

Erasmus Experience Report

28th International Summer School: Conflict Transformation and Social Work

Liège, Belgium | June 28 – July 3, 2026

I am a Master's student of Intercultural Conflict Management at Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences (ASH Berlin). From June 28 to July 3, 2026, I had the opportunity to participate in the 28th International Summer School on "Conflict Transformation and Social Work," held in Liège, Belgium, and jointly organized by the Haute École de la Province de Liège (HEPL), Alice Salomon Hochschule (ASH) Berlin, and the University of Applied Sciences Salzburg (FH Salzburg). The program brought together students and professors from these three partner institutions to explore the intersection of conflict transformation and social work through lectures, workshops, and field visits. The working language throughout the program was English. This report summarizes my experience, from the administrative preparations before departure to the key insights I gained throughout the week.

The organization of the exchange was handled efficiently by the ASH International Office. Learning agreements were signed well in advance, the Erasmus top-up grants were transferred on time, and communication with the office was consistent and reliable throughout the process. In the weeks before departure, professors and program coordinators held online information and introduction sessions, which gave all participants a clear overview of the schedule, the academic content, and practical arrangements. This preparation made the transition into the program in Liège smooth and stress-free.

Upon arrival, all guest students were accommodated at the Erasmus House, which offered a friendly, welcoming, and comfortable environment. Staying together with participants from the other institutions made it easy to get to know one another from the very first day. The program officially began with a welcome party on June 28, which set a warm and open tone for the week ahead and gave students an informal first chance to connect before the academic sessions started.

The first day began with welcoming speeches, followed by a presentation from Dr. Alfredo Langa on the topic of conflict transformation. This was followed by a group workshop in which students worked together to discuss and share their perspectives on real case studies, encouraging active exchange of ideas from the very start. Throughout the week, the program

continued with a series of comprehensive presentations delivered by professors and students from all three institutions, covering different theoretical and practical approaches to conflict transformation within the field of social work. Among the sessions, one of the most memorable took place on June 30 and was led by Mabel Gonzalez, an active mediator and instructor at ASH Berlin, who brought a practitioner's perspective to the theoretical content covered elsewhere in the program. In this session, we analyzed the Iran-US memorandum of understanding, signed only a few weeks earlier, working in small groups before presenting our analysis to the rest of the class. Discussing such a recent and real-world example of conflict in practice, and then defending our group's interpretation in front of our peers, made the theoretical concepts we had studied feel immediately relevant and tangible.

A particularly valuable part of the program was the field trip component. My group visited "Le Monde des Possibles," an NGO working with refugees and asylum seekers in Liège. The organization runs a range of projects designed to support the integration of refugees into Belgian society and to ease their daily lives, from practical assistance to social and cultural integration initiatives. One project stood out to me in particular: an interpretation project in which refugees who speak more than one language are trained over a period of three months and then given the opportunity to support newly arrived refugees by interpreting for them in government offices until they learn the local language. I found this especially interesting because people who share a similar background and experience tend to understand one another's struggles more deeply, and when given the opportunity to help, they generally do their utmost to support those going through hard times. This visit gave me direct insight into how conflict transformation principles are applied in real community-based social work, and how organizations translate theoretical frameworks into concrete support for vulnerable groups.

The summer school concluded on July 3, 2026, with closing remarks from professors representing all three partner institutions, followed by the distribution of attendance certificates to all participants.

This experience reinforced how important Erasmus programs are in giving students the chance to meet people from different cultural, academic, and professional backgrounds, to learn from their experiences, and to share their own perspectives in return. I also gained a much deeper understanding of how conflict transformation and social work intersect and reinforce one another, and why it is essential for social workers to be familiar with different conflict

transformation approaches in their practice. Beyond this, I came to appreciate the different points of view social workers can bring to the same event or case, depending on their background, training, and approach, and how valuable it is to compare these perspectives in a group setting. Working alongside students and professors from different institutions also strengthened my ability to collaborate across cultural and disciplinary boundaries, a skill that is increasingly essential in international social work. Finally, the program allowed me to build connections with peers and academics from Belgium, Germany, and Austria, some of which I hope to maintain for future collaboration or academic exchange.

If there is one aspect that could be improved, it would be that some sessions were held in a hybrid format because certain lecturers were unable to attend in person. This occasionally lowered the level of engagement compared to the fully in-person sessions, and is something that could be addressed in future editions of the program.

In addition to the academic and personal gains, I also received 5 ECTS credits upon successful completion of the program. Beyond the formal recognition, the knowledge and skills I gained are directly relevant to my studies in Intercultural Conflict Management, and I expect the perspectives and connections built during this summer school to continue benefiting me both academically and professionally in the future.

Overall, the 28th International Summer School in Liège was a highly enriching experience, both academically and personally. It offered a well-organized combination of theoretical input, collaborative workshops, and hands-on fieldwork that deepened my understanding of conflict transformation within social work practice. Beyond the academic content, the program highlighted the immense value of Erasmus exchanges: they open doors for students to step outside their familiar environments, engage directly with different cultures and educational systems, and build a genuinely international perspective on their field of study. Programs like this one are not just about gaining knowledge; they foster empathy, adaptability, and a broader worldview that stays with students long after the program ends, shaping them into more open-minded and globally aware professionals.