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Student Experience Report:

Erasmus+ Scholarship for the University of Stavanger

Preparation

As an Erasmus Mundus student in the European Master's of Migration and Intercultural Relations (EMMIR) program, my semester at the University of Stavanger (UiS) was a part of my degree requirements, which made the planning feel a lot easier than it might otherwise be. From the start, I had strong support from my program director and the International Office at Oldenburg, and the process itself was fairly straightforward:

1. Apply to UiS as a visiting student and submit a learning agreement listing your intended courses.
2. Apply for Erasmus+ funding.
3. Apply for university housing through UiS (highly recommended — more on that below).
4. Book your transportation!
5. Embark on the adventure.

One practical note: Stavanger is an expensive city (Norway in general is), so it's worth budgeting carefully in advance and researching the cheapest grocery stores before you arrive. Kiwi and Rema 1000 are your best friends.

Travel and Arrival

I flew into Stavanger right after Christmas break, and by coincidence, I was met with two familiar faces; two of my classmates from Oldenburg had booked the same flight, so we were already traveling together!

Upon landing in Stavanger, I quickly found out that one of my checked suitcases didn't make the flight. I've traveled enough that this wasn't a crisis, and thankfully, I had most of what I needed in my carry-on. My bag turned up three days later, and I learned an important lesson: disperse your essentials across bags.

From the airport, my friend and I took an Uber to the student dorms, which took about 20 minutes. I'd originally planned to take the bus, but after a long travel day (with missing luggage), the extra cost felt completely worth it. Sometimes convenience takes the cake.

Accommodation

I stayed in a student dorm about a 10-minute walk from the UiS campus, and it was genuinely one of the best parts of the semester. When I arrived, a friend who had moved in a week earlier met me at the door and helped haul my 23 kg suitcase up five flights of stairs. Needless to say, neither of us went to the gym that day.

My flat shared a kitchen with seven others: two from Italy, one from Brazil, one from Turkey, two from Norway, and me from the United States. We cooked together, taught each other phrases in our languages, talked about politics and culture late into the night, had study sessions, threw pizza parties, and even cried together sometimes, too. I feel incredibly lucky for my kitchenmates.

My strong recommendation: apply for student housing. It's the fastest route to community, and that makes all the difference in a Norwegian winter – trust me!

Studying at UiS

The courses I took were all directly relevant to my EMMIR degree:

- Emigration and Immigration in a Northern Perspective
- Intercultural Education, Integration, and Social Protection
- Migration, Gender, and Work

The professors were excellent, and the Scandinavian academic style, which tends to be discussion-based and student-centered, was a good fit. The grading system was comparable to Oldenburg's, and because UiS is a partner university within the EMMIR network, credit transfer was uncomplicated.

Outside the classroom, the university offers a surprising range of free events for students: academic workshops, film screenings, Waffle Mondays (!), and museum tours. I even attended a mental health-themed sauna session organized by the student union, where we talked about wellbeing as we steamed and jumped into the ice-cold fjord.

Everyday Life and Leisure

Stavanger is a small city, but there's plenty to do, especially if you love the outdoors. I spent most of my free time at the gym, at cafes with friends, or out exploring. UiS has a fantastic student gym that offers classes including yoga, Pilates, and bouldering, which was a lifesaver during the dark winter months when getting outside wasn't always appealing.

When the weather cooperated, there were fun adventures nearby: ferry rides through the fjords, hikes in the mountains, overnight stays in cabins, and explorations of Viking history and Norwegian culture. A group of us also took a weekend trip to Bergen for a bigger-city feel, which was absolutely worth it. We were surprised the first time the bus drove right onto the ferry and took us across the fjord.

Conclusion and Tips

My memories of Stavanger will stay with me for a long time. Here's what I'd tell the next student heading to UiS:

1. **Live in student housing.** If you want to meet people, this is the way. Dormitory living creates instant community, especially useful when you're far from home.

2. **Take full advantage of student activities.** They're free, they're genuinely fun, and they're one of the best ways to meet people outside your program.
3. **Go on a cabin trip.** Some of my best memories are going to nearby Flørli and staying two nights at a cabin. We did lots of hiking, and it was a blast!
4. **Join the gym.** Especially in January and February, when it's dark and cold, having a place to move your body and see people makes all the difference.
5. **Budget for Norway.** It's expensive. Shop at Kiwi or Rema 1000, cook with your flatmates, and take advantage of the free activities. I ate a lot of pasta while I was there!
6. **Pack smart.** Split your essentials across bags. Your future self, standing in a Stavanger dorm waiting for a delayed suitcase, will thank you.

This opportunity was made possible by the Erasmus+ scholarship, and I'm incredibly grateful for it. For anyone in the EMMIR program heading to Stavanger, get ready for a delightful experience!

