

Final report

Internship abroad

Personal data and general information on the internship

Subject of studies: Epidemiology

Bachelor/Master/State exam: Master

Time of internship: 01/08/2025 – 31/12/2025

Place of internship: Oslo, Norway

Internship institution: Oslo Centre for Biostatistics and Epidemiology (OCBE), University Hospital Oslo

Guidelines:

- The report should have a length of at least **4 DIN A4 pages** (Times New Roman, 12pt, 1.5 line spacing)
- If you want to give names, please do not give the full name of the person. Use only the first name or abbreviations such as "L.".
- When integrating photos, please note that your report requires the consent of the person(s) photographed when published and distributed.
- Please save your report as a word document (max. file size: 8 MB) and upload it to MoveON.
- If you are looking for a little inspiration for your own report or would like to compare your experiences with those of other students, please feel free to have a look at our [website](#).

1. Planning and preparation

As part of my Master's programme in Epidemiology at LMU, I had the opportunity to complete a mandatory internship in an epidemiological field of my choice. Having always been fascinated by the way Scandinavian countries manage data collection and processing, as well as their tradition of publishing high-quality research, I focused my search on internships there. After exploring the Oslo Centre for Biostatistics and Epidemiology (OCBE) and their ongoing projects, I contacted them to inquire about internship opportunities. The researcher I reached out to had published particularly interesting work on skin cancer epidemiology. Following a call in which we discussed both my background and their projects, along with some further correspondence, he kindly offered me an internship on this topic.

To be quite honest, I naively procrastinated looking for accommodation until just a few days before my arrival. I assumed that, since I was starting in August (the beginning of the semester in Oslo) many local students would be going abroad and renting out their flats short term. Fortunately, that turned out to be the case, and I quickly found a room in a shared apartment. I could also have applied for student housing (SiO), but I did not yet have an official university affiliation at that time. Sharing an apartment turned out to be a great choice, as everything I needed was already provided (furniture, kitchen utensils, linens, towels, and even a great flatmate).

I paused my insurance with Techniker Krankenkasse and switched to the much cheaper DAAD insurance, which was extremely easy to arrange. As for language, I neither needed nor intended to learn Norwegian, since virtually everyone spoke English, not only at the department but also in everyday life.

2. Internship

During my very first call with my supervisor, I was presented with several possible topics to choose from, and in the end, we agreed on a trend analysis. The first few days were mainly about setting things up and getting to know the team, their roles, and their projects. In recent years the department has expanded significantly and now employs more than 80 people working across different locations. Working hours were quite flexible, averaging about seven hours per day.

After the initial introduction, my supervisor explained the basics of cancer epidemiology and skin cancer, and we discussed my project in more detail. Specifically, I worked on trends in melanoma incidence in Norway between 1980 and 2024, using data from the national cancer

registry, with which OCBE collaborates closely. Once a week, our team worked directly from the cancer registry offices, located not far from the hospital where I was based. On Tuesdays, my supervisor R. and I always met with T. from the cancer registry to discuss project progress and potential next steps.

My tasks included reviewing the literature on melanoma, analyzing national data using Joinpoint and R (the main software tools applied), and discussing results with my supervisor and colleagues. Beyond project work, I regularly attended departmental meetings and seminars on epidemiological and statistical topics. During a poster walk, I learned about ongoing projects at the Faculty of Medicine, where OCBE is embedded, and had nice discussions with researchers. A particular highlight was the opportunity to present my work to a group of skin cancer experts, including one visiting from Australia. The presentations were followed by discussions, which not only gave me valuable feedback but also provided me with new ideas to integrate into my own work. The cherry on top was the after-work events, where I got to know everyone on a more personal level.

3. Social and everyday life and leisure

Making friends in Oslo turned out to be much easier than I expected. Early on, I looked into activities for Erasmus students and discovered the ESN group, which organizes weekly events on a voluntary basis. Through them, I not only met new people but also learned interesting facts about different neighborhoods, landmarks, and hiking trails. Their events ranged from hikes, cabin dinners, and dance nights to running and swimming clubs, as well as glacier tours. Personally, I joined a city tour and two hikes. It was reassuring to know that whenever I wanted to do something without being alone, I could always join ESN events and have the chance to socialize. That said, I often spent time with PhD students from my department who shared similar interests, so I didn't feel the need to rely too much on student groups.

One of the things I enjoyed most about Oslo is how closely the city is connected to nature, offering endless opportunities for activities. On weekdays, I liked going down to the port, strolling around the historic sites, grabbing a cinnamon bun and coffee, and visiting the financial district. In summer, one could swim in the Oslo Fjord, where there are many public beaches such as Aker Brygge or near the Opera House. On weekends, I loved going island hopping, which is conveniently included in the public transport ticket. The islands are perfect for hiking, camping, or just relaxing at the beach. Beyond that, Oslo offers countless hikes in and around the city, many of them with cozy cabins along the way where you can stop for food and drinks. And when the weather wasn't ideal – which happened quite often – I enjoyed

exploring the city's range of museums, from art and history to Viking culture and technological innovation.

4. Financing

It's no secret that Norway is an expensive country, and I was prepared for that. However, once I arrived, I realized that prices were quite comparable to those in Munich. I paid around €750 for my room and about €200–250 per month for groceries. Student housing can be even cheaper (around €500), but at the time I applied, I didn't yet have a university affiliation and was therefore not eligible.

For groceries, the cheapest supermarkets are Rema 1000 and Kiwi, followed by Meny and Coop, with Joker being the most expensive. Joker is the only one open on Sundays, while most supermarkets are open until 11 p.m. It's also worth noting that unhealthy products are heavily taxed in Norway: sweets, meat, tobacco, and especially alcohol are very expensive. For example, a beer in a bar or restaurant costs on average €12, and some Norwegians even cross the border to Sweden or Finland to buy cheaper sweets and alcohol. Beer and cider are only sold until a certain hour, while stronger drinks are available exclusively at designated shops. As someone who doesn't eat meat, smoke, or drink much, my overall expenses were relatively low, which is something worth keeping in mind when budgeting.

Many other activities are affordable, especially outdoor ones, which are often free or already included in the public transport system. With a monthly ticket (~€40), you can easily reach hiking, camping, or fishing areas, and equipment like tents, fishing gear, or kayaks can be rented very cheaply from SiO. Museum entry is generally around €10, though some, like the Munch Museum, offer free admission on certain days (e.g., Wednesdays).

5. Internship and studies

During my internship, I was able to apply many of the methods I had learned during my studies, which I greatly appreciated. This not only allowed me to deepen my understanding of statistical techniques but also to discover additional methods through seminars and presentations by my peers. On the one hand, I gained valuable knowledge about the content of epidemiology, and on the other, I learned how epidemiologists actually work in practice.

What shaped my experience most, however, was the strong sense of community at OCBE. Beforehand, I had thought of academia as individualistic, dull, and highly competitive. At OCBE, I instead found an environment where people are ambitious, motivated, and genuinely supportive. The negative impression I once had of doing a PhD faded as soon as I got to know

the people there. The relationships I formed only strengthened my belief that this is a working environment where people can thrive and one that both supports and challenges you in the best possible way. Overall, the internship left me with a very positive impression, and I truly believe it was the best experience I could have wished for.

6. Conclusion

My expectations were more than surpassed. I encountered many different challenges, but I was able to overcome them thanks to the support of those around me. In many ways, Norwegians are similar to Germans: more reserved at first, but once they open up, they become wonderful friends. My advice for anyone in a similar situation is to keep an open mind, take the first step, and never hesitate to ask for help when things get difficult.