

Article 3.2 TUE

The European Union makes it possible that people circulate around the 28 member countries with total freedom and safety, because living without internal frontiers is one of the principles of the European Union. Thirty years ago, in 1987 the European Commission started the Erasmus Program to allow university students and teachers from any of the European countries to study abroad in another European country and get credits for this when they return to their own university. The program started with 3000 students travelling between 11 countries. In the last 30 years 9 million people have participated in the Erasmus program, and so the aim of the program that is the equal access to educational opportunities has been achieved. Today, not only university students and teachers can participate in the exchanges but also teachers, sports people, volunteers and students and teachers from secondary schools.

STORY

In the year 1992 a young Dutch girl was studying Spanish Language and Culture in a university in the Netherlands. She chose Spanish because she was studying languages and Spanish was the only one that she hadn't tried before. What she didn't know then was that this decision would change her life. Because that year she had the possibility to study in Spain with the Erasmus program. So she and five friends more that were studying Spanish too, decided to live together this adventure, pack the suitcases with as many summer clothes as they could and take the airplane to Spain.

In January of 1993 they arrived in Murcia, Spain. They could choose between Valladolid, Murcia or Barcelona but when most people would choose Barcelona because of its fame, they choose Murcia because as good northern European people, they wanted to be in a city that was as close to the beach as possible and more in the South. During this adventure, they were impregnated of Spanish culture, they went clubbing in "tapas" pubs, they played Spanish cards in "La Plaza de las Flores", they went to a lot of different beautiful beaches and they met a lot of other students from many European countries.

The day when the important part of the story began and really changed the life of the Dutch girl, was the day of "El entierro de la sardina", a day of the spring festival after the Holy week, when there is a parade that celebrates the end of the period when Christian people can't eat meat, called lent. This festivity is famous because at the end, the people of the city burn a giant cardboard sardine. So all the students of Erasmus decided to go together to see the parade and after that to go clubbing. During that night they met a group of young Spanish people and in spite of their really bad English, this Spanish group reached to make some exotic new friends. They started to have dinners together, excursions and, the most important part of the story, the Dutch girl fell

in love with one of the Spanish boys, a normal Murcian boy who was studying psychology, also known now as my father and this boy loved her, my mother, too. But unfortunately the fairy tale couldn't be forever, because the Dutch girl had to come back to Holland to finish her studies. But this wouldn't be the end of this love relationship. To save the relationship, they had to find the way to see each other without the modern technologies that we have now. So they made a lot of phone calls, wrote a lot of letter and she decided to travel to Spain by bus, yes by bus, one day and one night of travelling for being with her boyfriend. And also, the Spanish boy travelled for the first time to other countries. But this method was too exhausting and expensive. So, after some years travelling, when they had finished their studies, they decided to live together in Madrid, where the Spanish boy had found work and the Dutch girl with soo many languages, would probably find one. Later they had found the perfect jobs in the city where this whole story began and also where the home of the Spanish boy was so they returned to live in Murcia, where their two excited families with two different cultures met for an international wedding between the Spanish boy and the Dutch girl in 2001. After one year, in 2002, a little girl was born, that is the part where I entered in the story. Now, almost 15 years later I am a student in a Spanish school of Murcia, speaking Dutch and Spanish at home and travelling a lot between both countries. Today I am writing this story of my parents and trying to have the same opportunity that has changed their lives. Now this Dutch woman is working in the Erasmus program in a university of Murcia, helping many students to have the same opportunity to change their live, learn new languages, meet people from other countries and have an unforgettable experience.