

# Summer Semester 2020 – A ESN Report

A Semester different from any other before it, the Summer Semester of 2020 was marked by a global pandemic which halted travel, closed most public spaces, and brought a full lockdown for months, which impacted the normal life of everyone in a way that most people alive would have never imagined.



*Our improv cover for the Semester*

The Erasmus Student Network was project born in 1989 from a meeting of the European Commission with the first students participating in the Erasmus program and from a common desire for **the *Enrichment of society through international students*, which became our core mission**. For this, we, evolving in a global network present in 42 countries, **promote mobility with the commitment of improving international education and providing self-development opportunities to two million young people, fostering intercultural understanding and creating positive change in society.**

**42** countries    **1000<sup>+</sup>** HEIs    **15 000<sup>+</sup>** volunteers    **350 000<sup>+</sup>** students

Clearly, the pandemic was a great challenge for all of us. Mobility of any kind became almost a tabu and our reason of existence was shaken. But we did manage to surpass this challenge.

**One of our strengths in ESN Göttingen is the ease and quickness that we to adapt and react to new challenges.**

In collaboration with other five ESN Sections in the region, we developed and launched in a matter of days a new planning of online events to somehow still welcome and support the exchange and international students who had arrive on the weeks prior to the lockdown or who were left in a limbo at home, not knowing if they would still experience any mobility program.



## From March to May

### From March to May we had the following online events

Online Göttingen City Tour – 29<sup>th</sup> march

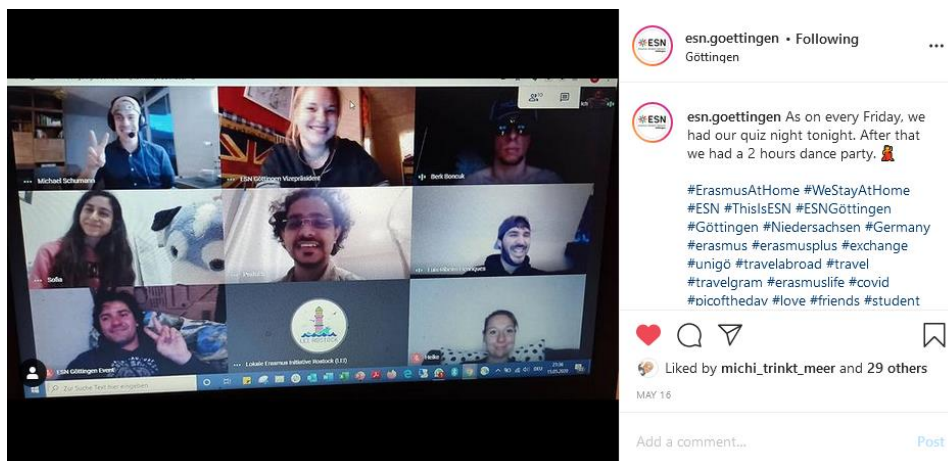
Language Café – every Tuesday

Stammtisch – every Wednesday

Game Night – every Thursday

Quiz night – every Friday

While during March and April the internationals did join our events in enough numbers, by May the number of students joining had drastically decreased. This was something observed at basically all more than 50 German universities where ESN is present.



*Friday's Quiz Night, one of our most popular events*

Our conclusion is that there is a limit for how long the students find these online events as a good alternative they want to join, and that limit has been reached.

While events and activities are most of our activity as an organisation, they are not all we do. **During this period we also provided support to all international students** by sharing updates on the COVID-19 situation in Göttingen/Germany and sharing updates on the measurer and regulations; we provided support to the international students with all sort of questions about their studies in Göttingen and all sort of bureaucratic problems, either by answering and helping them when we ourselves knew the answer, or by providing them the right places or contacts to get all the answers and help they needed. During this time, we also had various students sharing being depressed or demotivated, which we tried to help and support to the best of our capacities. While not restricted to international students only, had a harder impact on

the ones that had just arrived on a foreign land knowing nothing or no one, and less than a week after where forced to not leave their rooms for the next three months.

**While talking with the students**, both internationals and Germans, **most of them seem to have the opinion that they themselves and everyone else is tired of online events** and that next semester, if they have the option to either participate on an online event or having the possibility of meeting their own friends or simply do something else outside home, they will not join an online event.

This is a topic discussed with ESNers from different countries on the Network and the feeling seems to be the same all around Europe. **Students are tired of online events.**

## From June to September

Then in June the end of the lockdown finally came, which had become the most awaited moment of the Semester, and with it the possibility of organising physical events again.

**Following the rules and guidelines imposed at the time, we started organising events again.** We decided for outdoor events only, like Sports, Hikes, Bike Tours, and some City Tours near Göttingen (to avoid too long in a confined space like a train). The number of participants per group never exceed 10 people and the use of mask was always compulsory in urban spaces.

### In July we had the following events

Bike Tour 3 Lakes – 4<sup>th</sup> July

BBQ – 8<sup>th</sup> July

Hike & Biking to Burg Plesse – 11<sup>th</sup> July

Trip to Burg Hardenberg – 15<sup>th</sup> July

Canoe Tour – 25<sup>th</sup> July

Trip to Hardeggen – 29<sup>th</sup> July

Both our team and the internationals were longing for fresh air events again, which allowed us to again offer events almost twice per week, put also put some strains on our team, as the registrations for the events were higher than the available spots we could offer.



*Hike to Burg Plesse*



Taking as example the Trip to Burg Hardenberg, we manage to offer three groups of 10 people each, but even so there was a waiting list of more people who wanted to participate.

### **In August we had the following events**

Trip to Schloss Marienburg – 1<sup>st</sup> August

Beach Volleyball Tournament – 5<sup>th</sup> August

Tree Top Trail – 8<sup>th</sup> August

Trip to Wilhelmshöhe – 19<sup>th</sup> August

Goslar City Tour – 22<sup>nd</sup> August

**Another different aspect from past years**, instead of our normal Summer break when we would reduce the number of organised activities to one-two per month between the exam phase and the arrival of the new exchange students, **this year we kept organising up to two events per week**. Also different from past years was that the number of participants did not decrease in August at all. We took that as being partly an effect of the past lockdown, with people wanting to participate and do as much activities as possible, and partly as a signal that our events were of high quality and interest for all the participants.



*Our Beach Volleyball Tournament*

### **In September we had the following events**

Art event: Collage – 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Trip to Eisenach & Wartburg Castle – 5<sup>th</sup> September

Tour to Hardenberg Distillery – 9<sup>th</sup> September

Hameln City Tour – 12<sup>th</sup> September

Bouldering – 16<sup>th</sup> September

Games in the Park – 19<sup>th</sup> September

Table Tennis Tournament – 23<sup>rd</sup> September

Planet Route Hike – 30<sup>th</sup> September

To finalise the Summer Semester, having understood that the **internationals and some locals still wanted to have plenty of events during the semester break**, and now knowing for sure that our hygienic concept to protect against an outbreak at our events was properly working, we kept organising two events per week, which proved to be quite popular. In September we had a mix of cultural events and more sporty events to enjoy the good weather we still had during this time of the year.

**The beginning of the Summer Semester 2020 might have been full of surprises and setbacks for our normal activity and events, but we managed to overcome them, providing a safe Summer full of activities promoting intercultural exchange and fostering intercultural communication** between our participants, both local and international, and with our volunteers. We reached the end of this semester full of energy and motivation to face the upcoming challenges of the Winter Semester 20/21.



*Our Games in the Park event at Schillerwiese*

## Overview of all Events

### March-June

Online Göttingen City Tour – 29<sup>th</sup> March

Language Café – every Tuesday

Stammtisch – every Wednesday

Game Night – every Thursday

Quiz night – every Friday

### July

Bike Tour 3 Lakes – 4<sup>th</sup> July

BBQ – 8<sup>th</sup> July

Hike & Biking to Burg Plesse – 11<sup>th</sup> July

Trip to Burg Hardenberg – 15<sup>th</sup> July

Canoe Tour – 25<sup>th</sup> July

Trip to Hardegsen – 29<sup>th</sup> July

### August

Trip to Schloss Marienburg – 1<sup>st</sup> August

Beach Volleyball Tournament – 5<sup>th</sup> August

Tree Top Trail – 8<sup>th</sup> August

Trip to Wilhelmshöhe – 19<sup>th</sup> August

Goslar City Tour – 22<sup>nd</sup> August

### September

Art event: Collage – 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Trip to Eisenach & Wartburg Castle – 5<sup>th</sup> September

Tour to Hardenberg Distillery – 9<sup>th</sup> September

Hameln City Tour – 12<sup>th</sup> September

Bouldering – 16<sup>th</sup> September

Games in the Park – 19<sup>th</sup> September

Table Tennis Tournament – 23<sup>rd</sup> September

Planet Route Hike – 30<sup>th</sup> September