

Personal Erasmus+ Experience Report (WS 18/19)

Host University: University of Natural and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna, Austria

Program: Environmental and Resource Management (B.Sc.)

I am grateful to share the short report about my experience as an Erasmus exchange student at the University of Natural and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna, Austria. The experience, right from the initial application process until the end after mobility process, will remain one of the best learning experiences of my life. I would like to divide my report into few subtopics. Doing so will help future students to understand the process, prepare themselves better and make informed decisions in advance.

1. Before mobility (Preparation)

This is the first and the most important phase of the Erasmus exchange program. Personally, I think this stage is where I spend majority of my time. Selecting the University is a challenging task as there are lots of choices to choose from as a potential partner university. Depending upon one's interest on subjects, one must choose the university best suited for him/her and list the name of four universities during application process. However, one must be careful about the language requirement before application process. Generally, universities expect us to have minimum of B2 level of language proficiency (country's major language) before the mobility process. The main reason for my choice was the courses being offered there. Since BOKU is considered as one of the best green universities worldwide, it was my best opportunity to study at BOKU as an environmental student. The decision to study at BOKU would not have been possible without the help of International relations office (IRO) at BTU and Centre for International Relations (ZIB) at BOKU.

Once the selection of the university is done, we must be nominated by both the universities (home and host). Then, we are officially approved as an Erasmus exchange student for the respective term. Then, we were provided by the list of requirements to be fulfilled in advance (5-6 months). Hence, we had plenty time to complete the application process. I would like to thank and appreciate all the staff members involved in the process, the staff at the BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg (Home) and as well as in the BOKU Vienna (Host).

2. Accommodation

This part of the Erasmus experience was well organized by the host university as well. Depending on one's preference for accommodation, one can have multiple range of choices from one room apartment to communal living in a dormitory. OeAD service <https://oead.at/en/> (Österreichischer Austauschdienst - Austrian Exchange Office) . OeAD housing <https://housing.oead.at/en/> was the easiest and popular way to book a room in a student hall of residence. However, I choose www.akademikerhilfe.at as my accommodation as my preference. My accommodation had two rooms in an apartment for two people along with shared bathroom and kitchen. In a communal living, there were huge apartments with 15-20 people living in a floor with shared

kitchen and toilets. Personally, as a host I experienced communal living was better off than a private living in terms of exposure to new people and culture. One can easily have excess to new person while cooking or doing general thing in the communal area and have a small talk. (TIPP: offering your cultural food to a flat mate can easily win you a good friend). Ultimately, for a maximum gain of an Erasmus experience, I would highly suggest going for the option of communal over the private accommodation

3. University in General

The attractive courses offered by the university were my main reason to choose BOKU as my host university. In my case, there were tons of relevant courses offered in English language. Since most of the courses only earned me 2 to 3 ECTS. I had to register for more modules than what I usually did in my home university (BTU). Due to which I had lots of scheduling conflict. The registration/deregistration process of the exams was very flexible, one can register/deregister online even just before the day of exams. Apart from the courses specially designed for Erasmus students we could register for any courses (graduate or undergraduate) offered in university.

Apart from the curriculum the environment of the class was providing a platform to learn a lot. The staff members and professors were very friendly and had enough English language competence to teach in English. Visiting lectures and excursion was most interesting and learning experiences I earned. Listening, discussing and understanding to the views of international people from around the world during seminars and lectures was a valuable learning experience.

There were various assessment methods depending on the credit worth and the module itself. Presentations, report writing, HomeWorks and final written exams were some forms of assessment. Depending on the module we might have to go through all the above mentioned assessment methods for single module or just one assessment method might me enough to successfully complete the module. Visiting the first introductory lecture of interesting lectures and then taking a decision would be a good strategy. In some cases, we might not find the structure, workload or the teaching methods appealing. Therefore, it's worth visiting introductory lectures.

4. Leisure activities

Vienna is one the most beautiful cities I have ever been to. It has very wide and diverse culture. Architecture, museum, theater, palaces were some of the major attraction's city has to offer. I was really impressed by its excellent public transport system. Hiking in the Alps was one of my best experience. Travelling ca.2hrs south from Vienna by train we



can we can reach various hiking tracks. I hiked to Heukuppe (2007m), schneeberg (2076m) and others.

There are lots of social activities happening around. Especially gathering and events organized by ESN (International exchange Erasmus student network) <https://esn.org/> Being a member of this network can earn us a heavy discount during the events.

There were also lots of excursion organized by the university specially designed for Erasmus and international students. Excursions to the city center and historical places of Vienna were some of the highlights. Personally, I think there is something for everyone that Vienna has to offer.

5. Conclusion

This Erasmus exchange semester was one of the beautiful experiences of my life. Each day was fun and offered something new to learn. I had a high exposure to the intercultural environment/situations which ultimately assisted me to gain better intercultural competence and my personality growth. I thank and appreciate all the responsible members of Erasmus team for provided me with this life time opportunity. Alongside, I highly recommend University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU) as one of the best places to choose for an Erasmus exchange semester.