Student Experience Report

Subject: Student Experience Report for Erasmus Exchange Semester in France"

It gives me immense pleasure to present this experience report of my ERASMUS+ exchange semester which I studied at the PROMES CNRS Laboratory in France in the summer of 2022. I studied my specialization in 'Solar Thermal and Associated Renewable Storage (STARS)' which is a specialization offered from the University of Perpignan in collaboration with the PROMES CNRS Laboratory in Odeillo, France.

The Odeillo solar furnace of PROMES CNRS is the world's largest solar furnace, situated in Font-Romeu-Odeillo-Via, in the department of Pyrénées-Orientales, in the south of France. It is 54 metres (177 ft) high and 48 metres (157 ft) wide, and includes 63 heliostats. It was built around 1965, started operating in 1969, and has a power of one megawatt. Located in the mountains of Pyranees, Font Romeu hosts one of the oldest ski resorts in France, making it a popular destination for tourists.

My semester in France was worth 30 ECTS and was taught prominently in the Solar Furnace of Odeillo. The information and deadlines for application were mentioned in the Oldenburg University's website which was very helpful. To reduce carbon emissions, I decided to take by road journey from Oldenburg to Font Romeu. I travelled from Oldenburg to Paris by train. From Paris, there was a connecting bus to Perpignan. From Perpignan we took the line 560 bus operated by lio to Font Romeu.

The furnace is located in the beautiful valley of Odeillo, surrounded by Pyranees on one side and plains on the Other. The landscape is indeed very beautiful and offers a mesmerizing view of the mountains. In winters, you would find tress covered in snow and the mirrors of the great concentrator reflecting sunlight creates an illusion of gold.

The furnace does not only have beautiful landscapes to offer but also is one of the best places in Europe to study Solar Thermal Energy. The research carried out in this laboratory is indeed world leading and revolutionary. Our semester was very well structured in terms of academics and curriculum. We performed a series of practical sessions and experiments that helped to strengthen the theoretical background and gave us an insight into real life occurrences. Along with practical sessions, we also had simulation sessions in which we simulated systems and tried to predict their behaviour in different scenarios. This semester was indeed very informative and helped us develop the right skillset which would be very helpful for us in the future. We also had a lot of sight visits

One of the great things about this semester was that we could interact with researchers from all over the world who come to study at the furnace. The atmosphere in the furnace was very friendly, informative and welcoming, which makes this one of the most memorable learning experiences in life. Professors were super friendly and helpful and more importantly, patient with the students. Dr. Falcoz, the co-ordinator of this program, made us feel very welcome. He arranged a great skiing vacation and a welcome-week for the students in this specialisation.

For upcoming students, who are reading this, don't forget to carry wind-breakers and thermal wear enough for winter. Also, if you like camping, you can carry a tent with you. Camping can be super fun. Also, finding an accommodation can be a bit tough as the semester collides with the holidays in France. So, it's advisable to start looking for housing early on. A lot of accommodation sources are mentioned on the STARS website which you can refer.

In conclusion, I think that the semester was a great experience, helping us develop our technical skillset and also getting to explore the French culture. The impact this semester cast in my overall development would indeed last for lifetime.

First Day at the Solar Furnace

Fell a lot of times, but still skiing is super fun

Weekend hike as a stressbuster

Camping in the snow