

Experience report study abroad semester

How was it?

You may have heard this question more often now that you are at the end of your semester abroad. The International Center would also like to know how you evaluate your semester abroad and what you need to know. The experience reports will be published and serve to help orient others going abroad. The International Office would also like to use the contents for advertising purposes if necessary. We would therefore like you to keep this in mind when filling out the report.

1. General information

Please do not mention any personal information (name, e-mail address, etc.) in the experience report.

I agree to the publication of the report and the attached photos (there are no third parties rights to these fotos):

Yes No

Study program at EUF

B.A. European Cultures and Society

Subject combination (if BABW)

Society

Host country

Norway

Host university

University of Bergen (UiB)

Semester abroad (e.g. fall semester 2021/22)

Spring semester 2022

2. Your Experience Abroad

At this point you can share the experience you made abroad. Sometimes it is not so easy to report on such experiences in such a compressed way. We have therefore prepared some questions to help you do this. At the end of the questionnaire, you will also find a free field for you to fill in, in which you are welcome to enter aspects that are not covered by any of these questions.

How did you prepare for the semester abroad?

Introductory Norwegian course (A1) in Flensburg, buying hiking boots and warm woolen clothes

How did you establish social networks in your host country? Do you have any tips on how this can be achieved?

I have three recommendations:

- 1. Leave the ERASMUS bubble sometimes- In the beginning it is not so easy to get into contact with Norwegians. But it is certainly impossible if you just hang out with Germans or other international students.*
- 2. Be active at university and go to the lectures - University is a great place to meet people!*
- 3. Try out some of the student activities!
The gyms run by the student organisation (SAMMEN) offer a variety of sports courses. Also there are free guided hiking tours offered every Sunday in the city centre, which is great to meet new people and to explore the Norwegian landscape.
There are sailing, dancing, boxing etc. Classes offered by BSI. This is a great way to meet new friends! Also there are student parties every week in the club Fantoft.*

Did you learn the local language, respectively how important did you think it was for your stay?

I did an introductory course in Flensburg and I did the NOR INTRO course in Bergen as well. The course in Bergen is a lot of fun and a great way to meet other internationals. However, since the average English level in Norway is so high, you will not really need to speak Norwegian on a daily basis. But Norwegians will appreciate your effort and the language is not that difficult to learn.

How was the study program at the partner university structured?

(e.g. premises, workload, language of instruction, examination forms, accessibility)

What intercultural encounters/competencies shaped your stay?

UiB is a leading university in Scandinavia and there are high academic expectations towards the students. Check out the language of instruction before you book the courses! Students receive around 10-15 ECTS for one course in Bergen. Therefore, the workload for a course is also higher. I took one course in Political Economy (10 ECTS), one course in

EXPERIENCE REPORT ON SEMESTER ABROAD

European Union Institutions (15 ECTS) and the Introductory Norwegian course (7,5 ECTS). There was a huge workload for Political Economy and a big workload for the EU course. However, I also felt like I have learned a lot. One reason therefore is that the lecturers have more time to go in-depth. But if you put in the effort and go to the lectures, you will also receive good grades. In social sciences you will mostly write essays or at-home exams, just like at the EUF.

Although there is a lot of bureaucracy in the beginning, everything is well organized. There is a lot of support for students and there exists a very relaxed and welcoming atmosphere in the university.

What intercultural encounters/competencies shaped your stay?

For me it was very important to live in a student dormitory with a shared kitchen. This way I could live together with other Norwegian students and get a first-hand introduction into Norwegian culture. Also the sports courses were a nice place to meet other students. I can highly recommend the Salsa course at BSI!!!

Which perspectives on the host country/country of origin have changed and why?

The Norwegian university system works differently than in other European countries. It was refreshing to live in a country with an almost perfectly working public infrastructure, public education system, public health system and welfare state. And of course the Norwegian nature is amazing!

What was your daily life like where you were? (e.g. living, shopping, leisure, inclusion)

I lived at Fantoft, the biggest student dormitory. Fantoft is a great place to live, although it is kind of a "student village". With the city tram (Bybanen) it takes around 30 min to the city centre and the university. In Fantoft there is a close by supermarket and there are a lot of organized student parties. Also there is a great gym with a sauna. Due to my busy university schedule, I went to lectures everyday. At university I was usually meeting other friends or studying together at the big and cozy libraries during exam time.

What are the unique or special issues in the host country and what were the opportunities for engaging with these issues?

The quality of education in Norway is amazing. Also it is a very safe and welcoming country. The costs of living are however quite high: I spent at least 1000-1200 € per month (including the rent). A beer in a bar is about 10€; meat, candy and imported products are also very expensive. The ERASMUS grant will barely be enough to cover the rent, that

EXPERIENCE REPORT ON SEMESTER ABROAD

is why I would recommend everyone to apply for Auslands-BAFÖG in Kiel as early as possible. If you are not entitled to BAFÖG, try to apply for a scholarship, or start working in a student job beforehand. But Norway is affordable if you start cooking at home and use the public transport. Hiking is also a fun and healthy way to spend your free time without spending money 😊

Is there anything else you would like to share? (e.g. anecdotes, criticism, etc.)

The semester times in Norway are different to Flensburg!

*From my own experience: Try to finish **ALL** your exams and essays before going abroad.*

The courses in social sciences are amazing and fit very well into the EUCS program.

For getting to Norway: Sometimes taking the ship is cheaper than flying. Check out the prices of the ferry from Kiel to Oslo (Colour Line- they have an amazing buffet) and the train from Oslo to Bergen (around 30€ for 8h trip, very beautiful landscape).

I would recommend to have an additional health insurance for a long-term stay in foreign countries (that is also covered by BAFÖG).

3. Photos

Finally, you can upload photos here, which visualize/represent your stay abroad well. If necessary, add a description. The following questions can help you choose the appropriate photos:

- Does the photo possibly reinforce prejudices or stereotypes about the country?
- Do you have the consensual consent of the persons depicted in the photos?
- "A picture is worth a thousand words!" What does your picture say about the country and your semester abroad?



View on the city centre from Fløyen



That is also Bergen: Prepare for the rain!



Fjord landscape around Bergen



Northern lights near Tromsø



Sunset from Ulriken



Fantoft stave church at night (5 min from the student dorms)



Midnight in Bergen during summer. There are just around 3 hours of darkness



On top of Bergen's highest mountain

Many thanks for your support!