

Final Erasmus Report

My name is Fabian Kodalle and I am a Master student in the field Electrical Engineering at the University of Bremen in Germany. At the beginning of this year I started my Erasmus stay in Sweden. Now that my study period is over and my time in Sweden as well, it is a good time to write my final report about this stay.

The application and planning of my Erasmus semester started more than a year before the actual start date, in form of a counseling interview with the Erasmus coordinator of my department. During this meeting I was able to get a lot of general information about the possibilities and partner universities my department (Electronics/Physics) offered. After this interview, it was quickly clear to me that I wanted to go to Sweden, as I found the first-class academic reputation of the universities there, on the one hand, and life in Scandinavia, on the other, extremely interesting. Since my university has a partnership with the physics department of the University of Gothenburg, I applied there after consulting with my coordinator. Since I was assured by her that it would not be a problem to apply to a university whose department I was not directly affiliated with, I was in good spirits.

The application process started on the mobility-online website, on which different information had to be submitted until an official application would be send to the University of Gothenburg. The deadlines for the first application were more than a year before my actual Erasmus stay would begin. So, it is recommended to get in contact with your Erasmus coordinators early enough in order to be aware of deadlines. After receiving the acceptance letter new “steps” were available at mobility online, where further information had to be given and documents requiring to be uploaded. Also, I received a second login for mobility online from my host university where few information had to be submitted as well. I highly recommend to check the “application work flow² of both mobility accounts regularly, in case some files have been checked and new steps are available.

During that time, I also had to apply for courses at my host university. After my application had been accepted and I had accepted the place offered to me, I got in contact with the Erasmus representative of my host university, who then unfortunately told me that I could only choose from courses belonging to the physics department. So, I was faced with a choice of physics courses at master's level in English. I made my selection, striving to choose courses that were at least slightly related to my actual field of study. My choice of courses had to be submitted around June 2020, about half a year before my stay would start. The courses I chose were: Stellar Physics, Cosmology, Automated Robots and Superconductivity. After receiving a confirmation by my host university, I had to fill the “Learning Agreement before the mobility” and fill it with my chosen courses and the counterparty courses of my home university I chose the ECTS to be counted in. Because of my limited choice of courses, I decided to take courses from Germany that would be able to be counted as general studies. Each of the four courses in my schedule would be counted as 7.5 ECTS, with each course being 3 months long. Swedish habit is to have two courses at the same time for the first two months and then having the other two during the second term. Also noticeable about Swedish University life are the semester terms, which are different compared to the ones in Germany. While I had summer and winter semester terms in Germany, in Sweden the spring semester (my semester) started in January 2021 and ended in June the same year.

At the same time, I received information from my host coordinator about the housing situation in Gothenburg and the ways of appliance for student housing and for the search of flats in the city in general. There were several different student accommodations in Gothenburg, whereof some were only available for students of special parts or departments of the university. One (Olofshojd) was recommended and known to be for Erasmus students mainly, so I chose to apply there for a room, since it was the cheapest as well. I registered on the website and on the day, they opened the possibilities to apply for a room, I did so. At a given day and time a list of rooms was published, and whoever was fast enough to choose one and fill the form got a confirmation for it.

After my courses, my housing, the documents and all the other little things (like a language test for example) had been sorted, I mainly just waited for of my Erasmus term to begin. Before that time came, I prepared all the private stuff I needed to sort before I would leave. I found a tenant for my room in Bremen, bought a used, cheap but reliable car (because I decided to travel to Gothenburg by car, since I would see more of the country, had flexible possibilities for travels there and was able to take more stuff that I did not need to buy in Sweden upon arrival. Since all the documents had been uploaded by me, I got my "Grant Agreement" in which the amount and method of payment of the Erasmus money was described. I got 70 % of the total amount shortly before my term started, and was supposed to get the other 30 % after I finished it.

Luckily, by the time I planned to travel to Sweden (January 2021), there were no really corona restrictions for travelling from Germany to Sweden. I was not able to drive the land way via Denmark, since they locked their borders, so I took a ferry directly from northern Germany to southern Sweden and then drove the last few hours to Gothenburg. Upon arrival I realized that it was required from me to make an appointment with the student housing office (SGS) in order to get my keys and so on. So I made my appointment for three hours later and decided to have some looks around the area during that time. So, I recommend people to always check what exactly needs to be done to get one's keys as soon as possible upon arrival and if an appointment is necessary just schedule one still from your home country if possible. After receiving my keys, I went to my house and checked my room. I had a single room in a house with a total of 13 rooms and 2 kitchens. Each room had its own bathroom with a shower. The room was simple, but neat and spacious - better value for money than in the student housings in my home city Bremen. The kitchen was nothing special, but spacious enough and pretty well equipped. For the room it was only necessary to get a few minor things to make it more lively, upon arrival only a bed, a nightstand, 2 tables, 2 chairs, 2 lamps and a cupboard are in the room, so I decided to go to IKEA and things like a carpet, a plant and so on. Also, it was necessary to buy a WLAN Router, but a WIFI connection was already included in the housing contract.

On the first day after my arrival I had scheduled an appointment with my Erasmus coordinator of my host university. We met outside her office, and after welcoming me, she gave me a bunch of documents and instructions. She told me, on which student websites I would have to register (websites to activate my student mail, to get access to all the course material and so on) and gave me instructions on how to register and set my own login data and how to get my student card, needed to get access to university buildings etc. After following all the instructions and getting access to my courses, I was set for my semester.

The shared kitchens and the numerous houses on the grounds of Olofshojd make it easy to settle in and meet new people. The Olofshojd dormitory continues to offer many opportunities (like several BBQ-places with benches, a beach volleyball court etc.) to spend time outdoors despite

the pandemic and to get in contact with other students. When I arrived, there were some Corona restrictions, but they were really loose in comparison to Germany and almost all the rest of the world. Pubs and Restaurants were open until 8.30 pm and alcohol was allowed to be served until 8pm. Also, it was only allowed to sit with 4 people at one table. But there was no duty for a facemask or an actual lockdown.

Since many other countries cancelled all the Erasmus stays, they offered before the pandemic, it was offered to a lot of students from all over the world, to go to Sweden instead, which was one of the few countries still accepting people. So, it turned out, that a huge number of students actually came to Sweden, and many of them to Gothenburg (the rest to Stockholm, and some to the cities of Malmö and Lund). This made it a lot easier to meet new people, since so many students chose to live in Olofshojd as well. Also, due to the many connections different student groups have with each other, a connection to students from other accommodations was easily developed.

The classes I took were all held online (due to Covid) which was the same case for the majority of students I had contact with. Only some practical courses were apparently offered on campus. But university buildings like the library were still accessible for students.

Unfortunately, I did not manage to pass the courses I took in Gothenburg during my stay. My lack of prior knowledge in physics and the high demands of the master courses made this impossible for me. Nevertheless, I participated in the courses (in the form of online teaching) and can evaluate the academic offer. The structure of the courses and the organization via online portals was very structured and worked smoothly from my point of view. The professors and lecturers were very friendly and partly tried to take my situation into consideration. I believe that the University of Gothenburg is a very good teaching institution, but I regret not having been able to take courses from my field of study in order to make better use of the good range of courses on offer.

In terms of the recognition of courses, I can only say that it WOULD have been pretty easily done and straight forward, if I would have passed mine. After the semester I was in contact with responsible persons from my home and from my host university, so I can say, that the organisation of the recognition would really have been no problem and people were giving fast and helpful answers. That align with the information I got from other people there, that had absolutely no problem to get all their courses acknowledged in their home universities.

After my Erasmus stay, it was necessary to download a few final documents on mobility online, mainly just to prove, that I actually was in Sweden, was at the university for the agreed time span and so on. Also, this final report was required to be uploaded, as well as the results of a second language test and the submitted EU survey about my stay. All these final documents are necessary to receive the final Erasmus payment about 30% of the total granted sum.

As a conclusion, I would still describe my stay as very successful - I got to know a new city, a new country and many local and international students. I also gained many new insights into other teaching methods and also other fields of study. All these things made these five months very special and I can only recommend an Erasmus stay.