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University of Oldenburg

Exchange Erasmus Student  
University of Stavanger  
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To the international office of the University of Oldenburg,

I am Irene Vettiyadan, candidate for the European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations at the University of Oldenburg. As part of my Erasmus Mundus programme, I have spent my second semester (January - June 2024) in Norway, at the University of Stavanger.

The courses I have participated in were:

1. *Emigration and Immigration: a Northern European Perspective;*
2. *Arts based approaches to working with migration in educational contexts;*
3. *Migration, Integration and Social Protection;*
4. *Intercultural Education.*

I had the incredible opportunity to engage with highly global and intercultural methodologies combined with case studies on Norway and its diaspora. Two of our courses were also conducted by guest professors from the academic institution in Nova Gorica, Slovenia. Not only the courses had a practical approach, but the community in the city of Stavanger was open and enabled me to discover different diaspora networks.

Our classes were held at the education faculty of the University of Stavanger, where we could engage with Norwegian students of the department as well and we had the chance to interact more thanks to our professor who organised a common class for us. The University per se offered many spaces and platforms for international and local students to meet and mingle. Many are the international students who choose to come for higher studies as full time or exchange participants. Indeed, some of my colleagues and I became active members of political student associations, regional and religious student organisations, collectives and clubs. For example, I will never forget the Africa Day celebrations planned by the Pan African Students' Union where we could discover all the different countries' cultures, play games, try a variety of cuisines, and dance until late to Afro beats. Weekly events would also happen on campus at the library cafe and the student house bar, where every Monday there

were free waffles or presentations from different countries. All these student organised events were a key part of my life as an Erasmus student in Stavanger. We had the opportunity to connect with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and academic fields, we eventually made new friends and took advantage to discover together also the local culture, attractions, experiences.

Coming back to the academic experience, I must admit that I never felt this comfortable and creative about my academic assignments. In fact, at the University of Stavanger I found professors to be very approachable, open to ideas and alternative learning methods. For the first time I was offered a different option to submit my research projects rather than the standardised research paper assignment. I could experiment with podcasting and use the available technology and technical devices at the campus, I could use personal experiences, life stories and everyday observations that were finally credited in the research environment I found there.

Overall, my erasmus exchange time at the University of Stavanger has been a time for personal and professional growth both. It was an opportunity for me to engage with diverse cultures, fields of studies and approach academia differently and explore alternative methods.

Stavanger, 14/06/2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Irene Vethiyandam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line separating the first and last names.