ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT ÜBER STUDIENERFAHRUNGEN IN BAYERN
[Report on study experiences in Bavaria]

Herkunftsland [county of origin]:   Romania

Studium in Bayern [program in Bavaria]:   von [from] 10.2021 bis [until] 04.2024

Hochschule in Bayern [university in Bavaria]:   TU München

Studienfach [subject of study]:   Informatics

Abschluss [degree]:   Master

Continuing my studies with a Master program in Munich was very exciting and challenging. In this report I will describe the key aspects of this experience.

Accommodation

The most challenging part of moving to Munich was finding a place to live. Since at the time I started my studies all my courses were available online, I was able to take my time searching. Even now, most courses at this program are also available as live streams and recordings.

Some useful websites for this were *HousingAnywhere* and *WG-Gesucht*. I also registered myself on the waiting lists of multiple student dorms. However, the waiting time is usually around 4 semesters so not exactly a suitable option for short study programs. The Informatics master students also have a Telegram group where people post the places they are moving out and this is where I found my first accommodation in Garching.

Every landlord I came in contact with requested various documents and usually the first person to provide them will get the contract. Here is a list of documents I had to prepare:
- proof of financial support (scholarship, document proving help from parents)
- parents' proof of income
- bank statements
- Schufa: since we do not use this in Romania, I provided a FICO assessment as an equivalent
- proof of enrollment
- a personal introduction (to check the compatibility with the possible roommates)

I recommend having all documents prepared ahead of time and being prepared to reply to calls and emails as soon as possible for the best chances of finding accommodation! If possible, it is also useful to visit the apartments before signing the contract. Some people are also able to show the rooms through video calls.

Administrative procedures

Except for the documents required for the study program application, I only had to manage:

- **health insurance:**
  Since Romania is part of the EU, my statutory health insurance I had there was accepted as a suitable alternative after contacting *AOK*. All communication happened through email and at the end I had to wait around 2 weeks for the document to be sent to my home in Romania.
- **liability insurance:**
  I also set up liability insurance (Haftpflichtversicherung). This was not mandatory for my study program but highly recommended by some of the dorms I applied to. I easily set this up online through *Feather*.

Once arriving in Munich, the only other administrative tasks I had left were:

- **registering my place of residence** (Wohnsitzanmeldung):
  This needs to happen both the first time you move to Germany, and when moving within the country. I have lived in both Garching and Munich so far. Both times I was required to make an appointment through their respective websites. The forms I needed to fill in and the list of documents I was required to bring were also available there. An important aspect is bringing a document from the landlord acknowledging the new tenant. For this reason, it is very important to make sure the landlord is able to provide such a document before accepting a contract.
- **setting up the Rundfunkbeitrag payment**:
  Depending on the situation, this fee might already be included in the rent, or a roommate might be already registered to pay it for the entire household. Shortly after registering, I received letters asking me to fill in an online form to either register the apartment to pay the necessary contributions, or provide the account details of the person in charge of it.
- **get a German phone number**:
  While it is possible to only rely on roaming for a while, multiple services (such as mail and various subscriptions) accept German numbers only. Many stores sell prepaid SIM cards and top up codes for them. I chose O2 since it had the cheapest mobile data offers. However it does not have the best coverage, so, if greatly inconvenienced by this, I encourage researching other providers too.

For the most part, there was no issue in using the Revolut **bank account** I made in Romania. However, while the Lithuanian IBAN it provides is legally required to be accepted anywhere a German one would be requested, this switch tends to introduce delays in the administrative processes. After a while, I also created an N26 account to be able to receive my tutoring salary from the university and to set up subscriptions (MVG, Rundfunkbeitrag, etc.).

<u>Arrival at the place of study</u>

Travel between Bucharest and Munich is possible through direct flight. I got tickets from Tarom and Lufthansa for around 70€ a trip. Tarom seems to no longer offer this route, but Lufthansa still offers almost daily flights.

Travel

Most of my classes were held in the Garching campus. My first accommodation was close enough to reach by bike. However, I would still recommend taking advantage of the student tickets at least for weather related issues. The system changed a bit in time. At the start, there was a semester ticket: travelling through all M-6 regions by any public transport means for 209€ a semester(6 months). Afterwards, the Deutschland ticket became more favourable since it also covered regional trains for only 49€ per month. Starting from this semester students also get a discount and only need to pay 29€ for it.

PC equipment

When studying Informatics, it is very useful to have a personal laptop and an Internet connection. However, TUM also provides access to computers and printers in the Computer rooms, which are well suited for the given assignments. In addition to this, students can also contact the student council (*Fachschaft MPIC*) to borrow a device.

Contact with other students

TUM and the student council regularly organise social events: SET (introductory event including campus tours, city centre tours, games, pub crawls), TUNIX and GARNIX (music festivals), game nights, hackathons (HackaTUM), pub quizzes and karaoke at Die Campus Cneipe in Garching, movie viewings in both the Munich and the Garching campus.
Many Informatics students also use a Telegram group to communicate outside of classes and the events mentioned previously.

Leisure and sports

Beside the activities mentioned previously, there are a lot of museums, parks and historical buildings to visit in Munich. TUM students also have access to multiple sport courses through *ZHS-Munchen*. Additionally, the Garching campus has a few outdoor sport fields and the student council offers equipment by request.

Cost of living

The cost of living has increased quite a bit since I moved to Germany. The monthly prices in Munich and Garching are similar and can be approximated as follows:
- rent: 600€ (for a WG room)
- groceries: 300€
- insurance: 130€ (student statutory health insurance + liability insurance)
- transport: 29€ (since October 2023)
- mobile subscription: 10€
- leisure: 50-100€

Studying at TUM

Students can manage their academic program details through the tumonline website. This is where you apply to a study program, register for courses and exams. The curriculum will contain different sections

depending on the study program. Besides theoretical courses with written exams, the Informatics curriculum also contains the following types of courses:

- Practical course: grade depends on a programming project
- Seminar: grade depends on researching a topic and writing a scientific paper
- Interdisciplinary project: has a practical component and a theoretical component from a different faculty than the one you are registered at

Students have a lot of freedom in picking what subjects to study and the only restriction is having a certain number of credits in each category mentioned in the curriculum. One issue with this however is that the number of students for each subject greatly varies, sometimes even making it difficult to find a free space in the lecture halls (especially true in the case of AI related courses).

Study places

There are multiple libraries in the Garching campus. Besides spaces for quiet study they also offer some group study rooms by reservation, and they can also offer help in printing and scanning documents.
In addition to the libraries, there are also places specifically built and managed to offer students additional study spaces: StudiTUM. These can be accessed at any time of the day using your student card. The hallways of most faculties also contain desks and Internet access is available everywhere through eduroam.

Involvement at the department

The study program I followed does not have a limit for the number of students admitted. The same is true for most theoretical courses. This is the reason why it is significantly easier to stand out during practical courses and seminars. Choosing a practical course or seminar you are interested in is the best way to get closer to professors and the assistants that could guide you through your final thesis. After my practical course Mediator Patterns, I was offered a tutoring position for the Business Process Technologies and Management course and I am currently working on my thesis at the same chair (Information Systems and Business Process Management).

Further professional qualifications

Through TUM hackathons and job fairs I also got the chance to get acquainted with multiple interesting companies. Here I got to find out about other workshops and presentations held outside of my main study program. Despite not being able to follow the Security branch as my main specialisation due to the high number of courses only offered in German, I still had the opportunity to attend multiple presentations in this field through teacher recommendations and invitations from companies met at the job fairs. The hackathons, both hosted by the university and by other companies, helped me put all the theory learned during courses into practice and I have collected multiple interesting programming projects.

Assessment on study results and effects on future career

My first semester was spent mostly trying to understand and adapt better to the way the courses and exams are managed. I took a lot of courses from different specialisations, and I got to experiment with what

I would like to do further, the only consequence being the need to take an extra semester over the minimum 4 recommended. This greatly helped me choose what specialisations to focus on in my next semesters, getting especially high results in the project-based courses. Notably, my performance in programming a robotic arm during Mediator Patterns practical course helped me get a tutoring position and a thesis under the Information Systems and Business Process Management chair.

I came in contact with the company I currently work for through my IDP. I also got introduced to specialists in IT Security and Cloud Computing thanks to the professors inviting them as speakers during lectures. I am confident this university helped me build up excellent qualifications and provided valuable connections to the industry.

Plans after BAYHOST funding

I am currently working part time for a company aiming to make educational resources more accessible. At the same time, I am also working on my thesis project "Quantifying the Efficiency of Blended Learning" for the following semester. After graduation, I will remain in Munich and I will switch to working full time.