For my MA Euroculture I had to switch to one of the other eight universities in the consortium for my second semester. Here, I picked the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain, mainly because of some of the courses and my wish to live in Spain for a semester. I did 25 ECTS in Bilbao and had different courses. I had one course in Methodology, which was a mix of about everything. We had some classes in statistics, something very interesting as this was completely new for me. We also had some theory about other methods we could use for our future research. Secondly, we had a Project Management class, together with a MA program in Human Rights. It was a very interesting class, taught by professionals instead of ‘real teachers’ and it was mainly about the entire project cycle and logical framework. Nevertheless, it was a pity that we did not really carry out a project, like the other universities did. Finally, we had a class in Europe in the Wider World, focusing on International Relations, Latin America and India. These classes were very good and interesting, with three different tutors who were all very passionate about their subject. This was by far the best class we had in the semester.

I think in general the quality of Deusto University was good, both facility wise as education wise. Some classes were more interesting than others, for sure, but we did not really have any problems throughout the semester. The library was very modern and very good, and we were helped a lot at the start of the semester through an introduction to the library. Also the university helped out a lot with personal problems or questions, the supervisors were all very good and offered to help out wherever it was needed. The facilities were also nice, such as the classrooms, the cafeteria, etcetera. Regarding that aspect I don’t have anything I didn’t really like.

The reception was also good, we were given a nice introduction and a tour through the university. As our group was rather small, it was quite easy to accommodate ourselves at our new university. The accommodation service offered by the university was the best one I have ever seen in my life. We were sent some kind of Google Maps, and you could click and look at different houses the university had contacts with. There were a lot of houses on offer, and after sending your top 5, the university would assign you to a house and get you in touch with the landlord. This all went very smoothly and was one of the big pluses of the university’s help and services, without doubt.
The contact with the teachers was always very friendly, maybe because we were a small group and we had a small group of teachers. Teaching style was rather ‘South-European’ I would say, teacher speaks, students listen, but that was fine. We had outside of the classroom also a good relationship with our teachers. Regarding other Spanish students, it was hard to find some people who would let you ‘integrate’. Groups of friends in Bilbao are rather closed and it was quite hard to establish relationships with local people. That’s a disadvantage of Bilbao I think, it is very hard to escape the ‘Erasmus bubble’ as contact with locals isn’t easy to establish.

Regarding the expenses during the semester you can consider Bilbao more or less the same as Groningen. Living costs are a bit cheaper but going for food or supermarkets can be a bit more expensive, depending on where you go. So don’t think “ah Bilbao, that’s Spain, that’s cheap,” that is not true, the city is rather average-priced.

Apart from that life in Bilbao is great. The pace of daily life, the way people meet in the streets, in the bars, for a pintxo, it is lovely. Also the city is very nice, it is very green, it has a great metro and tram system and there is a lot of cultural and social stuff going on throughout the year. The city is very vibrant and is everything but the “boring industrial” city everyone always talks about. Also the region, the Basque Country, is wonderful, which really helped during the semester.