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Does studying abroad change lifestyles?

It is a truth widely acknowledged that studying abroad is a life-changing experience. We gain friends for life, we tear down language barriers and stereotypes, we live new, thrilling adventures.

We move out from our comfort zone and even understand what the notion of “cultural shock” really means.

Most of the students who have spent some time abroad will agree that it is a revolutionary experience in many ways – to the extent that even our own lifestyle and healthy habits might change. According to a research conducted at the University of Washington, the alcohol consumption

in Americans when studying abroad doubled – especially for students that travelled to Europe, where the legal drinking age is under 21.

But, how about Europe? The culture of a country plays a crucial role when it comes to social norms and habits. For instance, having a glass of wine or beer next to a meal is a widely-spread common habit in Europe in comparison with other parts of the world – and that is one of the main reasons

that the alcohol intake of American students booms when they come to study in Europe. Therefore, it is not easy to find a one-size-fits-all answer to this matter.

In the last academic year alone, 270,000 European students travelled to another part of the continent to pursue their study period abroad. Erasmus, the top study abroad program, has topped the milestone of 3 million students in its 28 years of existence. The impact of Erasmus has been measured in several aspects, such as intellectual and personal growth, intercultural awareness, language learning, employability or civic engagement ; but little is known about health behaviours when studying abroad.

Now, a new research is trying to discover which are the trends and actual health impact of studying abroad for young Europeans. A project called Lifestyle in Mobility, funded by the European Foundation of Alcohol Research and carried out by the Catholic University of Milan, Cardiff University and AEGEE / European Students' Forum, is currently interviewing up to 4,000 European students who are pursuing studies abroad.

Eating and drinking behaviours, physical exercise, perception of social norms in the hosting country and more will be covered during the whole stay abroad of the surveyees. The study aims to follow a year-long evolution of students abroad - kicking off the survey right before they depart. Then, the research will check how have their habits stabilised once they have spent a few months abroad, and how such habits are consolidated once they come back.

The research will put a strong emphasis on how students abroad interact with the local students. Adapting to a new environment plays a key role in having a successful and, not least important, healthy study period abroad. You might think that it does not have any correlation, but the premise of the research suggests that the more that students are well-adjusted into their host country, the more chances they have to have a healthier life!



Do you feel like taking part in the journey and contributing to valuable research? Lifestyle in Mobility is currently looking for young Europeans pursuing their semester or year studying abroad, and you can contribute too. Besides helping the research, you will also be eligible to many prizes like Interrail tickets if you answer all the surveys!

Erasmus, or any other study abroad programs, is the time of many young students' lives and a one-of-a-kind opportunity for personal development. The adaptation to a new country, new culture and new habits can be overwhelming sometimes, and that is why a healthy lifestyle is key for the correct development of a study period abroad; to make this journey one of the most memorable experiences of a lifetime!



Are you a European student abroad? Find more information and participate in our survey - some prizes are awaiting!
site.aegEE.org/projects/lifestyle-in-mobility/