

From Bologna to Sarajevo: An Erasmus Journey in Sustainable Agriculture

Meet **Bedadyuti Dash**, a master's student from the University of Bologna, who spent the period from October 2025 to February 2026 in Sarajevo on an Erasmus+ exchange.

Passionate about sustainability and global change, Bedadyuti dove into new academic adventures and vibrant student life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Interview by Amila Pervan

1. What were your first impressions when you arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sarajevo?

When I arrived in Sarajevo, my first impression felt both unfamiliar and strangely comforting at the same time. Walking through the city, surrounded by hills and layers of history, I felt a sense of curiosity mixed with comfort. It reminded me of how cities carry memory, much like places I have lived in before. I was especially touched by how open and welcoming people were toward those from other countries.



2. Which local tradition, habit, or food surprised you the most?

The coffee culture surprised me the most. I clearly remember sitting in a small café for my first Bosnian coffee where conversations mattered more than time. It felt very different from more rushed environments I had experienced before. People take time to talk and listen. Sharing traditional food like ćevapi or burek also became a way of learning about local culture through everyday experiences.

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3. What was the biggest challenge in adapting to daily life in a new cultural environment?

Language was the biggest challenge, especially during my first weeks when handling daily tasks. Simple moments like asking for directions or shopping required extra effort. However, each interaction increased my confidence, and I gradually felt more comfortable navigating daily life independently.



4. Which factors were key in choosing the host institution for your mobility (quality of teaching, research capacities, practical activities, international environment)?

Several factors influenced my decision. I was particularly interested in the faculty's practical approach to agriculture, forestry, and environmental sciences, which complemented my studies in Global Change Ecology and Sustainable Development Goals. The opportunity to learn in an international environment, gain exposure to regional sustainability challenges, and experience different teaching methods also made the University of Sarajevo an excellent choice for my Erasmus mobility.



5. How would you describe your academic experience at the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences?

My academic experience has been both very hands-on and engaging. Lectures and practical classes often linked theory with real environmental and agricultural issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This approach helped me understand how academic knowledge translates into local and regional realities.

6. What is one key difference between studying here and at your home university?

Studying at the University of Bologna is more theory-driven and strongly research-oriented, with a broad international and global focus. In contrast, studying at the University of Sarajevo offered a more applied and context-specific approach, especially in agriculture, food systems, and land management. This complemented my previous interdisciplinary studies and helped me see sustainability challenges from a more grounded perspective.



7. Which course, practical class or activity did you find the most interesting or useful?

The most useful course for me was Quality Assurance Management Systems, as it provided a strong understanding of standards, safety, and quality control within food and agricultural systems, which are essential for real-world implementation. I also found Entrepreneurship and Urban Agriculture Requirements very engaging, as it connected technical knowledge with innovation, business thinking, and sustainable urban food production, making the learning both practical and forward-looking.

Help Along the Way: Facing Erasmus Challenges

8. What was the most challenging moment during your Erasmus experience, and how did you overcome it?

The most challenging moment was managing multiple technical courses while adjusting to a new academic structure, which was completely new for me. During the first few weeks, the workload felt intense, but gradually I developed better study strategies and adapted to expectations.

9. Did you face any administrative challenges during your stay, and how were they resolved?

I encountered a few administrative challenges related to documentation and course coordination. However, each time, the international office and faculty staff provided clear guidance, which helped resolve the issues smoothly.



10. How would you evaluate the support provided by the international office and faculty staff?

The support from the international office and faculty staff was extremely reassuring. They were approachable, responsive, and particularly helpful during the initial phase of my mobility, when clear guidance was most important. Overall, I would confidently rate their support as 5 out of 5.



Learning, Living, Thriving



11. What is one thing you learned about yourself during this mobility?

This mobility taught me that I am more resilient and adaptable than I had realized. Living and studying in Sarajevo pushed me to handle uncertainty with confidence and approach new challenges calmly. It also helped me grow socially, as I built meaningful friendships with both Erasmus and local students, and shared memorable trips and activities across different parts of Bosnia with them.

12. How has this Erasmus experience changed you, both academically and personally?

Academically, it strengthened my applied and technical skills. Personally, it improved my confidence, independence, and appreciation for cultural diversity through everyday interactions, from group work to simple conversations in the city.

13. Describe your Erasmus experience in Sarajevo in three to five words.

Challenging,
enriching,
welcoming,
transformative.

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14. How did you find your accommodation, and what was it like? What are the living costs in Sarajevo compared to those in your home country?

I found my accommodation through recommendations from the university, the ESN group, and online housing platforms before arriving. Their guidance made the process much easier and helped me secure a comfortable place in a convenient location with easy access to both the university and the city center. Compared to Bologna, living costs in Sarajevo are generally lower, especially for rent and daily groceries, which makes it a more affordable option for students. Overall, it remains a suitable and student-friendly destination for mobility.



15. What were you most nervous about before arriving, and how did the reality differ from your expectations?

Before arriving, I was most nervous about language barriers and fitting into a new academic environment. The openness of people and the supportive atmosphere made the transition much easier than expected.

16. How easy was it to meet both local and international students? Did you participate in any student organizations, events, or ESN activities?

It was quite easy to meet both local and international students through classes, university activities, and Erasmus gatherings. Everyone was welcoming, and group assignments naturally created opportunities to build friendships. I also participated in Erasmus social events and informal student trips, which allowed me to connect with people from different countries and learn more about Bosnian culture beyond the classroom.

17. Did you encounter any language barriers, and how did you overcome them?

Yes, especially during everyday situations such as shopping, transportation, or communicating outside the university. However, many people spoke English, particularly younger generations and university staff. I also learned a few basic Bosnian phrases, used translation apps when needed, and gradually became more confident communicating in daily life.





18. During your stay, did you have a chance to explore nearby areas? Which places would you recommend?

Yes. One of the highlights of my Erasmus experience was exploring different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina with friends. I would highly recommend visiting Mostar for its iconic Old Bridge and rich history, Travnik for its cultural heritage and beautiful surroundings, and the Olympic mountains near Sarajevo for their stunning landscapes. Walking through Baščaršija, exploring the city's museums, and enjoying the natural beauty around Sarajevo are experiences every Erasmus student should have.

Take the Leap: Erasmus in Sarajevo

19. What advice would you give to students considering an Erasmus exchange?

Be patient with yourself and open to learning beyond the classroom. Spend time walking the city, talking to people, and observing daily life. These experiences shape you as much as your courses. Some of the most valuable lessons come from daily life, conversations, and adapting to a new cultural setting.

20. What is your favorite memory from your Erasmus in Sarajevo?

My favorite memory was traveling across Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond with friends I met during Erasmus. Exploring new places together, both within the country and in neighboring destinations, sharing meals, and learning about each other's cultures created unforgettable experiences and lasting friendships. Those moments, both on and off campus, are memories I will carry with me long after the exchange ended.

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That warmth made adapting to a new country much easier and made Sarajevo quickly feel like home.



21. What surprised you the most positively?

I was most positively surprised by the kindness and hospitality of the local people. Whether at the university or in everyday life, people were welcoming, patient, and always willing to help. That warmth made adapting to a new country much easier and made Sarajevo quickly feel like home.

Take the Leap: Erasmus in Sarajevo

22. What will you miss the most about Sarajevo?

I will miss the city's unique atmosphere, where different cultures and histories come together so naturally. I will also miss the peaceful walks through Baščaršija, the coffee culture, the beautiful surrounding hills, and most importantly, the friendships I built with local and international students during my stay.

23. Would you recommend Sarajevo and this faculty as an Erasmus destination, and why?

Yes, I would strongly recommend it without hesitation. Sarajevo offers a culturally rich and welcoming environment, while the faculty provides strong academic support and practical learning opportunities, making the Erasmus experience both meaningful and memorable.



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