In this document I will summarize the principal events and particularities of my experience as an abroad student in the University of Perpignan, in the PROMES laboratory in Odeillo France.

**Preparation:** The preparation to this semester was quite straightforward. I had called the university to confirm the application procedure. We had a small delay in this stage because the Erasmus partnership between Oldenburg University and Perpignan University was very new and the web page had not been updated to receive exchange students for Oldenburg University. After 20 minutes on the phone we have resolved the problem and now the problem will not appear for the future students of Oldenburg University. The procedure was clear concerning the papers and signatures needed.

**Travel and Arrival:** The PROMES laboratory is located in Odeillo in the south of France. In the middle of the Pyrenees it is a very beautiful and natural scenario. The little inconvenient is to get there. The train route that I had taken has been quite long: Bremen → Hamburg → Karlsruhe → Paris → Perpignan → Odeillo. From Paris to Perpignan I have taken a night train. It was a nice experience, I was able to sleep during the whole way. Then from Perpignan to Odeillo I have taken the “little yellow train”. It is the only train going from Perpignan to Odeillo and it is a very nice experience also. It is a little 2 wagon old style train which goes very slowly through the Pyrenees. I was a nice way to arrive and a good sample of what was going to be the scenario the next 4 months. I have arrived in the middle of the winter so there was a huge amount of snow (1600 m of altitude). It was the first time for me to live in a place where you have to walk in 40 cm of snow for a month.

**Accommodation:** The arrival to the university was on the 12 of Feb 2014 but I had found accommodation in Odeillo starting from the 1 of March. I had called the Laboratory and they have kindly offer me a room in the Laboratory guest house for the first 15 days. The day I have arrived I went directly to the reception desk of the laboratory and they had everything prepared for me. The personal of the laboratory was very kind and I got along with them very well. The guest house was a nice and well maintained place just in front of the laboratory. It had a big kitchen, living room and 4 rooms and the Laboratory wifi INTERNET connexion. Me and 2 other friends in the same situation had spent 15 days in this place. Then, from March we have moved to the apartment that we have reserved. It was also a good place with everything that we needed plus the superb view from our balcony to the Pyrenees mountains.
**Studying experience:** The PROMES laboratory is mainly a solar research institution. It has around 80 full time researchers working in various solar energy subjects. As part of the EUREC renewable energy master, this laboratory receives every year students from the second semester. We had been assigned one classroom were we received the majority of the curses. Professors come sometimes from the University of Perpignan to give the lectures and other lectures were given by researchers of the lab. The level of the lectures was very good. One important thing to note is that we had very good laboratory equipment as we were directly in the research institute. As part of a solar master, we have received top of the notch lectures in the subject: Solar technologies, thermal storage, solar fuels, thermodynamics and heat transfer processes. We have also had a very interesting week dedicated to electricity market given by a professors of the University. I have been a good introduction of how energy is traded and sold to the final consumer, subject to which we are normally not very interested on but that has an important relevance in our field. We have been assigned a full time professor of the laboratory as our contact point. For any problem or inquiries that we had, he was the person to be addressed. This has worked pretty well as he has been very supporting to the group on every day questions. In over all I am very happy with the technical level and content of the study given to us there.

**Everyday life:** As already said before, this is quite a natural and isolated scenario. It is not for everyone but for me has been one of the best experiences. I have enjoyed the clean air, the animals on the side of the road, the green/brown color of the mountains all over around us. From the apartment to the Laboratory we had a 20 minutes walk going down the mountain. It was a nice way to begin the day. We had lunch daily at the Laboratory restaurant. For 3 euros we had a very nice and consistent French lunch: entre, plat principale, fromage and dessert. The cook made only 1 option per day but it changed every day. The cook also took into account the special food regimes like vegetarian, no pork, no fish. The food was very good and this statement has been backed up by the general consensus of the students. In the free time we have organized skiing (Odeillo has a well known ski station in France), hiking on the mountain, cannoning, paint ball or a night out on one of the 2 bars in town. Some student have also planned trips to perpignan to have a more city like scenario.

**General conclusion and tips:** For me this has been a wonderful experience, from both the technical and the human side. It is not a place for everyone as some of my fellow students had missed the more active big city Life. In my personal experience, I am very glad that I have taken the decision to do my second semester in this laboratory and I look forward to return one day and work there for some time. My tips for other student spending one semester in Odeillo will be:

- Important to prepare very warm winter cloths, especially good shoes (like impermeable hiking shoes for example). Nothing worse that walking in the snow with wet feet!
• Prepare yourself for some peace an quite time (could be an inconvenient for some people)
• The study time is demanding but you will have plenty of time for leisure activities.
• Do not take with you ski material. Things are very cheap to rent and easy to find there.
• It is a nice French experience as you are located in the middle of the country side.
• Go as often as possible to the Bolangeries (bakeries), France has very good bread and pastries!
• Try to arrange as soon as possible for the accommodation. It is not very difficult to find but because of the ski station near by, the winter season could be a difficult time. You can find information about places for rent with the Font Romeu turist office at this e-mail: “office@font-romeu.fr” . You can ask for the list of long term rents and they will send it back to you by mail. A few months is considered long term as they are used to rent for week in the ski season.

Some photos:

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