

Exchange Program E-Paper 1

By: Melina Kurniawan (106933031)

My exchange program journey started with my tight and busy schedule, tough process (complicated visa procedures, many rejections on accommodation application process, unhelpful solutions from partner school staffs, and the list went on), and unpleasant updates about Paris. I felt so grateful and nervous at the same time. It was my first-time travel to a very far place alone. It was 2.5-hour flight to Guangzhou, China and another 11-hour flight to Paris plus 6.5-hour transit.

I got accepted for a semester exchange program in ESCP Europe Paris. One day before my flight to Paris, I just came back from 10 days leisure trip to Japan. I arrived in my dorm at midnight, January 1st of 2019. Thank to my Indonesian friends, despite of my tiredness, I still managed to have a short New Year celebration in their room. My flight to Paris was in January 2nd afternoon. With not much spare time to spend, I managed to clean up and packed all my stuffs, had a short rest, deal with the leaving dormitory procedures, did a short but quality farewell party with IMBA office staffs. I was so exhausted.

Unlike many other students who go exchange enthusiastically, I was worried about many things. I still remember the mixed feeling I felt during my way to Taoyuan airport and while waiting for the flight. I did not know what will happen to me in Paris. There were many questions and uncertainty inside my head at that time. The protests by Gillet Jeune just happened and became a serious issue in Paris. This made me more worried and could not really enjoy the new journey I would start.

Moreover, by that time I feel that I just settled and got comfortable in Taiwan. I got a job as a teaching assistant. My students (who are also my friends) loved the way I taught them. I felt so happy that I had chance to assist and help them. I was also a member of IMBA student council, which helped me know more people and make my social network broader. I also had a part-time job in a well-known Indonesian company with good salary. I enjoyed all the things I did at that time. But while I just felt so comfortable, I needed to leave to a new place with all the uncertainty.

I knew no one in Paris. I also could not speak French and I heard that French people will treat you differently if you cannot speak French. They even could ignore you altogether if you do not speak French. I also did not really like French in the beginning. I tried to learn some basic French during summer holiday. But, I found out it was too hard for me. I knew that Paris is a beautiful city of light with so much history behind. But, I am not sure I can enjoy all of that beauty and story. I did not really sure why do I choose Paris in the very beginning. But, it has been decided and I had to go and complete this exchange program.

With all the courage I have, I finished the program well. I got a wonderful and valuable experience that cannot be bought or traded with anything. A few months live in Paris gave me many life lessons and make me more open minded. I learned many things that made me know myself better, what I really like and not, what I really want to do in the future, what the biggest dreams I really want to pursue are, and so on. I realize that I still lack on many things. I still do not know a lot of things. I need to be more open with new environment and people. Moreover, life is about learning. There is no end of knowledge.