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My exchange in Zürich (Fall semester 2013-2014)

I did my exchange in Zürich in autumn 2013. Applying for the exchange semester was easy as Erasmus-program was still involving universities in Switzerland. The enrolment to the University of Zürich as well as registering as a resident of the city was a bit more bureaucratic. All the information needed for e.g. taxation, health care and so on took many visits to city bureaus; even for us exchange students from European Union.

Studying at the University of Zürich was quite similar to studying in my own university in Turku, Finland. All difference was that the courses were a bit more difficult and they didn't involve as many ECTSs per course as in my university. Lectures had more dialog than in Finland but I think that is more due to the Finnish mentality than anything else.

The exchange itself was the best time of my life so far. I got to meet people from different countries. For the first time I could really see the cultural differences among the European people. The differences were usually very small, but of course I had more in common with Nordic people. Still my best friends in Switzerland didn't come from the Nordics. The cultural difference was not a barrier to make friends. I still keep in contact a lot of friends I got in Switzerland.

Integration to Zürich was for me quite easy. People are a lot like Finnish people; they don't talk so much, they don't show their emotion and so on. Public transportation, the close-to-nature infrastructure and similarity in conception of time also made it easier to adapt. The products and groceries were the same in Finland, with of course some different brands.

People in Zürich were similar to Finnish people but ruder. You could always trust the people to act as they were supposed to and I was never afraid to walk in the city, not even at nights. As Swiss people almost always spoke English and I also spoke German, getting to know people was not so difficult. Many also told me that Nordic people are usually very liked in Switzerland. I got to know many Swiss people with whom I still keep contact.