

Student Experience Report

Preparation

The Erasmus coordinators at University of Oldenburg brought to our knowledge about possibility of semester abroad via emails and other platforms with major expenses being covered by the program. The application process was simple from University of Oldenburg to the host institute University of Perpignan, France. All the documentation work was completed before leaving for the semester abroad. The program covers 70% of the scholarship before the mobility period and remaining 30% at the end. The amount varies from country to country, where your semester abroad is. The coordinators at home institute were quite helpful with all the procedure and everything was done smoothly before the start of mobility. Even the respective receiving institute coordinator was quite helpful in all the preparation viz emails before the commencement of mobility.

Travel & Arrival

Flight from Hamburg to Barcelona was booked because the RyanAir was the cheapest option, around 30 €. Bus from Barcelona to Perpignan was booked whose price was around 20 €. Font Romeu from Perpignan is like 2 hours more travel. Also, the connectivity is quite good and has everyday bus services every 2 hours. Arrival at the destination (Font Romeu) after around 15 hours of Journey.

Accommodation

The coordinator of host institute had helped in finding and booking the apartment for the mobility period. He brought us in contact with the owner, other students and we together formed a WhatsApp group, coordinated and did the booking for the apartment. The apartment was good and quite cheap. The rent was around 280€ with utilities. The location was on main road, approximately in the middle of CNRS-PROMES (where lectures and practicals take place) and the city centre of Font Romeu. So, going to lectures and going to shopping centre and city was equidistant and quite ideal for us. We walked to the research centre or wherever we wanted to go in Font Romeu. It's a remote location thus the whole area lies within the radius of 5 kms. The view from the balcony of the apartment was quite beautiful. Waking up to that and having morning coffee at the balcony before the start of the day was just pure serenity

and a bliss. There's a canteen at CNRS lab which costs around 6 € per meal. We had our lunch there sometimes, sometimes we cooked. There was separate room for us students at the research centre where we could study and work along with all necessities of microwave, basin, utensils, coffee machine, furniture, etc.

Studying at the host university

Studying at University of Perpignan was a wonderful experience and I highly recommend it to students planning a semester abroad at this host institute. Most of our lectures and work was at CNRS-PROMES laboratory in Font Romeu. But we did visit and did some lectures and practicals at University of Perpignan during our mobility period. We were taught by highly educated and some of the scientists working full time at CNRS-PROMES laboratory, along with highly experienced professors from University of Perpignan in their respective domains. The study and work load were quite balanced and not hectic at all.

Everyday life and leisure time

We had about 6 hours of lectures a day from Monday to Friday. During the break, we used to go to the canteen, have our lunch and relax a bit in the room meant for us students in the building. We played ping pong for around half an hour with other researchers, PhD students, post docs, etc and then returned to the remaining lectures. By the evening, we used to come back home, cook food, do homework or other tasks and plan for the next day before sleeping. During weekends, we used to go to meet up with other friends and colleagues from PROMES lab for balling, watching football matches or occasional parties. Some weekends, we used to go to Perpignan city, or Spain to do shopping (stuff we couldn't get in Font Romeu, it being a small village) and explore. Fun fact, Font Romeu is a renowned tourist destination for skiing in France and people from across Europe come there for skiing during season. Luckily, it was skiing season during our mobility period. Thence, I tried skiing for the first time with my colleagues and it was quite an exhilarating experience.

General Experience

Overall, the experience during the whole mobility period at this host institute was good. The professors, the learning experience, colleagues, local people in Font Romeu, everything. Got to learn so much from all the experienced and highly educated people. It was an absolute pleasure studying here. Didn't even

realise when the 4 months of mobility period came to an end. Thus, marking an end to a pleasant chapter at Font Romeu and a new beginning of other opportunities and chapters of life.



(In front of CNRS-PROMES Solar Furnace)



(View from the Balcony)

-Mohammad Zeeshan
(India)