

## Student Experience Report

May 2023

EMMIR

As a non fee paying student of the European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations (EMMIR), I received an Erasmus+ stipend that supported me during my mobility journey. As part of the mobility, my first semester took place at the University of Oldenburg (UOL), Germany. During the second semester, I, along with my Masters colleagues departed together to the University of Stavanger (UiS), Norway.

### **Planning**

Preparations started two to three months before departure. We had to apply for the Erasmus grant by the deadline and choose our modules in the host university. We also had to apply to UiS and complete some document requirements. Additionally, we applied for accommodation in Norway as soon as possible. Private accommodation was very expensive, that most of us applied for student dorms. Travel also had to be planned ahead of time to ensure we got the best of prices, especially that the travel was around the holiday season.

### **Travel & accommodation**

I booked a flight from Berlin to Stavanger, with a transit in Oslo. I had many luggage that made it challenging to travel by train. Other colleagues booked trains and Ferry rides, and although their trips were longer, they got to enjoy the beautiful road. Many also planned their trips in groups. During my return trip, I booked a long bus trip from Stavanger to Oslo, and then from Oslo to Stavanger. It was well worth it. Arriving to Stavanger on my own at night, made it challenging to find my dorm. The weather was also windy and rainy. It was easy however to approach strangers, bus drivers, and workers and ask them any questions I had. Most if not all the people I met in Norway speak English, and were helpful when approached with a question. I arrived to my dorm on campus. The room was clean and well kept. It was well heated and furnished, and had its own bathroom. In that dorm, the kitchen was shared with the whole floor. What was really nice is that access to laundry machines was free in all the university dorms.

### **Host university**

UiS was a stunning place. The courses were part of the same program and it was a planned part of mobility so there was not a big difference. However, I noticed a more laid back approach to studying. One of our modules was heavily focused on study trips, presentations and guest lectures. As a final assignment, we were also able to choose doing a digital story or podcast over a research paper. The EMMIR team in the university was so helpful. They took the time to show us around Stavanger, and to

discuss with us some aspects of Norwegian culture as well as answering our questions about the country. We didn't face any problems with the credits system since the semester in Norway is a planned part of our Masters mobility. The university and its facilities are also very modern with a beautiful visual interior. You can find comfort anywhere in the university, whether in the library, cafeteria, classes or the "data labs" dedicated to study. There was a strong student body as well planning free activities for students throughout the semester: from Waffle Monday every week, to parties and a Fjord trip. Those looking to socialize with other international students will have a blast.

### **Life and leisure**

If you are a nature lover, Norway is for you. Hiking, camping, rock climbing are all activities that you can enjoy for free in the stunning nature of Norway. When it comes to expenses, Norway is far more expensive than Germany. For example, while around 30 Euros for Groceries was enough for me in Germany (in addition to some meals at university), I would pay around 60 Euros in weekly groceries in Stavanger. Salmon and fish products were among the most affordable. While vegetable and meats were more expensive. Meals at the university were also not cheap. There are no special student prices, and one plate can end up costing from 5 to 12 Euros based on weight. Going out to restaurants or drinking outside was very expensive, that many of us never went during the semester. The free activities that the university were helpful, and sometimes food was offered. Leisure in Norway is focused on nature activities when the weather allows, and maybe clubbing. Other paid activities were not affordable for everyone. The weather in Stavanger was not much colder than Oldenburg in my opinion; However, the wind and rapidly changing weather were really annoying. One has to come prepared. Day hours are also very short in winter. Going to class under snow and in the dark was a new experience to me. If you come in the spring semester, this will not be for too long as the day quickly starts to get longer, and during the spring and summer you enjoy very long day hours and beautiful weather and nature.

### **Tips**

Do organize and plan everything for your stay before arrival.

Do pay attention to deadlines and stick to them.

Do come well prepared with suitable clothing depends on your destination.

Do get to know other students and locals if possible.

Do learn to properly cook and take care of housework, as this will usually save you money

Don't underestimate the effect of the weather and daylight time on your mental health.

Don't isolate from your colleagues or friends.

Don't neglect your studies for leisure events. Have a healthy balance.

## **Conclusion**

Departing for an Erasmus semester can be very overwhelming, but it is well worth it. Choose the place and country that speak to you, and grab the chance to indulge in the culture: meet locals, try the food and the language. It is always comforting to share your journey with others around you, whether colleagues, roommates or acquaintances. You will meet very interesting and like-minded individuals. It is always wise to have everything well planned and organized in advance so that you can get the enjoy the actual life when you go for your semester. Good luck!