



NEO ALBANIA
National Erasmus+ Office of Albania

“I am more responsible and independent thanks to Erasmus +”

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E+ Programme: Exchange Students
Host Institution: University of Bologna
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My Erasmus+ experience in Bologna

My name is Xhoana Dunolli, 22 years old. I study at Fan S. Noli University, Korça and thanks to the Erasmus+ exchange program I had the opportunity to experience and get to know a different culture in the city of Bologna, Italy, Alma Mater Studiorum University.

I am studying in the program "Primary Education Teacher" at the Faculty of Education and Philology of the University of Korça, currently in the last year of studies. I developed one semester at the University of Bologna through Erasmus+ Programme. I have to say that it was an extraordinary and valuable experience not only for my profession as a future teacher, but also for my personality.



How did I become part of the Erasmus+ student network? Initially it has been communicated by the university as a study opportunity for a semester at the University of Bologna and I did not want to miss it, so I applied by filling out a CV and a motivation letter in English. After I won this application, language level protection was required: English B2 and Italian A2 as well as a list of grades. With the approval of the request from the University of Bologna, a "Learning Agreement" is completed, a document which contains the courses that will be attended at the host university. Travel Form is another document in which travel data is entered, as it is provided by the host university.

After receiving the confirmation, I got access to an email used by the students of that University which enabled me to enroll in the Italian language course, accommodation, transportation and many other services for the students. As an Albanian citizen I had to apply for a visa at the Italian Embassy in Tirana, where it was required to present the documents proving my purpose and guarantee covered by Erasmus +. To be honest this part of the application was a bit tedious but with the support of the University it was simpler.

I chose to apply for this Erasmus experience because I wanted to get to know a different culture, the Italian one in this case. The purpose of this exchange was to get to know a different teaching context. Even meeting new people was important as development of foreign languages. Before this opportunity came I had planned to know different cultures of education, and I can say that this experience opened many other doors for me.



Arriving in the city of Bologna: the first barrier I faced was language, despite the fact that I possessed a level of



Italian language, it is part of the culture so they are being developed together, but this barrier did not last long, as I managed to adapt and become familiar. ESNBOLOGNA is the association that welcomes and guides students in the city of Bologna. Thanks to them I knew many students from different nationalities, from different cultures, I participated in many cultural and sport activities.

Bologna is a wonderful city, magnificent, both historical and modern. The University of Bologna, students, Italian citizens and foreigners have impressed me. What impressed me most was the independence of each one to work, study, the seriousness and motivation shown, the holding of responsibilities, the creativity and free, original opinions.

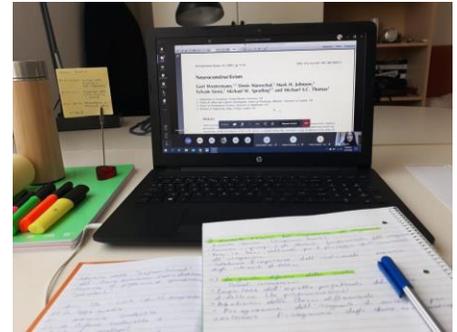
In terms of culture in general I can talk about language, dialects by regions, which seemed to be different languages, but quite interesting because of the accent with an attractive sound.

"Italian kitchen is the best in the world!" - so say Italians and I support this from the moment I tried the pizza, polpetone, panini, spaghetti, lasagna, pastries of various kinds, bruschettas, tiramisu or aperitivo with bacon, not to mention wine, beer or spritz. These are very important and there is always space to discuss and talk about food. Most of the population belonged to the Catholic faith, which they practiced and respected the rules of their religious faith.



In terms of studies, I personally did not have the good fortune to "live" student life as we got lockdown

because of Covid, however in those conditions I luckily got a valuable experience on teaching and technology, as the lesson took



place online. The UNIBO organization represented a well-constructed, secure, safe and flexible system and model.

I find it hard to describe this experience and I do not believe I am the only Erasmus student. I think this is an experience to be lived and the results or consequences appear in practice, in our skills, in our attitudes, in the way we think and in the activities we perform. Anyway I tried to describe this experience in bold lines.

"I am more responsible and independent thanks to Erasmus +" How much can a 6-month period affect my life? All right, I can not change everything I have built in these years, I just proved that I have built a good foundation for my future, since I have managed to discover myself in a different, new context. Living alone I had to manage and organize all my responsibilities and this helped me to be a more independent female (one of my goals). The fact that I lived alone in a foreign country encouraged me to develop these skills: analysis, problem solving, independent learning, self-confidence, being open-minded and curious, after this experience I managed to develop critical thinking where it is placed a question mark over what we always take for granted. By creating a wide social circle I manage to appreciate and not prejudice cultures, I strongly believe that every culture, every individual has its own values and man should not be excessive ethnocentric. Moreover, I am proud of the Albanian culture and I believe that I have demonstrated it in the best way as a student.

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