

Transcript

[Interviewer]

OK. Hello and welcome to a new edition of our Ullandhaug Exchange podcasts. I am very happy to be joined here with our international students for the autumn semester 2023, and I would let them introduce themselves.

[Andrea]

Well, hi, my name is Andrea and I'm from Spain, Barcelona. And I am 21 years old.

[Alba]

So, my name is Alba. I'm also from Barcelona. I'm 23 and yeah, I've been here for five months now.

[Interviewer]

OK. And you are finally done with your exams right today, right. So I want to thank you for doing this with us today. And I would start just by asking you to tell us a little bit about yourself and what do you study back home?

[Alba]

So we both study to become primary teachers, primary teachers in our country means from one to six grade in our country. And we are doing the English mention. So we are going to become English teachers.

[Interviewer]

OK. Are you from the same university?

[Andrea]

Yes, in the same class, yeah.

[Interviewer]

In the same class? OK! All right, so, what drew you to teaching?

[Alba]

Wow, such deep question!

[Andrea]

Yeah, good question. I can summarize by saying that since I was a little girl, I wanted to become a teacher. Maybe not an English teacher, but a teacher in general. So yeah...

[Alba]

Not me, to be honest. I started studying economics and statistics. And I quit because I hate it. And then I try to understand what I wanted to do with my life. And there's this social part this, perspective of trying to build like a better world and I thought that teaching was a key part of that and that's why I chose teaching and now I love it!

[Interviewer]

OK, good to hear! So, what drew you to the UiS? How come you're here?

[Andrea]

Choosing Norway? Well, since we have in, we are in the 4th grade now, YEAR, in the university and we have to choose a specialization, so we chose English and we had some specific options for that specialization and one of them was Norway, and both of us agreed that it was the best place to choose regarding the other ones options that we have. And that was the main reason.

[Alba]

And also, a close friend of mine, she came here two years ago. She took the same program, and she was in love with the university and with the city. And now I couldn't agree more with her. And yeah, she recommended me. She told me, "Oh, if you do that, you really need to go to Stavanger". And that's why I chose it.

[Interviewer]

OK, so can you tell us a little bit about how it was while you were here?

[Alba]

Ohh. Fantastic!

[Andrea]

I really loved it also.

[Interviewer]

Yeah. OK. You, Andrea, you had a little bit of an unfortunate shot, so you ended up in a hospital for a few days. But you've overcome that. So how was that experience for you? And kudos for staying!

[Andrea]

Yeah. Well, now for me it's a funny... anecdote, yeah, exactly. But in that moment, obviously, it was not funny. It wasn't funny, but well, I recovered quite quickly and in the hospital, they were so nice and they look after me really, really nice. And even though I'm super happy with the experience and I love the country so.

[Interviewer]

It didn't spoil. No. OK, that's good. And when you think about the benefits of going to an exchange program, and you think about your future career, what are some of the benefits? Where do you see them and why should anyone go on an exchange program?

[Alba]

At first, I thought about learning and improving my English skills. And then also learning about a new or a different pedagogy system. Here in Norway, you are famous for having such a powerful education. That's why. That's another reason why I chose Norway, and now that I'm done with it, I would add to the list the people you get to know when you are, when you live abroad. Different cultures, different perspective, and you don't agree with a lot of people meet and you get to know. But that's also part of the magic, and I think I've become more tolerant and more open-minded and that's something I really like about myself now. And yeah, I've enjoyed that part that I didn't expect that.

[Andrea]

Yeah. Following Alba, it was one of the things that I've maybe enjoyed the most and make me learn the most, because I met A lot of people really different between them and that make me learn a lot. And that flexibility and open-minded, as Alba said. It's really enriching, so yeah.

[Interviewer]

That's very nice to hear, but do you think that there are some benefits for the local students to have you here?

[Andrea]

Yes, of course.

[Interviewer]

What do you bring to them?

[Andrea]

They can also learn to be flexible and yeah, learn a new culture, as we do. So.

[Alba]

We are funny classmates, to be honest. That was a joke. But yeah, I think they also ask a lot about how we manage things in our country. What's the regulation in our country regarding education, which is very different from Norway.

[Alba]

So I think that also enriches the classroom discussion and what we learn from others and our perspective is different. And that's always good.

[Andrea]

And also, at some point you build new relationships and maybe in the future this can help you professionally or personally because you can come back here to have a visit.

[Interviewer]

Hmm. Quite, quite true. Quite true. And how was? How was the international crowd here? A lot of students that you've met internationally?

[Andrea]

A lot. Yeah, we did.

[Alba]

Yeah. Yeah, it was fantastic. I also didn't expect it because I didn't know. In fact, I didn't even know Stavanger before coming. Because, well, I knew Oslo, Tromsø, and that's it, to be honest. So I thought it was going to be like, what, quite small and cozy city. Which it is, and I didn't expect this amount of international students. We are a lot of Spanish, lots of Italian, German people, also from the Netherlands. And this is, I mean, I'm talking about Europe, but we also share kitchen with two Pakistani boys and from Nigeria. Yeah. So lots of international and lots of events for international students, which is always great, yeah.

[Andrea]

Yeah, it surprised us, like, here, there is a lot of diversity and how university uses in a good way, because of all the events that Alba talked about. So yeah.

[Interviewer]

So you took advantage of those? You participated?

[Alba]

Yes, of course. Yes. Yeah, yeah. There's on Thursdays, there's this coffee around the world which we love.

[Andrea]

We love it.

[Alba] Yes, there's one volunteer every week and they talk about their country. And then there's, like, free coffee and chocolate and you chill there and you listen to everybody. It's very, very nice.

[Andrea]

Yeah. And after you do a Kahoot.

[Interviewer]

And can you win something?

[Alba]

YES, cinema tickets, yeah.

[Interviewer]

Oh, very good. So, did **you** win?

[Alba]

Yes!

[Andrea]

Several times in. Yeah.

[Interviewer]

You're a very lucky crowd! You also won some other quizzes, right?

[Alba]

Yes. I think it was for Fadder week. Well, at the beginning of the semester, there was like, a meeting of future teachers. Right? So from our faculty and we went there and there was a quiz very funny, and then the Spanish team won 1.000 krona to spend in the city.

[Interviewer]

Yeah, very nice, very nice. So lots of benefits for students who are coming to the UiS, I guess. But, when we talk about coming here, so, what was your process of getting here? Finding housing, for example, or just getting your way around here?

[Andrea]

Well, I have to say that we were really lucky because we were together. So we maybe get lost at some point, but we were together, so it was not it wasn't a big deal, but I think it was easy.

[Alba]

Yeah, the paperwork was quite simple and easy going exactly. Yeah, it's quite a long process. I think we got accepted in November last year and we are right here the 4th of August. Yeah. So there's like a long follow-up but quite easy. And then for the housing, there's this bolig SiS web page or service. It works, in saying. In fact, I have a funny anecdote about this. Do you mind if I explain it?

[Interviewer]

No, please do.

[Alba]

Because the first week we arrived here, my mattress was terrible. I had, like, the worst nights because my back hurt a lot. And then Klaus show up. Who is like a man who manages everything, in the accommodation. And he told us that whether we need something there's this web page or we can send a message and then they help us with whatever we need. So I decide to send a message before going to sleep. It was maybe 11:00 PM. And I say I'm talking about my my thing with the mattress. And next morning at 8:00 AM, I had a man with a new mattress in my front door at 8:00 AM, and I was like, wow, these Norwegian people are very effective. Yeah. Yeah. Crazy. Crazy.

[Andrea]

That's crazy. It was super. Yeah.

[Interviewer]

OK. But no backache.

[Alba]

No backache. No, no. Now I sleep perfect.

[Interviewer]

OK. That's good. OK. So when you think about coming here, and were you surprised about something that you found in Norway?

[Alba]

I was surprised - I expected, but I was surprised of how safe I felt. I live in Mosvatnet, next to a lake, a very beautiful lake, and I love to go running there. And you know, maybe at 5:00 PM it's already dark, but I go anyways and I feel super safe. And that's something as a woman, I'm not quite sure if I would do it back home. So, I felt very, very free and empowered here. I love that.

[Andrea]

I'm going to say something, not such a social thing, but I loved the fact that you can return your cans and they give you money. OK? Insane. You go to the supermarket. I mean, what? And you return all your cans and then they return.

[Interviewer]

Yeah. Yeah. So you kind of save the environment and you earn a little bit and then you can buy a another.

[Andrea]

Yes, yes. But we were really surprised and at the same time, we loved it.

[Interviewer]

OK. So yeah, well saves money a little bit. I would say - and when you think about your experience here, so is there anything that stands out? Is there anything that you can share with us?

[Alba]

Like an anecdote or something like that?

[Interviewer]

You know something that you found important, either in terms of education or in terms of just social life, something that will stay with you.

[Andrea]

We both agree, because we were talking about this yesterday night, because we were sentimental because we are living, so we were sentimental we were talking about how our

life, or how our way to see the our life and living have changed due to this Erasmus and this exchange because, now we don't have the sense of being late to everything as we do in in Barcelona, we have this this feeling of being late and running and doing things quickly, but here - we are just living without any pressure, without any, anything in your mind that bothers you, so we were talking that it's a really good thing that we take of this Erasmus and that we want to try to continue with this style of life when we go back home. I don't know if it would be possible...

[Alba]

Hope so.

[Andrea]

We would love to continue because I mean, we are really really happy. And yeah.

[Alba]

I would also love to highlight, like, it's the very first time, at least me, I live away from home. Back home my university is the UAB and it's in my hometown. So, I live with my parents, so this opportunity of moving abroad and creating your own life makes you feel super independent and makes you feel like you have, like, the power of choosing whatever is going on in your life. I think that is also very powerful. Yeah, it's. It's like creating a new life with new people, new hobbies, new lifestyle. And it's a very nice opportunity. I feel so, so grateful.

[Interviewer]

That's nice to hear. So, if you could give one tip to somebody coming to Stavanger to a teacher education program, what would that be?

[Alba]

I would say, yeah, I would say at first don't worry because you are going to be out of your comfort zone every 5 minutes. So just chill and go with the flow and everything is going to be as it's supposed to be. At first, it's hard, because it's very, lots of strange feelings, everything mixed and your brain, it's like crazy. Also your heart, because you miss your home and you miss everything. But then, you get used to it, and you get to enjoy a lot. So chill and don't worry.

[Interviewer]

OK. And why should people come and take up English studying in Norway? Why should they come to our program? What was important for you?

[Andrea]

At least for me, I enjoy it a lot, and since I told you today in our final exam presentation

[Interviewer]

Disclosure!

[Andrea]

I learned a lot for this from this course. And I think that everything that I've learned and everything that I've experienced with this course, it will be really useful in my future career and I'm super grateful that I've learned this because, well, obviously in Barcelona we learn a lot of things, but going out of our comfort zone as Alba said, and meeting another context and other people really enrich our thoughts, mind and learning, of course.

[Alba]

And the professors really, they are insane. They are very welcoming. Their English level is insane too. Then we get to do 3 weeks of practice, like in a real school, which was fantastic. And everything is very guided, very easy and yeah, I mean, I couldn't be more grateful. I mean, insane. Yeah.

[Interviewer]

Yeah. Well, thank you for this. And is there anything else that you would want to share with us, or did I ask all the questions?

[Alba]

I would just say if you're thinking about doing it or not, just go for it. Yeah. Do it. Yeah, totally worth it.

[Andrea]

Do it.

[Interviewer]

Yeah. This is good to hear. Thank you both. Thank you for being with us and I hope to see you again soon.

[Andrea]

Thank you.

[Alba]

Of course, if you go to Barcelona....

[Interviewer]

I'll give you a call!