

Autumn Semester at the Aarhus University

I am a third year International and European law LLB student at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. I have completed my autumn semester at the Aarhus University, Denmark. I highly value the overall experience of my exchange. However apart from many advantages, there were certain drawbacks. Therefore, I will discuss my experience in more detail.

First of all, I would like to comment on the study programme at this university. Around ten subjects taught in English were offered to choose from. All of them were master courses and mainly worth 10 ECTS. My choice was taking EU Company law, EU Migration and Asylum Law and International Copyright. At the beginning I thought that as a bachelor student I would be challenged taking all master courses. However, all courses I have chosen turned out to be not so difficult. In total I had only 9 hours of lectures per week and final examinations were conducted orally for around 20 minutes. As there were no assignments or compulsory seminars, the study schedule was quite relaxed. The content of all courses was interesting enough, I especially enjoyed the course of International Copyright. I did not find these courses difficult, having in mind, that they were supposed to be of a Master level.

Furthermore, the evaluation of our knowledge during oral examinations I have found quite arbitrary. I was very disappointed about the EU Migration and Asylum law exam as it was not conducted constructively, questions were very vague and examiners had given no direction of what they were actually asking. Therefore, oral exams are quite challenging in a way that there is not much time to think about your answers and one has to face the examiner face to face on one hand, but not that difficult as most of the lecturers are very dynamic or even supportive and it is not a case that a student will be struggling with one question while they will sit and wait for an answer, new relevant questions will be given instead. A very high grades can be obtained easily enough. What is also convenient that one is able to choose between several exam dates. Usually, one will be offered before the Christmas holiday break and the other one after it. For this reason, it is possible to complete the exchange before holidays. Several of the courses offered a possibility of an essay assignment instead of an oral examination, however, I have not had these subjects and cannot elaborate on the matter.

Furthermore, apart from English courses, it is possible to choose from many courses of both, Master and Bachelor levels, in Danish. As I do not speak Danish I did not do that, but the general view is that Danish courses are more difficult and more demanding than English ones.

What is more, the costs of living in Denmark are high enough to feel a difference between living in any country of Western Europe compared to Scandinavia. The rent is very high, I would say comparable to rent prices in Paris, which is famous for expensive rent. That I find quite fascinating as the comparison is between a European capital and a relatively small distant town in Scandinavia. As Denmark is well known for the quality of the standard of living, any other expenses are higher than in the Continental Europe. On the other hand, after a while one will definitely adjust by finding cheaper places and reasonably priced products. However, eating out, going out will still cost more.

Moreover, the university itself was very welcoming. During the introduction week all the necessary information was given and it was even organised that students did not have to go to the state hall to apply for the residence permit, but were offered an opportunity to do that at the university. A mentor programme was also arranged, any exchange student could apply for a mentor. All mentors were Danish, so it was an opportunity to integrate into the local Danish community, however, having in mind cold Danish mentality it is practically impossible. On the other hand, the introduction week was lacking social activities and events, one could describe it as very official and boring. Although, the lack of fun in the beginning was compensated by the contingent of exchange students. All law Erasmus students were from very different countries, anyone could obtain the multicultural experience. What is more most of the students were from the US and Australia, what I enjoyed a lot, because I have not know a lot of people outside Europe. Now I can proudly say that I have many friends outside our continent, therefore, a lot of travel possibilities and prospects.

Yet one major disappointment of my exchange experience was the problem of accommodation. The University Housing Office offered me only one option, which was totally unacceptable as the place was 14 kilometres away from Aarhus, that meant that the

travel duration would have been almost one hour with a bus. After I have rejected this offer I did not get any others. I was constantly contacting the Housing office and the International Office for law students, however, I have not received any help. The situation, in my eyes is ridiculous, as the University is accepting exchange students and then is not able to provide them with an accommodation, while student dorms are packed with Danish students. But this problem is not only regarding international students, because the student population overall in this city is huge. Some of the students were even living in a caravan city built especially for the purpose to accommodate students. Which one could find absolutely ridiculous. Therefore, for a new, especially international student, finding a place on your own, not through the housing office is a big challenge. I have been looking for one for over a month, had even to contact the embassy of my native country. Although, if you are lucky the Housing Office will offer you a very nice place. The nicest and cleanest dorms I have ever seen in my life were in Aarhus.

While living in Aarhus I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with a real Scandinavian, yet still European culture. Amongst many cultural features I have experienced in this country I could highlight several: the stylish Danish minimalism, which definitely influenced my thoughts on architecture and fashion; their loyalty, which made me realise the importance of commitments; the obsessive tidiness, which I have appreciated so much; the preference of the quality over quantity, which is a complete opposite of the Dutch position on this matter. Furthermore, the exchange in Aarhus will be an unforgettable experience as the city itself is a very beautiful harbour and has quite a lot to offer for any taste and any personality. Apart from the fun student life there are quite many cultural shows and events taking place, as well as many exhibitions. After the arrival to the city, one must simply do not forget to pick up the welcoming bag from the Town Hall with free vouchers and discount tickets, which is an amazing opportunity to see most of the cultural objects and events for free or at least with a great discount.