



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

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| Study programme WU | Bsc Communication & Life Sciences |
| Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy) | 31/01/2024 until 28/05/2024 |
| Exchange destination: University | Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) |
| Faculty | n/a |
| Country | Norway |
| City | Ås |

2. Motivation for exchange

a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I chose to go on exchange for multiple reasons. The first reason was that I wanted to know what it is like to live abroad. The second reason was to learn about how Norway and Scandinavia in general incorporate sustainability governance into their government and legislation. They are much further ahead compared to other countries like the Netherlands with regards to this topic. The third reason was because I always wanted to go to Scandinavia once, but hadn't been able to up until that point in time.

b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

Besides the beautiful nature and interesting cultural history, I also chose to go to this country due to their wealthy status, low crime rates and thus high levels of safety.

c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

I chose this university because it is quite similar to WUR due to it also being a university focused on life sciences. Besides, it was one of the only university that had courses that I was qualified to follow due to my bachelor.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

If you go by plane then try to arrive at Oslo-Gardemoen airport. It is located in the fields outside of the city. From there you can take two routes. You can either take the train to Oslo and then to Ski or Ås and go the last part of the journey by bus. Another way to go to Ås is by taking the Flybuss. It is a more luxurious bus that takes you directly from the airport to the highway exit of Korsegården. There you can change to the local bus. The bus stop at the university is called Universitetet i Ås.

4. University and studying

a. Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

| | Course | ECTS | Short description of the contents | Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high) | Remarks |
|----------|--|------|--|---|---|
| 1 | AOS236 – Sustainability Leadership | 10 | The course provides an introduction to leadership for sustainability. It recognises the formidable challenges facing anybody who attempts to question established practices, mindsets, and power structures. | 4 | <p>Make sure to make clear agreements with your workgroup at the beginning of the course.</p> <p>Prepare the seminars beforehand so that you can actually participate in the discussions. By doing this you are already training for your exam since it will be the same type of questioning.</p> |
| 2 | EDS130 – Introduction to political ecology | 10 | The first part of the course focuses on theoretical issues and approaches relating to political ecology (population and scarcity, markets and commodities, institutions and the commons, environmental ethics, risks and hazards, political economy, and social constructions of nature). Thereafter, the lectures will present case studies of particular environmental issues and resources to highlight some of the theoretical issues. | 3 | <p>This is a level 1 course. While the contents of the course aren't that hard to get your head around, there is a lot of mandatory attendance in the second part of the course. This wasn't communicated beforehand.</p> <p>There are also 3 individual reports you have to write besides group work and student-led seminars. Tip: don't try to finish your report in the bus on an ESN trip to Lapland... it's possible but not worth it 😊</p> |
| 3 | EDS348 – Global Environmental Governance | 10 | This course will examine national, regional, and international policies designed to address global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, chemical hazards, and energy system transitions. The class will explore why | 5 | <p>If you like group discussions then this is your course. It is a master's course so you have to do more work than your general bachelor courses you are used too, but it is still very doable.</p> <p>Again there is groupwork, there are</p> |

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| | | | environmental problems occur, identify the characteristics and drivers of global environmental problems, and critically discuss their underlying causes. | | seminars and just normal lectures. Seminars are somewhat like what we call "werk colleges" back in the Netherlands. |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |

b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, Explain):

There are enough courses that are taught in English. On every webpage of the course it states if it taught in English, Norwegian or both. Keep in mind that they prefer to teach in Norwegian but are required to teach in English as soon as there is one international in their class. It is your right and you are allowed to point it out if they forget. This has never happened to me or the other students I was with though.

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, Explain):

Due to the fact that NMBU is also a life science university there are a lot of similarities with the WUR. However, it is taught differently and perhaps other aspects of the field are more prominently discussed compared to courses taught in the Netherlands. Keep in mind that if you have a background in the social sciences, like me, you are severely limited in your options. I think there were only a few courses available to me but fortunately I found them interesting.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, - Explain):

Keep in mind though that the way of teaching is different in Norway. It is even less hierarchical, a lot of group discussion, and a lot of room for your own interpretation of groups etc. If that is your thing, the NMBU or probably Norway in general is your place to be.

e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes - Explain):

While there weren't a lot of options for me due to my background in the social sciences, in the end I was very satisfied with the courses after all.

f. What is it like to study there?

Like I already said, a lot more freedom with regards to the way of teaching. Workload is a bit more than I was used to but still doable. The lesson materials are mainly books (quite expensive though) and scientific articles (provided by the university).

g. What is the culture of the university?

The lecturers are very approachable. Often even more approachable than Dutch lecturers. There is less hierarchy. With regards to the students... I found it quite easy to engage with international students, however local students can be somewhat hard in the beginning. This is not because they don't like you but because of the difference in culture. Like many others, I've experienced that Norwegians are very polite and don't want to interrupt or disturb you in any way possible. That's why it's rare for them to reach out to you. But by doing it yourself you will definitely be able to make some Norwegian friends. Besides, during group work everyone is required to work together so

that shouldn't be a problem as well. It will just be a little bit different than you're used to but nothing to worry about.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

There is indeed catering; but like anything in Norway, it's quite expensive. There is a sports facility, a library, modern buildings but also beautiful historical old buildings. One thing that I found quite interesting is that the university has its own forest. Definitely worth to go there!

5. Housing-traveling-living

a. What are the possibilities for housing?

Like Idealis in Wageningen there is an organisation called SiAs in Ås that does the student housing. They will almost always have room for you available. Especially if you apply as soon as possible. It's also possible to get rooms via the Facebook group "Kjøp/salg/bytte ved NMBU". The prices at SiAs are often less expensive than the private sub-letting ones via Facebook.

b. What is the culture like?

I've already talked about this in one of the previous questions.

c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

Public transport is great. There are busses going every 10 minutes. You install an app called Vy and can order bus and train tickets in there. When you get into the bus you just have to show a QR code of your ticket to the driver (it's in the app) and that's it. In the trains they sometimes do random checks in the same way as they do it in the Netherlands.

6. Expenses

a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

| Category | Expenses |
|---|---|
| Travelling there | 1500 NOK |
| Visa - if applicable | n/a |
| Vaccinations - if applicable | n/a |
| Insurances (extra) - if applicable | 1000 NOK |
| Daytrips/sight-seeing | 10000 NOK, I went on a ESN trip to Lapland though... |
| Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation | 5000 NOK, private housing in a 4-bedroom house with 2 bathrooms and a kitchen/living area |
| Grocery costs per month | 2000 NOK |
| Public transport costs per month | 1000 NOK |
| Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month | n/a |

b. The price levels were in general higher in comparison to in the Netherlands:

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses? n/a

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

Drøbak, Oslo, Lillehammer, Trømsø, Trondheim and if you are able to go on the trip to Lapland with ESN just do it, you won't regret it!

b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?

The inner city of Trondheim! Find a local that can take you to the lesser known locations of the cities such as the little waterfall or the mountain hikes!

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?

I think that everyone has ups and downs, also on exchange. Deal with it how you deal with it back at home. Although there probably isn't any family around, you will probably have made friends by then. If you really feel down you can always go to the university for help.

b. Best memory?

The trip to Lapland!

9. Contact details

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| Is the reader allowed to contact the writer? | yes <input type="checkbox"/> | no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Name & email address (if yes) | | |