

Laima





Steunpunt  
Inclusief  
Hoger  
Onderwijs

This portrait of Laima was created by Laima, Delphine Callewaert and Delfien Versaevel, under the authority and guidance of SIHO.

Laima about her interests and international experiences:

Music

Literature

Erasmus: Am I able to go?

Erasmus: A shared dream

Erasmus: Physical adaptation

Studies

Friends

Muscular dystrophy

Writing

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# Music

Singing is what I  
can't live without.

I grew up in a small village  
and all the time I was  
dreaming about someone  
who could play the  
guitar for me

as I was too weak to  
do this by myself.

When I began my studies  
in Vytautas Magnus  
University I met a girl.

It could sound quite  
simple but she played  
the guitar. I sang with  
Ieva for two years.

When I went on  
Erasmus I thought  
I would have a few months

without the music of a  
guitar. But in a youth house  
in Rennes, I met an Erasmus  
student from Madagascar  
who could play the instrument.

The boy accompanied me  
in a talent show in the  
school and in a concert  
which was organized  
by the school radio.

I spent lots of evenings  
singing in France  
and it made me feel  
at home.

This simply story  
shows that nothing  
is impossible,  
if you really want it.



# Literature

When I have time  
off I like to spend it  
on reading books.  
I guess this is the reason  
why I have chosen to study  
Lithuanian philology.

I have bought so many  
books... that I still haven't  
had the time to read  
them all.

But I think that there  
is a special time  
for each thing to be  
done. So there will come  
a time when I will take a  
specific book that  
was waiting for me  
for a year or more...

When I am allowed  
to read what I want,

I prefer books  
that are written by  
Lithuanian authors  
because I think that  
I can't read other  
stuff without knowing  
important things of  
my home country.

For me it looks like  
all the books that were written  
from the 19th century till now,  
have a strong historical value,  
because it is mainly about  
people.

Understanding  
the feelings and the  
perceptions in the lives of  
different generations seems  
essential to me to  
understand and  
appreciate life now.





## Erasmus: Am I able to go?

I started to dream  
about Erasmus  
in early spring. I  
kept my dream  
to myself and no one  
knew about this.

I didn't want to talk  
about it out loud,  
because of the idea that if  
everyone  
knows a dream,  
it will not come true.

'Am I able to go?'  
was the first question  
on my mind  
when I began to think  
about going abroad.

For me,  
all things in my life  
happen so easily.

I just need to  
dream a little  
about what I want  
to happen and  
it becomes true.

I wasn't afraid to  
dream, but when I was  
reading offers of my  
home university to go  
abroad I always noticed  
the sentences with extra  
information for people  
with disabilities.

Well just one sentence,  
and one main  
question that kept  
coming back: 'Am I able to go?'

Still I stayed positive.  
Thinking positive  
comes rather natural

to me.

And I know that I  
could not reach half  
of the things I have  
now without this  
way of thinking.

## Erasmus: A shared dream

Once,  
during a lecture,  
I told my friend  
Rita. She was very  
enthusiastic and  
said she wanted  
to go on Erasmus as  
well. Since that day  
we dreamed about  
going on Erasmus  
together.

First we wanted to  
go to Finland for one year,  
because rumor has it that  
Northern countries are  
more open and adapted  
to people with  
physical disabilities.  
But as I know now  
it was just rumor...

On the final day Finland  
rejected our applications,  
because we didn't have  
enough experience  
to study the objects  
we had chosen  
and because it wasn't possible  
to match the lectures of  
Finland with the lectures  
we had in our  
home university.

All that was left was  
France, the ESC Rennes  
School of Business that  
we had given up as  
a second choice,  
just in case...

Going to France was a  
little intimidating,  
because we didn't know

the language.  
Though all the lectures  
would be in English we  
were still concerned  
about the rest of the  
communication.

On the 5th of September  
we arrived in France and  
the communication with  
the school was more  
successful than I  
would have ever expected.

When I look back I can say  
that the experience abroad  
was very positive and  
successful I feel really lucky  
for the things I experienced.

Now that I'm home,  
I definitely know the  
answer to my question:  
'I am able!'

Still, I think Lithuania is  
my home,  
my place,  
to live, laugh, sing  
and create...



# Erasmus: Physical adaptation

In relation to physical adaptation to the new environment

I can say that it was easy and convenient.

The school in Rennes was located in a new building so it was accessible for me. They said they would try anything to make me feel comfortable.

As the dormitories of the school were not adapted to people with physical disabilities they looked for an accommodation for

me and Rita that fitted my needs.

Those kind of positive experiences encourage me to go to places with less fear and to have more trust in people that are going to take care of me.

The woman responsible for all Erasmus students even helped me to find a physiotherapist that was needed for a more comfortable stay in a foreign country.

When all things like this had been taken care of, fewer worries were left.

To get to school we needed to take one bus.

As all the busses were suitable to drive in with a wheelchair it wasn't hard for us to travel through the city and even to the island of St. Michel.

In St. Michel we found hundreds of stairs but with the help of my Lithuanian friend, who was an Erasmus student as well, we reached the top of the castle!  
The view was amazing...

It might sound funny or strange, but in France I experienced

what it means to travel by train and it was really comfortable! In Lithuania we just have a few trains that are adapted to people in a wheelchair so I hadn't had many chances to use it.

The other thing that surprised me were the pavements.

It was easy to drive on and off as they were not so high. In Lithuania it is almost impossible for me to drive without any help, as I encounter so many obstacles.

## In Rennes

we were able to go anywhere! I guess that is one of the reasons why I liked Rennes so much.

While studying in ESC Rennes School of Business we had one week off.

Me and my friend decided to go to Barcelona for a few days. And there the rumor that Southern countries are less prepared to accept people with a physical disability collapsed!

I can say the same good things about the transport system and the pavements as I said about France.

It was so easy to explore this warm city and we felt really welcome!



# Studies

In Lithuania I  
study Economics.  
I'm in my third year now.  
Two years ago I also  
started up my studies  
in Lithuanian  
Philology and I started  
up French lessons  
since I got back  
from my Erasmus  
experience in  
Rennes.

Lithuanian philology  
is something very  
interesting to me.  
It's something that I do  
because I absolutely love it.

I found the lessons  
in Economics better

in France then in  
my home country.  
I feel like they are  
more practical.

At home, I sometimes  
have the impression  
that I learn things,  
that I won't be  
needing in my life.  
Also, I noticed that  
the lessons were up to date  
and I found the books

in France more  
current. I guess it  
takes more time to  
have them translated  
in Lithuanian.

When I have to  
go to my lectures,  
there is always someone  
who can help me

but in winter we  
have lot of snow  
so sometimes I can't  
reach my university  
even with the help. Then  
I stay at home to work.  
This, of course, requires more  
responsibility and discipline.  
Till now I was able to cope  
with it and I hope I will  
keep doing this in the future.

# Friends

Though I can take care of myself  
when I am at home,  
moving outside is quite hard  
for me.

But on Erasmus

I didn't even get the chance  
to worry about this  
because I wasn't alone.

My three friends

Rita, Karolina and Zygintas  
were always prepared to  
help me.

We traveled together and,  
as I have already mentioned,  
we even reached the top of St.  
Michel!

Before going on Erasmus  
I knew Rita for about a year,  
and I still can't explain why  
I felt so close to her...

I can't say that I knew  
Zygintas and Karolina as good  
as I knew Rita before the  
experience abroad  
but Erasmus changed us a lot.

My friendship with Zygintas  
and  
Karoline began exactly there,  
in Rennes.

We have spent so many  
time together.

Talking,  
drinking French wine,  
making dinner,  
exploring Rennes and other  
cities...

All those things made us  
almost  
inseparable.

And now when we  
are home again

we are still very close  
and I guess that is something  
that we will be for the rest  
of our lives.





## Muscular dystrophy

When I was eight years old  
I began to feel the first  
signs of my disability.  
It is called muscular  
dystrophy.

It means that my muscles  
lose their strength and power.

When I was younger I  
could not even think  
that I would have ever  
been able to call  
my disability a gift  
but a few years ago  
I finally understood...  
Because of my  
disability I am able to  
see the same things  
in a different way.

When I ask for any kind  
of help I can tell if

a person is honest or  
not by the answer, the  
tone of their voice,  
the expression on their  
face... Also I appreciate  
simple things more,  
because everything  
I do requires more  
effort.

For example, in the evenings I  
have to think about who will  
help me get to university, what  
I will be doing in my spare  
time in between classes, what  
books that I will need for the  
whole day,

where that I will  
have my dinner,  
who will bring me  
home... All those simple  
things are essential to me.

Now I know that this kind  
of thinking helps me to  
control my time and to  
develop my patience.



# Writing

I categorize writing in  
the same group as singing  
and reading,  
because I can't  
imagine living without  
it. I don't write novels  
or so... but I really  
love writing letters.

I think it's a miracle  
that everyone seems  
to forget.

Of course, typing is  
more useful and  
efficient nowadays...

But what a great feeling  
to receive a letter!

To me, writing letters  
to the people I love is  
a big pleasure that  
can't be replaced

by a new technology.

When I was I Rennes  
I wrote  
more than sixty letters...  
most of them were for my  
beloved.

I find it wonderful to see  
how much power  
handwriting on a sheet of  
paper  
can have and what  
joy it can bring.

Now I am dreaming about  
learning calligraphy...  
And I will be able to do it  
soon.

