

My Mobility

Students from Ca' Foscari Recount their Learning Experiences Abroad

21 kilometres of experience

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LM Relazioni Internazionali Comparate

Destination: Universitat de Valencia, Spain

Giulia Marasca compares her Erasmus experience with running a half marathon.

If I had to describe what it did mean for me to study at the Universitat de València, I would compare it to my first half marathon, a competition in which you have to run for 21 kilometres.

It is a course that comprises a long previous training which generally begins one month and a half earlier, the same time, before the departure to Valencia, in which you start thinking: 'I can do it', 'I am afraid of not finding friends', 'where can I live?'. But the time is running, your legs and your breath are getting stronger and you convince yourself that this new adventure is not so scary because both your mind and your body are ready.

When THE day of the departure arrives, as during the day of the course, you wake up early during the morning, your shoes are tied, you have to stick your bib number to the t-shirt, the same number which represents your outbound ticket towards the experience that is going to change your perspective when looking at the environment around you.

With a determined look, you are prepared to pass under the first Column of Hercules, your hand makes the watch start and in few seconds the first metres have passed and, without completely realizing it, the airplane is taking off. The first step has been made, there is no time to come back; you start to run and you soon understand that the first kilometres are not compelling as the mind is caught in a state of excitement. All the days that you have spent training are becoming true and this state of euphoria is precisely incited by all those persons who have come to see the sportive event to provide you with the strength you would need when alone.

All these anonymous people, with whom you get in contact through a simple glance, can be compared to all those students that you meet during the first days and who has the fundamental role to form your foreign family. What is more, the excitement experienced after the start is exactly the same feeling which invades you as soon as you enter in your new university ready to assimilate all the knowledge that you know will enrich both your academic skills and your character.

But then everything changes; when you arrive at the seventh kilometre you remain alone, just you and your legs, and the first difficulties begin. You have enrolled in several courses and you get to know that one of them is the worst and the nightmare for all the students in that university. You start to realize that your situation at the home university was not that difficult, but it is exactly in this situation of powerlessness that you start to be aware of the functionality of your physical and mental training and that you just have to trust your legs and your academic skills. An exam has to be faced, a Spanish test where you are supposed to recognize all the Spanish dialects finding for each word its Latin origin.

Looking at the exercises the thinking came alone: 'I have never studied Latin', 'Spanish is not my mother tongue, I cannot do it.'

However, you look at your watch and you see that you are already at the tenth kilometre and behind the corner the volunteers appear in order to provide you with both bottles of water and energisers in order to give you the right motivation and strength to go on. In that moment you become conscious that you can find a solution to your problems because one secret of the Erasmus has been disclosed: being abroad for an Erasmus not only did it help you to be more responsible, but also to be able to ask for aid to everyone who could be able to let you see the light.

You are almost at the half of the course, stopping is not contemplated, a high level of concentration is required so as not to feel the pain in your legs and it is already time for you to face your first exam abroad. The 18th kilometre has passed, you have run a lot and a further sprint is the only thing that you are supposed to do to finish the course. 'Is everything going to be ok?', 'what if I ruin the average of the marks that I have reached studying at my home University?', 'I should have chosen an easier exam as all my colleagues': these are the common thoughts that invade your mind as you present to the professor your university card.

However, while concentrating in order to find possible solutions to all these negative outcomes, you pass under the first Column of Hercules which means that there is only one kilometre missing. The professor gives you the exam, you start writing and the awareness of the effectiveness of the preparation becomes patent. The last column becomes visible and looking hardly you can see the time which is marked and, knowing that your principal goal is to finish under two hours, you increase your speed without even knowing where exactly you are finding all this strength. It is done, you have finished, two hours and zero seconds and, suddenly, the professor appears in front of you telling that you have been the best of the class.

This is my International Mobility.