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Study program: Industrial Engineering & Management

University: Lund University

Employer: Inspiralia (<https://www.inspiralia.com/>)

Location: Madrid, Spain



After three years of studies of which almost two years were completely online due to the pandemic, my motivation to study was at a low point. I was longing for new experiences and wanted to put my knowledge to the test in a real work environment. Luckily, I came across this interesting internship opportunity in Madrid and spontaneously decided to apply. Little did I know that this would turn out to be the best decision I have ever made.

I arrived in Madrid in September 2021, both nervous and excited. I had left a cold and rainy Sweden and made it to Madrid in the middle of a 40-degree heatwave, which instantly reminded me that this was the start of something completely new. IAESTE Madrid gave me a warm welcome at the airport, they helped me find accommodation and sort out all the necessary documents to enable me to work. They were always there to answer any questions I had.

My internship was at the company Inspiralia, an innovation consultancy focusing on helping startups with product development and assisting them with applications for different types of funding. The headquarters are in Madrid, but they also have offices in Vienna, Miami and Cambridge. I was placed in a team working with the EU funding program EIC Accelerator. This extremely competitive funding program is aimed at startups who are developing highly innovative and game changing technological innovations. These innovations could be anything from medical devices and cancer therapies to innovations within sustainability or software development. My role was to write and coordinate these applications for funding, mostly targeting innovations within sustainable industry. The application writing included describing the company's, business model, technology and market strategy. I had the opportunity to work with clients from all over Europe, with cool innovations about satellites, robots, medical devices and cloud solutions, just to mention a few.

Before I arrived, I knew nothing about EU funding and my knowledge about innovation technology was limited. The work was challenging in the beginning and I had a lot to learn, but my coworkers were always there to support me and answer all my questions. It was a high pace from day one and what

motivated me from the start was that my work felt incredibly meaningful. I was contributing to the innovation scene in Europe, helping startups to bring their important innovations to reality. It also made me understand how many interesting startups and innovations are out there. The work was dynamic and Inspiralia made sure that I got the opportunity to try many different tasks to get the best learning experience from my internship. I can certainly say that I learned new things every day and I also had a lot of fun along the way.

The best thing about the internship was without a doubt my coworkers who quickly became my close friends. The workplace was very international and I had the pleasure to work with talented people from all over the world. Everyone was helpful, kind and inclusive. Even though I was the only intern within my department, I was always treated like everyone else on the team. The office culture was outstanding, better than I could have ever imagined. Inspiralia regularly arranged several office events, such as BBQs, padel tournaments, pizza dinner and quiz night.



I was fortunate enough to share a big apartment in the center of Madrid with eight international students. Living with that many people was surprisingly easy, even though of course it was challenging at times. My roommates quickly became my good friends and we experienced Madrid and Spain together. As for the city, I could not recommend Madrid enough. Madrid is vibrant and there is always something fun happening. You can visit famous art museums, watch great football, experience incredible nightlife, go on hikes in the nearby mountains and most importantly eat a lot of good food. Tapas, paella, churros, patatas bravas, tortilla, croquetas... the list of delicious Spanish food can go on forever. Since Madrid is located in the middle of Spain with high-speed trains to all the other regions, it was easy to visit other places over the weekends. I went on several trips with my friends, visiting places such as Valencia, Sevilla, Grenada, Cadiz and Malaga.

This was my first time living abroad and experiencing the Spanish culture was incredible. It is true, you cannot understand a culture until you actually live there. People were extremely kind and helpful. My impression is that people in Spain seem to live more relaxed and enjoy life in a different way than in Sweden. I regularly saw people dancing on the streets to the music of street musicians and bars were overfilled way past midnight. I also got to experience the famous New Year's celebration at Puerta del Sol, eating the twelve grapes of good luck together with thousands of other people. Though I must say that I was not prepared for the incredible heat during the summer months. Living in 40 degrees without

air-condition and no ocean to escape to was a big challenge for someone who is sensitive to heat. I also had to get used to Spain's different eating hours. At work we had lunch at 2pm and dinners with Spanish friends would not start earlier than 9pm.



During what was supposed to be my last month in Madrid, I was asked if I wanted to stay longer at Inspiralia. Since I liked the life in Madrid so much, the choice to extend my stay was easy and my 7-month internship became an 11-month internship.

I am now back in Lund and thanks to my internship experience I decided to continue my studies with a masters within business and innovation. This internship really opened my eyes to innovation and sustainable technology, and I realised that this is what I want to work with once I graduate. My internship experience has motivated me in my studies as I now better understand how my knowledge can be useful in a work environment. It is not until now when I look back at my time in Madrid that I realise how great of an impact it has had on me. Not only did I learn a lot about innovation and interesting technologies, but I also gained confidence and grew as a person. I am now working remotely as a freelancer for Inspiralia, which clearly shows the great opportunities an IAESTE internship can bring even after the internship period is over.

For anyone thinking about applying for an internship, do it! Doing this internship was without a doubt the best decision I have ever made and I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. I made friends and memories for life and I am still in contact with my Inspiralia coworkers almost every day. Madrid became my home and I cannot wait to visit again.