



## ERASMUS IN BULGARIA

### EMRE'S REFLECTIONS

**"Being on your own teaches you responsibility and self-confidence."**

—Emre Kutlar

*"Hello Emre, let's get to know you a little. What year are you in, which country and university did you go to? What motivated you to apply for Erasmus?"*

I'm Emre Kutlar, a 4th-year Chemical Engineering student. I went to the University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy (UCTM) in Sofia, Bulgaria. What motivated me to apply for Erasmus was simply myself. Back when I was studying Chemical Technology before transferring to Chemical Engineering, I really wanted to take part in the program. However, Erasmus applications weren't accepted for 2-year associate degrees. So, I first transferred to a bachelor's program, and then I finally applied for Erasmus.

*"Before going, what were you most curious or worried about?"*

Since I had never been to Bulgaria, I didn't know what to expect, and I was a bit anxious about the cold weather. When I arrived, I found a very welcoming environment. People my age were especially helpful and spoke English much better than the older generation. So, when asking for directions, it's definitely a good idea to approach someone your own age :) As for the cold, I realized it's actually something you can get used to—and even grow to like. Still, packing warm clothes is highly recommended!

I was mainly curious about cultural differences, especially daily life and food culture. In the end, I didn't face too many differences, and after a while, I really started to feel at home there.



Campus



Student dorms



Sofia Aleksandr Nevski Cathedral

*“Did you face any difficulties with the visa, accommodation, or registration process? How did you handle them?”*

I didn't have any problems with the visa process; I received a positive response within three weeks. I stayed in a dormitory. During registration, there was a moment when I couldn't fully communicate in English, but a peer from my age group stepped in and helped me. I handed in my documents to the exchange coordinator and received my student card the next day. Apart from that, I didn't face any other issues during registration.

*“What were the courses, professors, and campus life like at the university? Compared to here, what stood out to you?”*

The courses were largely in line with the course catalog of our department. In theoretical classes, we sometimes prepared and delivered presentations in English, which was a great way to practice speaking. In laboratory classes, we learned about analyses, conducting experiments, and using instruments for instrumental analysis. We were able to work individually in the lab as well. The professors I met were very supportive; maybe because we were Erasmus students, I felt comfortable asking questions—just as easily as I would at home.

*“How were the living costs (accommodation, transportation, food, etc.)?”*

I think it was easy to manage. I didn't have any special strategy, because when you consider the purchasing power, the living costs were quite affordable. In particular, transportation and food were much cheaper compared to what I was used to.

*“How was your social life, in terms of friendships and meeting new people?”*

Social life was really enjoyable. Meeting and making friends with Erasmus students from different parts of Europe was a very positive experience for me.

*“What was the most surprising or challenging aspect of Bulgarian culture for you?”*

I was surprised by how much espresso people drink in the mornings and the fact that they hardly ever add milk to their coffee. The most challenging part was that, due to cultural habits, the student dormitories didn't have washing machines.

Sofia Med factory visit



*“What was the biggest academic benefit Erasmus gave you? And personally, what helped you grow the most?”*

Academically, the biggest contribution was improving my English speaking skills through the presentations I prepared and delivered. Personally, it was the fact that I spent six months completely away from my family, which meant facing life on my own. In that sense, it was a valuable opportunity for self-development.

*“Did this experience change the way you look at life or your career plans?”*

Yes, it did. Before Erasmus, I was a less disciplined person and used to think that things would somehow work out. But thanks to the people I met and the environment I experienced, I realized that life doesn't work that way—discipline really needs to be at the center of your life. As for my career plans, my perspective has shifted toward pursuing a master's degree abroad, and I truly hope to make that happen one day.



*UCTM Chemical Engineering  
Student Laboratories*

*“What advice would you give to students who want to go on Erasmus?”*

I would recommend that they use their financial resources wisely so they can travel as much as possible, communicate effectively with professors at the host university, and not be shy about seeking experiences and opportunities.

*“If you had to summarize your Erasmus in three words, what would they be?”*

Travel, learn, discover.



*A moment from the Seven Rila Lakes hike  
and new friendships*



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