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Huom! Tämä on rinnakkaistalenne.

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Teacher exchange in Albania was worth it

22.5.2023 — Riikka Kramer



The faculty and students in University of Elbasan welcomed us warmly.

Mari Laaksonen, Senior Lecturer of Social Services and Health Care and Arja Halkoaho, Principal Lecturer of Social Services and Health Care from Tampere University of Applied Sciences took part in one weeklong teacher exchange in Albania in April. The teacher exchange was conducted by the universities' health sciences departments. The trip was a wonderful experience and emphasised the importance of cooperation.

What can University of Elbasan and University of Vlora offer for students?

Through collaboration with previous funding applications, we had become acquainted with colleagues from the University of Elbasan and the University of Vlora in Albania. When the Erasmus exchange agreements succeeded, a one-week teacher exchange in Albania became possible.

Vlore is located in southwestern Albania and sits on a bay that marks the meeting of the Adriatic and the Ionian seas. There are long beaches, and it is very popular holiday destination during holidays. Elbasan is located in central Albania. It lies on the north bank of the Shkumbin River and only 45 min drive from Tirana, capital of Albania.

As new cooperation begins, it is important to get to know the staff and facilities that students will encounter during their exchange. During the exchange, we were able to discuss the possibilities for clinical training and participation in theoretical lectures. Both universities stated that clinical training is possible in all hospital departments. At the University of Vlora, an annual catalog of English-language theoretical courses is also available. Training is carried out in small groups under the supervision of a nurse-trained instructor. In Vlora, the student exchange aims to be carried out simultaneously with exchange students from few other countries. The University of Vlora also hoped for exchanges in other fields, not only with the health science department.

Accommodation is easily arranged; students can live in university dormitories or with private landlords. It is noticeable, that the cost of living is considerably cheaper than in Finland. When moving around in Albania, it is good to note that public transportation is less developed. The taxi service is significantly cheaper than in Finland, and they are used to travel around a lot, even on long trips. However, attention should be paid to road safety. The road conditions and traffic culture are different from what we are used to seeing in Tampere.

Teacher, go on exchange!

Exchange is not only profitable for students. We also encourage teachers to apply for exchange in Albania. For teachers, universities offer a good opportunity to lecture and hold workshops on various topics. Universities are quite capable of tailoring teaching situations to benefit both parties. You will manage well in English, but of course if you can speak e.g., Italian, it will be useful.

In this exchange, we gave lectures on genomic-informed nursing and presentations about Tampere University of Applied Sciences' current projects, as well as discussions about the upcoming collaboration in the [GenoNurse](#) project and new funding opportunities. Students already showed interest in participating in pilot events organised by GenoNurse during the project. We are looking forward to these new cooperation opportunities. We talked a lot about cultural differences and social issues in both countries e.g., the concept of family. In Albania, the family includes the grandparents, who are cared for at home as long as possible. We were also asked about the reasons why Finland is always the happiest country in the world. We had many interesting discussions about the reasons and what happiness looks like in Finland.

Albania places great importance on friendliness and hospitality, which we experienced throughout our visit. We recommend Albania as an exchange destination for teachers, self-sufficient and curious students, as well as a destination for student pairs. We are more than willing to provide further information about the destination, just contact us and we will tell more!

Text: Arja Halkoaho and Mari Laaksonen

Picture: Archive of University of Elbasan