



Mikael (Sweden)

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I was given the opportunity to be a trainee at EVTA during the spring 2010. Coming to Brussels and the EVTA office I had no specific idea of what to expect more than I was going to work with something in the field of vocational training and that I had to do this in English.

My background is in studies of business and economics at the University of Lund from where I hold a bachelor degree. Naturally my interest is therefore more oriented to the running of an organisation and business aspects in a broader perspective. The first question I got when I arrived at the office was about what I wanted to get out of my time in Brussels and what I was interested in. There was a mutual interest in making my stay as giving as possible which I find very important and positive. My work therefore had to do with vocational training and European projects, but I got to look at them from my perspective and to focus on aspects linked to my background.

In my studies I have never got in contact with non-profit organisations, why it was extremely interesting to be working from inside one of these organisations. This reality turned out to be pretty far from the simplicity of school book examples I have come across during my years in Lund. Also the multi-cultural and linguistic environment in which EVTA operates gave a rich insight in the obstacles that an organisation faces. All these hands-on experiences have been very interesting and given me a deeper understanding in the everyday work of organisations.

To be honest, I did not have very high expectations in Brussels as a city to live in; I thought it would be ugly and I was expecting that I would be quite lonely. Fortunately my expectations showed to be quite the opposite of reality. I think that Brussels is a beautiful city with its old narrow houses, all with unique balconies, but also with its modern skyscrapers and green parks.

To me Brussels appears to be much bigger than it actually is. All the European buildings, happenings at EU-level and the mix of nationalities makes the city feel like the centre of Europe where it is all happening. I have always felt very welcomed and treated in a friendly way and I guess that it is due to the fact that everyone is used to be in contact with foreigners. To be honest I cannot remember that I ever experienced a city with such a friendly people. Life after work is full of possibilities in Brussels. First of all there are a lot of trainees in Brussels so just going to the Place du Luxembourg a couple of times and you will have met several fellow trainees even from your home country.

After half of my internship I felt convinced that I would like to stay in Brussels and with EVTA for as long as possible. Since there was a possibility to extend my stay with one and a half month I did and never regretted it. Staying for a long period has made it possible to get into the work and the city more in depth and feeling more well-settled..

I have mixed emotions about leaving Brussels. I am looking forward to going back to Sweden but I am absolutely positive that I will miss the co-workers at EVTA, the people of Brussels and the city as such. Leaving will probably let me get some perspective on my experience and increase the feeling that one can do almost anything and that one should not worry about problems, they will be solved, they always are. Finally I think that I have learnt a lot about myself and got a great working experience at that, working as an intern at EVTA. I strongly recommend everyone that has the possibility to consider doing an internship abroad.