EXPERIENCE REPORT

My name is Daniela Moreno I am 22 and I am from Colombia. Currently I am doing my master in Renewable Energy at the University of Oldenburg. My master program (EUREC) requires that one semester is studied abroad according to the specialization preference of the student. I decided to go to the National technical University of Athens (NTUA), Greece to do my specialization in Wind Energy and I seized the opportunity to apply for the Erasmus Grant and the Mobility Grant offered by the university of Oldenburg.

The application process for both grants was very easy I just had to complete some forms and send them together with other simple documents like transcript of records and copy of my identity documents. Only the information related to the credits (required for the Erasmus grant) needed special attention but fortunately the coordinator in Athens had all the information previously defined. For the mobility grant I had to present the flight tickets to get to Athens and the contract of the apartment. I received 320 per month from Erasmus grant and 420 euros in total from the mobility grant.

I took the train from Oldenburg to Hamburg and then I flight from there to Athens. I decided to travel with all my luggage, but it was not the best idea because I had to take public bus, metro and trains, and as may be expected, it was really difficult to carry all my stuff, a courier service would have been way better.

Regarding to the accommodation, the coordinator of my program in Athens helped us with some contacts. I lived in a 2-rooms shared apartment with one friend of mine who was is doing the same master program than me. The apartment was located in a student area, only 20 minutes by walking from the university or 10 minutes by bus. The rent of the apartment was 220 euros without the bills. At the end, including electricity, water and internet it was around 300 euros per person per month. Compared to Germany and some other European countries I did not have to register in Greece during my semester abroad.

Thanks to the Erasmus grant I had food for free at the university, including not only the lunch but also the breakfast and the dinner. To be honest I only had lunch there so I can only refer to that. Of course, it was not the best food in the city, but it was good enough. It was possible to choose one out of two different salads and one out of three different main dishes. Besides that, food in Greece is extremely good and mostly cheap. There are a lot of traditional restaurants “taverns” around the whole city where a meal with drink is approximately 10 euros. Bakeries and patisseries are amazing and pretty common in every street. Shortly, in Athens it is easy to find cheap food for all tastes.

The academic offer there was really good. I had lectures not only with professors from the host university but also with experts working in the industry and/or doing research in the topics that we studied in class. Therefore, we had the opportunity of making some contacts in the professional sector. Moreover, we went to visit a couple of researching centers and companies working with wind and renewable energies in general. Classes were mainly in the morning, so usually we had the afternoon for non academical activities.

Greece has a lot of things to do and a lot of places to know. There are many cultural and historical places with tons of history to know and appreciate. Almost every day you will find an activity to do
like concerts, festivals, shows and exhibitions. Some of them are paid but you can also find free activities. Checking the local cultural websites is a good way of planning leisure time. Museums and archaeological sites are amazing. Personally, I went to Meteora and Delphi which are archeological places close to Athens that anyone who has the opportunity should go. Greek islands are incredible; it is possible to visit them by ferry or by plane. It is important to book the tickets and the accommodation in advance given that prices can reach really high prices. I did not go to the most touristic islands, but other more traditional ones: Hydra and Zakynthos where I could enjoy the same wonderful landscapes for lower prices. Anyway, it depends on personal interests.

I went to Greece with no knowledge of Greek language given that all my classes were in English. Fortunately, most people, at least young people, speak English so I did not have any kind of difficulties to express myself in the daily life. However, it would had been great if I had learnt at least some basic expressions and the alphabet before going there. That would had made the things easier during my first two weeks there in terms of recognizing for example some public signs and names of basic products at the supermarket.

I have no problems with the credit transfer and the paper stuff during my semester abroad. However, it is important to know that in Greece, at least from I could appreciate, administrative tasks take a long time to be solved and communication by e-mail sometimes does not work properly, so I would suggest to do these kind of procedures in advance in order to avoid deadline problems.

Even though studying in Germany is already an international experience for me, Greece showed me a completely different point of view of Europe. I met people from different parts of the world, with different cultures and traditions. I tried new food, new way of living, new way of thinking. Without a doubt this is the kind of experience that no one should miss if there is the possibility of doing it.