

Translation:

Ellie: In April 2017, the British Government announced that in spite of Brexit, students from the EU can go to universities under the same terms and with the same economic assistance as before. However, according to the BBC, the number of Spanish students in British Universities decreased by 4% in 2017. It seems that factors such as Brexit and the huge fees could influence students that instead choose to study in Spain or another country in the EU.

I want to know why Spanish students would still want to have a British education. Not only this, I want to learn about the differences between the lives of students here in London and in Spain. I'm going to chat with two of my friends, Flavia and Leo, both Spanish students in London to learn more about their reasons for coming here and what they think about life in England.

Interview 1:

Flavia: My name is Flavia, I study neuroscience, and I'm from Albania but I was born in Italy and I've been living in Gran Canaria for about seven or eight years.

Ellie: You're in your second year...first year of studies.

Flavia: First year, yes.

Ellie: Cool, do you like it?

Flavia: Yes, I really like it.

Ellie: Why neuroscience?

Flavia: Ahh, [that's] a tricky question. I don't know when... I always wanted to study something to do with psychology or medicine or something, and when I discovered neuroscience, I liked the subject and the degree in general, so I decided to study it.

Ellie: And what do you want to do in the future?

Flavia: I don't think I'll be a doctor, but something to do with the brain...I don't really know what to do. I'll have to keep looking for an idea as I go through university.

Ellie: Yes, and why have you chosen to study in London?

Flavia: Ever since I was little, I always wanted to study abroad, I started looking a few months... well, not a few months, a year ago more or less, I started looking where to study. I also thought about other places, like the US and stuff like that, but it was really complicated and really expensive, so London looked like a good idea, or rather, the UK in general, because of English and because of the degrees too.

Ellie: And why Kings?

Flavia: It was quite tricky choosing what university, I mean, the university to go to, but I chose King's because I liked the options they had, for example, the possibility of having a Year Abroad, or... loads of things, all the societies they have and stuff. It seemed like a university with loads of options, but at the same time not super competitive or super-only-studies-and-nothing-else, and I liked the atmosphere at Kings.

Ellie: Do you think there are any differences between the education system in Spain and here in England?

Flavia: Here it's much more specific, in secondary school and at A-level and stuff. Well, you have to choose very specifically what it is you want to do, while in Spain you have a much more general education, I mean, you choose science or humanities, or some path like that, but you don't have to choose one subject, two subjects...

Ellie: Is it harder doing more?

Flavia: Hmmmm... no. I don't think it's harder because there are more subjects. I think it's better to have more subjects because you get a much more rounded education, and also I think it puts lots of pressure on students that have to choose one or a few subjects, because it's not the same, choosing science or humanities, as choosing only one specific subject, and then at about 16 or 17 you have to look at universities because universities ask for certain subjects, and it's difficult to know and it's quite stressful.

Ellie: Are there any challenges that you've had since studying here?

Flavia: Yes, because I was used to, or rather, most of my studying I had done in Spain. There are after-school activities, but it's nothing like here. I would go to class, go home and study. But now I do loads of things, and with such a busy schedule, you have to find time to make food and study. Well, making food is manageable, but when you study you have to be really focused and if you're tired because you've been doing loads of things, it's really really really hard. For me, it was really difficult, switching gears like that. It's a completely different concept, because here they encourage you to do loads of things outside of studying... it's not that you're encouraged to join a society just because you want to dance, that's not the only thing. It's also that the university gives you support and... yeah, they encourage you to do lots of things. In Spain, it's the other way round. In Spain, people stop doing extra-curricular activities, they don't do anything other than study. My friends in Spain will sometimes go to parties, but they go to uni, and are studying all day. Nothing else. So it's quite different, the lifestyle here.

Ellie: If you could change anything about the British system, what would it be?

Flavia: Umm... I don't know because I really like it personally, but... at university level, I like it, but preparation for university could be a bit more general. I don't agree with having to choose one specific subject.

Ellie: In Spain, how much does it cost to...

Flavia: Much less!

Ellie: It's like... I... If I remember rightly, my friend told me it costs 2,000 euros?

Flavia: Yeah, it depends. Actually, 2,000 is a lot.

Ellie: And do you get help from the government?

Flavia: Well, we have grants. It's not a loan. Here, getting a loan is quite secure. It's just a given because it's a loan. But in Spain, sometimes we don't get grants, and it drives you mad because you get the grant at the end...

Ellie: So not everyone gets a grant.

Flavia: No, not everyone. It's not a given. It depends on the income too.

Ellie: I lived in halls last year, and it cost loads...

Flavia: It's super expensive.

Ellie: Do you find it hard to pay, or do you just think 'ah, it's London'?

Flavia: Yeah, well, it's really expensive, but I always knew it was going to be expensive living here, but I think it's a really big opportunity and it's worth it. It's like, if I didn't want to spend a lot of money I would have to study in, I don't know, Spain or something. And I don't know, it will open up more doors as well.

Ellie: In Spain it seems that the majority of students stay in their parents house whilst they're at uni, but here everyone lives in halls or in flats. What do you think?

Flavia: Well, I was sure that I wanted to live on my own, and I think it's better to live away from home. Well, not better, I think it depends on the person, but in Spain it isn't as easy to leave, although I have friends that have gone, or rather, moved into their own flat, but here it's much more common.

Ellie: What is your favourite thing about London?

Flavia: One building that I really like is St. Paul's Cathedral. It's fantastic, walking past there at night is incredible, with the lights and everything, it's something that I really like.

Ellie: Thank you so much, I hope all your studies go well.

Ellie: The next weekend, I spoke with Leo about her experiences.

Interview 2:

Leo: My name is Leo, I study Fashion Design and Development at London College of Fashion, I came here about a year and three months ago, in September 2016.

Ellie: And why London?

Leo: Well, since I was eight I wanted to go to Central St. Martins. I didn't get in, but I'm at the same university! No, it's because all the best fashion universities are in London Basically, if you look at the lists, at least ten are in London – of the top ones. I think that the universities, at least fashion universities in Spain are much more... much less important, they don't have such a big name, and also I thought that by going here, even though it's not Central St Martins, in Barcelona if I said 'I went to London College of Fashion', everyone will be like 'oh, wow!'

Ellie: So there's like a presti... How do you say it, prestige?

Leo: Yeah, English universities have a lot of prestige.

Ellie: About the lives of students: do you think there's a difference between the education system in Spain and England?

Leo: I think the biggest difference is that here everyone lives away from home... away from their parent's house... and in Spain almost everyone stays at home, out of all my friends, only one in Spain has moved out.

Ellie: And when I spoke to Flavia last week, she told me that in Spain you can get grants, but they're not for everyone.

Leo: No, they're only for the best and it's really hard to get grants depending on what you do, like of you do technology... I think you get the same, but with fashion for example, basically you get

nothing. And also there aren't maintenance loans, and your parents can't pay for Uni and for you to live somewhere else. So it's quite different.

Ellie: I see. And what are the challenges that you've had since you've been here in London?

Leo: Well, the language for example? It wasn't difficult to speak or understand my classes, well, I started watching series so I learned loads about how to speak, but then when we were in groups, for example at the beginning, it was harder with everyone, like, with one person it was easy, but when there were loads of people I felt a bit...uhhh!

Ellie: It's always like that.

Leo: But now everything's ok.

Ellie: Do you think the lifestyle is different for students in Spain and England, because you've said that here everyone lives away from home, do you think this changes anything?

Leo: I think so, because English students are much more mature in some ways, they have to live on their own, almost everyone has a job... in Spain, no one really works, not in retail or anything, until you're older, and some of my friends, Maria, for example, does skiing classes but it's more because she likes doing it.

Ellie: It's fun, yeah.

Leo: I have another friend that worked in McDonald's for three months, but that was it, nothing else, but here everyone works, everyone lives on their own, it's like they grow up faster here.

Ellie: I understand that you've never been to uni in Spain, but if you could change anything about the education system here in England, what would it be?

Leo: I think it would probably be the timetables, for us it's different every week. At the beginning I had two weeks with one class in two weeks. And for the last three weeks I've had classes every day at nine.

Ellie: Last year you lived in halls, right?

Leo: Yes.

Ellie: And what do you think of halls?

Leo: Well, it was a great experience, because as you know in Spain, not many people live in halls because no one moves out and everyone lives at home... It was good because I made loads of friends and stuff...

Ellie: And you liked your flatmates?

Leo: Yeah, yeah.

Ellie: That's good...

Leo: But I didn't get on with everyone in the flat...

Ellie: And do you think London is more diverse than other places?

Leo: Well, firstly, more than Barcelona, yes. Also here it's like, in this area for example, there are lots of English people, there are lots of young people, but there are also lots of people that are most likely immigrants, or whose parents are immigrants, all mixed together. In Barcelona, it often

happens that everyone is like separated. It's like, there are immigrant neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods with people that are from here, even in the schools. Yeah, in general it's a lot more mixed, a lot more...

Ellie: Do you feel part of the community here, and do you think it's easy to make friends seeing as you didn't know anyone here?

Leo: Yeah, I think so... well, by being in halls, I think it's easier because everyone is new, everyone... but yeah, I think at uni and stuff everyone is very open.

Ellie: What kind of support did you get from London College of Fashion, or from your school in Spain when you applied?

Leo: Well, my school in Spain, the truth is they didn't... well, they helped me, but I was given advice from a friend that went to London College of Fashion, well, a friend, an acquaintance, so I asked her stuff, and she told me how to do it, and UCAS and everything, so it was more me that went to my teachers like 'I need you to write me a reference and upload it to the web', so we did it together and they were, I mean, they were really nice in every aspect. They didn't tell me how to do it, really, I just went 'hello, I want to study in England, how do I do it?' And then London College of Fashion... I came in November to look at universities...

Ellie: Like Open Days?

Leo: Yeah, for Open Days. I went to Central St. Martins' Open Day and I went to London College of Fashion, I basically just said 'Hi, tell me how I do this'. And the people were really nice, they told me everything.

Ellie: Do you think your experience here has made you want to live here in the future?

Leo: Honestly, I'm not that bothered, I've lived here in London for a certain amount of time, like, I think I'll definitely end up going back to Barcelona. Only for the weather, but yeah, I have a family, I think they would prefer that I lived in Barcelona, and it's more relaxed, the weather is better, and it's sunny...

Ellie: Of course. And are the cultural differences between England and Spain?

Leo: Well, yeah, I think people's schedules are different, and for example, eating, we eat more than you, loads more!

Ellie: Yeah, I get that! And what is your favourite thing about London, or your favourite place?

Leo: I think my favourite place is definitely the café at the V&A. Well, it's the Victoria and Albert, there's art and objects and stuff there that I love...

Ellie: And fashion...

Leo: Yeah, they do tonnes of fashion exhibitions, there was a Balenciaga one, and they have an amazing café with a grand piano, so on Friday nights I would go with my friend every week because they have a pianist playing and they close at ten. We would go to the museum, do our homework...

Ellie: Thank you very much for this, and until later!

Leo: Until later, thanks!

Ellie: It seems to me that the greatest benefit of coming here is that you can be much more independent, which is worth it in the long term in the job market. By living in London, there are more opportunities, and a prestige that helps too. In regards to the future, it's impossible to know if Brexit will affect the number of Spanish people that come here to study. Perhaps it will increase the standard of European universities if it becomes harder to come here in the next few years, altering the rankings and making British universities lose their prestige. But only time will tell.