteered at Cabuwazi, a Berlin-based association organising circus workshops for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Claude feels an Erasmus experience helps young people grow up and find out what jobs they really want to do. He met his soon-to-be wife during her Erasmus; they now have an ‘Erasmus baby’.

From Luxembourg
To Germany
In 2002
>>> Youth in Action

Biruté STATKEVIČIENĖ – 63

Biruté competed at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games and was a London Olympics torch bearer. She has won multiple swimming championships and is a former record holder. Since 2001, Biruté has been an Erasmus teacher in swimming and physical education in several European countries. For Biruté, sport brings people together from around the world, and levels the playing field. She believes that Erasmus not only help people build firm friendships which stretch beyond national borders, but it also provides ample opportunity to share knowledge and learn from one’s peers.

From Lithuania
To Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Portugal & Spain
In 2001 - Present
>>> Erasmus+ Staff Mobility – Sport

Enriching lives, opening minds.
Alexandra KRSTESKA – 24

From Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
To Spain
In 2014
>>> European Voluntary Service (EVS)

Alexandra currently works as an EVS Placement Coordinator in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. During her own stint in Spain, Alexandra volunteered at Adefis Juventud Internacional in Madrid. In this role, she worked with recently arrived migrants and jobseekers to improve their employability and access administrative and learning channels. This experience enabled Alexandra to develop the skills necessary to land an internship at the Macedonian embassy in Madrid, and ultimately her current job. Additionally, her time as an EVS volunteer provided Alexandra with the opportunity to make lasting friendships and build a professional network, as well as improving her English and Spanish language skills.

Ruth FRENDO – 37

From Malta
To Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland & Sweden
In 2015
>>> Adult Education

Ruth represented Malta in a multi-country Erasmus+ project which promoted social inclusion. During the project, Ruth interviewed asylum seekers and refugees in Malta and was able to connect with people on a personal level through their stories. Ruth learnt a lot from her experience, and built lasting relationships with colleagues throughout Europe. Ruth’s research was translated into seven European languages, and resulted in the production of a television documentary.
Ánde is Sami, an indigenous minority in Norway. He currently works as a Sami language teacher and is a member of the Norwegian Sami Parliament’s Youth Committee. Ánde’s youth exchange was in the environmental field. Whilst in Hanover, he organised workshops to demonstrate the effects of climate change on the Arctic region. During his placement, Ánde strengthened key professional skills, such as his ability to manage, organise, and communicate confidently in other languages. Ánde was encouraged by the ease with which he was able to build positive relationships with people from entirely different cultural backgrounds to his own. On returning home, Ánde was highly motivated to become more involved in the Sami community, particularly in creating a dialogue among young people concerning the challenges faced by people in the Arctic region.

Roberto is a geography teacher and enthusiastic eTwinning ambassador for the Netherlands. Since 2012, Robert has led two eTwinning projects, organising virtual student exchanges across five European countries. By interacting with people from different backgrounds, his pupils gain new perspectives and become more open to new ways of thinking and learning. They also greatly improve their English language and ICT skills. The experience is also educational for Roberto himself, prompting him to try new and exciting approaches to teaching and learning.
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Carlos ARSÉNIO – 30

Carlos is an electrical engineer. He completed a VET mobility when he was just 18 years old. Prior to moving to Cáceres to undertake his internship, Carols developed a prototype for a robot which could detect human life in areas hit by natural disasters, for which he won a Young Scientists and Researchers Award. During his mobility in Spain, Carlos developed an interest in industrial maintenance, and decided to pursue academic studies to become an engineer. Living abroad at such a young age gave Carlos the confidence to explore new and challenging environments, and adapt to different ways of working.

Anna KWIATKOWSKA – 50

Anna is an IT specialist, developing educational tools for people with intellectual disabilities as part of a number of Erasmus+ projects. Anna and her colleagues at the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability build partnerships with therapists and psychologists across Europe to improve people’s employability, thus helping them live more fulfilling and meaningful lives. To Anna, Erasmus+ means breaking barriers using new technologies. Recently, she helped create a tailor-made computer lab and got to witness how this can help change people’s lives.
Jakub VIKTORIN – 26

Jakub is a film producer and young entrepreneur. He did an Erasmus film course at the University of Falmouth in the UK and an Erasmus+ internship at NISI MASA, the European Network of Young Cinema in Paris. His Erasmus experiences were very positive, allowing him to learn about new cultures and outside of a typical school environment. In Falmouth Jakub improved his production and writing skills, while in Paris he made valuable contacts, with whom he remains in touch. Studying in various countries helped Jakub expand his portfolio and experiences; it also allowed him to gain knowledge which helped him start his own company. Jakub thinks the Erasmus experience gives students a new perspective on life and work.

Simona BISBOACA – 37

During her Erasmus exchange, Simona was able to take full advantage of the lab facilities available at the University of Bologna, and greatly improved her Italian. On returning to Romania after her stay abroad, Simona was able to secure employment at an Italian firm based in Romania; this was thanks to the language skills and knowledge she had developed abroad. Simona also became more confident and entrepreneurial thanks to her time in Italy. Simona now runs her own company which manufactures a powerful anti-oxidant supplement which she discovered as part of her research. Her research and entrepreneurial skills have led to two patents for her products. Simona is a keen advocate of engaging young people in science and research and allowing them the educational opportunities to grow and innovate.
Enriching lives, opening minds.
Turkish product designer Aykut was one of the first participants to benefit from a vocational training mobility. This experience allowed him to continue his studies at the Domus Academy in Milan, and to meet many renowned designers with whom he worked on different projects. He believes Erasmus+ helps young people broaden their horizons, find new forms of self-expression, and become more conscious, also with regards to the environment. His creations, for instance an award-winning ‘Line Series’, reflect this idea as they propose an environment-friendly and future-oriented design.

Jennifer LENHART – 35

Jennifer is a programme manager/expert at the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). She was one of the first students to participating in the Erasmus Mundus Masters in Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management (MESPO). Her experiences abroad, in Hungary and Greece, helped Jennifer better understand other cultures, as well as to appreciate the different applications of environmental policies and scientific research in diverse local contexts. The knowledge which Jennifer gained during her Erasmus Mundus course continues to influence her work today, where she aims to engage citizens in shaping the cities in which they live.

From Sweden
To Hungary, Sweden & Greece
In 2005
>>> Erasmus Mundus

From Turkey
To Italy
In 2004
>>> Vocational and Educational Training (VET)
Tania grew up in the UK and Belgium. With Erasmus, she studied international business and German. The experience presented Tania with the opportunity to build an international network of contacts, and prompted new, entrepreneurial ideas. Today, Tania runs her own enterprise Tailored Business, a TV show which documents experiences of designing suits for individuals in Africa, and interviewing them about their own careers. Tania is an advocate for women entrepreneurs, and hopes that her TV show will inspire others to explore their own business talents. Tania also contributes to Elle magazine South Africa as a careers specialist.
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