

Erasmus+ Outgoings

Report of the Experience Abroad during the Summer Semester in Vienna, 2019

My name is (*name omitted*), I come from Brazil and since September last year I have been studying a LL.M. in IT- and IP-Law (EULISP) at the Leibniz Universität Hannover. After the first semester in Hannover (Sep-Dec, 2018), I had to choose one partner university among 12 options (most of them in Europe and thus part of the Erasmus+ program) to continue my studies during the second semester (Mar-Jun, 2019). The Universität Wien, in Vienna, Austria, seemed to be the best option for me, therefore I chose it as my receiving institution.

My preparation for the second semester started actually in the beginning of the first semester, because I had to select the partner university until the end of September 2018. In the application for the master program, which I had to submit until the end of April 2018, I also had to mention some partner universities I would accept to register myself for if I was chosen for the program among all the candidates. So, Vienna was meant to be my city of studies for the second semester almost a year before moving in there. And I must say I am proud of my choice and I do not regret choosing Vienna as my second experience of studies in Europe after Hannover.

After submitting all the necessary documents in Hannover and also in the receiving institution, such as the application form and the learning agreement before mobility, I was accepted by the Universität Wien as an exchange student for one semester on the 5th of November 2018. The whole process was exhausting, but I must admit that both universities (i.e. the International Offices) were really organized and helpful. I received all the information needed in time and with precise details, I had no huge difficulties to collect all documents and hand them within the deadlines.

When the “bureaucratic” aspect of the process was concluded, I started to search for accommodations in Vienna. I was really surprised that it was much easier to find accommodation in Vienna in comparison with Hannover. I could find an apartment in Vienna in the first week of February 2019. I remember that to find housing in Hannover I have spent more than a month and I had to send more than hundred messages and e-mails until I could sign a rental contract. Besides, the prices of the accommodations in Hannover and in Vienna were not so different, even though the cost of living in Vienna is higher in general. I have then rented a small apartment for four months, covering all the period of the summer semester I would live in Vienna.

Before being sure I could sign a rental agreement, in January 2019 I entered in contact with the embassy of Austria in Munich to ask them whether I had or not to apply for another Visa besides the one I already have from Germany. Since I was an exchange student and would stay abroad for less than six months, they said I had not to apply for another Visa there. They just requested me to register myself in the city, as it is also required in Germany. So, I did it within three working days in the 22. District of Vienna, where I had my apartment.

I traveled to Vienna by bus and arrived there on the 1st of March 2019, the day I had to show up there to receive my documents from the university (e.g. my ID card, my certificate of arrival etc.) and to learn some important instructions for the adequate living in Vienna and the functioning of the university. My first days in Vienna were not that easy, because I had to understand how the city is organized, how the public transport works, how and where I had to register my stay etc.

In spite of those problems, I must admit that my studies in Vienna were better than expected. All professors of higher competence and experience in their field of studies, the infrastructure offered by the main building and by the Juridicum (the faculty of law), the database of the library, the classes... Everything was better than I imagined it would be. Moreover, I could find classes which fitted my studies in Hannover and were offered in English. Even though I have some knowledge in German, which is inclusive required to apply for the Universität Wien, I was afraid of attending some classes in German and maybe not understanding them, something that could have been a problem to conclude my studies abroad. Fortunately, I attended enough classes in English to achieve the 15 ECTS required for my curriculum. It would, of course, have been better if I had followed some German classes, but I believe I could improve my German without it, because I had other external experiences where I could use my German, e.g. meeting native friends, bureaucratic situations etc.

I did not attend many 'live' classes, once I decided to sign up for three seminars, which I believed would be better for me in order to improve my skills of writing and reading. My classes and seminars were mostly related to IT-Law, the only different one was the class about Human Rights. I thought it would be interesting for my experience abroad to study a little bit about Human Rights since I had never studied such topic in detail at my home university in Brazil. Intensifying my studies in IT-Law mainly to contribute for my thesis but also being able to study something different like Human Rights was a good decision I have made.

I think the most interesting experience I had concerning my studies in Vienna was one of the seminar papers I had to present in the countryside of Austria, in a city called Zwettl. It was something unique for me, since I would have never been to the countryside of Austria if I had not had the opportunity to. I have stayed there for three days watching different seminar topics, all about IT-Law, and with native classmates speaking in German, which was a challenge for me. I could understand them well, and the topics were really interesting and some of them were novelties for me.

Most of the time I was studying at home, because I cannot usually concentrate myself studying at libraries. However, I also had some off-campus life and leisure time, of course. I could meet new friends not only from the faculty of law, but also from other fields of studies (e.g. education, political science etc.). Unfortunately, my best friends were not natives, once I did not find so easy to construct relationships with native persons, I do not know precisely the reason for it. Maybe it is because usually foreign people tend to draw near the ones who are also in the same situation, I mean, also living abroad and feeling themselves not part of that place. Furthermore, I used to visit different places in Vienna and surroundings, since Austria is known to be a really cultural country with many museums and musical life. I visited many art museums, the opera and some parks surrounding the city. Vienna is a perfect city for the ones who enjoy this kind of life. I should also mention that during my period there I could witness a strike for climate with the presence of Greta Thunberg and also the EuroPride Parade which were really important events in the city of global repercussion.

I believe my time in Vienna could have been better enjoyed, but this is something difficult to realize when you are living there. And time flies. When I realized, I had already finished all my papers, presentations, classes and exams. And now I am back in Germany and must finish my last tasks to conclude my master program. It is hard to find a bad experience I had there; maybe sometimes I had some difficulties in speaking and understanding German, which is something that sometimes makes me feel sad. I also cannot define my best experience there, but I can conclude that the whole period there made me realize that I am able to face new challenges in a foreign language and country, to live alone, to solve problems by myself and to see them not always as something negative, but rather as positive experiences to help me become more mature.

Mannheim, the 3rd of July, 2019