

**ERASMUS+ student report on the academic mobility****About the student**

Selina Hegger

5th semester of Economics – undergraduate study program**Basic information on the mobility period**

Semester:

winter (30th September - 17th February 2020)**STUDIES**

Which courses did you attend?

Business Correspondence (Nataša Mirković, MA)
Project Planning (dr Ivana Damnjanović)
Management (dr Filip Đoković)
Marketing (dr Katarina Plečić)
English (Upper-Intermediate) (Lora Petronić Petrović, MA)
Spanish (Level 1) (Lora Petronić Petrović, MA)

Describe the general teaching system. How much and in what way does it differ from the system you nurture at your faculty? How important is such a different experience to you in terms of education?

The general teaching system in Valjevo is definitely different than I am used to in Germany. In my home university are usually at least 30 up to 500 students in one room. In Valjevo I have been alone with the professor or up to 15 other students. Everything is individualised and adapted to my knowledge and the things I knew before and the things I wanted to get to now.

What was the language of instruction? Was the foreign language an obstacle to acquiring knowledge and taking the exam? How much has this mobility influenced the improvement of your language skills?

The only language necessary is definitely English. This is why my English improved a lot. When I came to Serbia in October, my written English was okay. But with the need and use of it every single day my vocabulary extended and I gained knowledge you cannot learn without talking. Besides that I learned two new languages: Serbian and Spanish. I did not know any of these languages before and now I can understand basics and answer simple questions. The Serbian language was not necessary but it eased my everyday life a lot. I can order a coffee or other things in restaurants, count to 10.000 (which means I can pay bills), and I understand the content of nearly every conversation I listen to and this is very helpful in a country where a second language is not necessarily English. Additionally, I joined the German lessons. It was informative for me to talk about the differences in the Serbian and German language and culture. It helped me a lot learning the language.

COURSES

How often did you have classes?

4 days a week

How much of the knowledge were you familiar with before the mobility? How much of the acquired knowledge is completely new to you?

Before the mobility, I knew the basics of each subject. Within the period of my stay I gained a lot of new knowledge and strengthened the things I already knew. I would describe the new things not as new knowledge in the original meaning of the word, rather as a practical experience. I have never ever learned things that I had to use in this way afterwards. This was a completely new way of learning in this dimension for me. Summarized, I would say I have already known the basics and gained practice.



What are the specific acquired skills and teaching characteristics that you would share with your professors and fellow students? Why?	I liked the personal way of teaching and that not every final exam is a literal exam. It was great to see that you can do projects, give talks or write short exams. Additionally, it was nice to experience that not only the final exam, but the whole semester counts. Your grade does not depend on one good or one bad project or exam but a whole semester of work and studying.
How much is the acquired knowledge useful for continuation of your studies and in practice? Explain.	Unfortunately, I only had 2 courses that can be recognized in my studies back in Germany, but I learned a lot for life. The two new languages I did not know before or the improvement of my business writing skills are some of the things I cannot learn here and something I will need for the rest of my (work-)life. Besides that I learned a lot in <i>Project planning</i> when it comes to organisation and writing. This is something that will not be acknowledged in my studies in Germany, but I already recognized that it helped me organizing my personal way of arguing, studying and writing. I will also benefit from this when I am going to write my next project or my bachelor's thesis.
EXAMS	
Have you passed the exams at all the courses you attended? Explain.	Yes, I passed all my exams. They were all different. In some courses I had to write a project or give a talk and in other courses I had to do an exam.
How difficult was it for you to pass the exams? Why?	It was a different way of passing exams than I was used to. Usually, I pass the exams through an exam that lasts 1-2 hours. It was a different kind of studying and a different kind of exam. I was asked to handle a situation and think creatively and not only to reproduce knowledge I learned. It was not easy to adapt to that new way of doing exams but I think I did it well enough.
Are you satisfied with the grades and acquired knowledge? Why?	I am definitely satisfied with the grades. I did not know what to expect but I was positively surprised.

LIFE

ACCOMMODATION	
What kind of accommodation did you stay in? Describe in detail.	The accommodation I stayed at was a flat with 3 rooms + bathroom + kitchen. I stayed there together with 4 boys. The kitchen was fully equipped. My room was furnished with 2 beds, a wardrobe, 2 chairs and a desk. There was enough space for me and my guests. It has never been a problem to invite a friend to come over for night, because of the second bed. A washing machine and a dryer were accessible in the basement. Additionally, there was a nice garden and a nice view on the rooftop.
Are you generally satisfied with the accommodation? Specify positive and negative aspects.	Yes, I am satisfied with my accommodation. I stayed in a flat with 4 others. My flatmates differed in age between 15 and 24 and most of the time it was no big deal to live with 4 men, but in the end it got more and more difficult. Besides this, my accommodation was fabulous. I had a big room all on my own, a nice bath with hot water all the time and a kitchen with all the necessary equipment. Twice a week we had someone to clean up all the rooms. It helped a lot keeping the flat clean with those boys. We had at least one window in every room, so everything was flooded with light at day. When it became dark outside it was not a problem to turn on the light. The furniture was quite simple but fulfilled the needs absolutely. The bathroom had a heating installed, a shower, a toilet and a washbasin. The floor in the whole flat was covered with linoleum and 2 small carpets in my room. The kitchen had a big fridge, an oven and a stove. We were allowed to use all the flatware in the kitchen and all the things in the common rooms.



Would you stay in the same type of accommodation? Why?	I would stay in the same type of accommodation again, but I would like to get in touch with my flatmates before I go there.
How much did it cost on a monthly basis?	I paid 150€ per month + 140€ deposit I received back in the end.
FINANCIAL ASPECT	
How much money did you receive as the <i>Erasmus+</i> grant?	I did not receive the full amount of money yet. It was around 2000€.
Was the amount of money enough for the life expenses?	Because I did not receive the money in time it was a problem to survive only by the <i>Erasmus+</i> money. If you exclude this fact, I think that the money would have been enough.
Did you have to add your personal money?	Yes, I added some money. 1. Because the money from <i>Erasmus+</i> was late 2. I had a few expenses that were not necessary. Things I would usually not buy but I bought them because I was abroad. (E.g. trips, souvenirs, etc.)
SOCIAL LIFE	
Describe how you spent your free time.	In the warmer months I spent my free time outside meeting friends, doing sports and going for a walk (the Gradac river or Marco's Chair viewpoint). In the winter I started traveling. Meeting friends and going out (old Tešnar street, restaurants, etc.) were always part of my social life.
Did you meet a lot of new people? Describe the experience.	Yes, I did. I met several people from completely other countries and many Serbs. I met them at the faculty, at conferences or just on my trips. It was great to talk to different people and to hear something about other cultures and how they ended up in Serbia (when they were no Serbs). Also, I was invited to a few <i>slavas</i> and got informed about the Serbian culture by my friends.
Did you travel to other places? Describe.	I visited Macedonia, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Divčibare mountain. I intended to go to a few other places but, unfortunately, I did not have enough time. But honestly, it was no big deal because I spent it with my new friends in Valjevo. Travelling alone is one of the things I learned to appreciate in the last months. I did not know that it can be that much fun. You get to know new people and you can eat, drink and sleep whenever and wherever you want. You can visit places and museums as long as you want to and nobody is trying to interrupt you. But I did not only travel alone. Friends from Germany and from Valjevo joined me and we had a great time together. It was not about the places but about the people there.
CULTURAL ASPECT	
Describe your experience and your attitudes to new surroundings, language, lifestyle, traditions and people's mentality.	I was an open-minded person before I spent my semester abroad but I still think that my personality changed and my attitude to a few things. I learned to appreciate some things I was used to in Germany and I experienced things we could improve a lot. When you are going abroad alone, you have to adapt to the country and the culture. Fortunately, this is something that I did (more or less) smoothly. I am very glad that I learned two new languages in Serbia and that my friends informed me about the new culture and traditions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ACADEMIC EXCHANGE (MOBILITY)

PERSONAL IMPORTANCE	
Would you take part in the mobility of this kind again? Why?	I would like to do something like this again. It was an amazing experience and very informative. I learned so much about other people, different mindsets and, most importantly, about myself. I do not regret anything and I aim to do something like this again.



Could this experience open a new door for you in the future?	I think so. Even if the experience itself is not a key for me, the things I learned and the people I got to know enrich my life a lot and changed my mindset in a positive way.
Describe the importance of the experience for your personal development. How has it changed you?	It was so important for me to show everybody that I can survive on my own. Today, I do not feel like showing someone what I can do, not to prove it to someone but to trust myself, my skills and my knowledge. I gained confidence, improved my language skills and I improved interaction with different people from different places in the world. I would not change this experience for anything in the world and I know now the importance of balance between success and accepting help.
POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE FOR OTHER STUDENTS	
Would you recommend this experience to your fellow students? Why?	I cannot understand why people underestimate Serbia. It is a great country with amazing people and beautiful places to visit. I can only recommend everybody to go there at least for a vacation. Besides that, I can definitely recommend spending a semester abroad to get to know oneself better and to experience a lot of things people would never do alone or at home. This is a great way to extend your knowledge and leave your comfort zone in a controlled way.
What do those who apply for the experience need to be prepared for? What are potential downsides?	Potential students should be prepared for the bad air problem in Serbia during the winter. Maybe they should know if they are open-minded in general and if they can accept other cultures or if they are more likely to stay alone, shut in a room and watch TV. This is not a good option for people who do not like to do something adventurous and new. Additionally, these people need to prepare for a feeling of loneliness from time to time. Fortunately, I did not have a big problem with homesickness.

YOUR ERASMUS+ EXPERIENCE IN ONE SENTENCE

What is your message for future Erasmus+ exchange students?	Expect nothing but hope for everything. You will still be positively surprised.
---	---