

ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT

Studienaufenthalt im Rahmen des Masterstudiums an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München 2014-2017

Country of origin:	Ungarn
University in Bavaria:	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Subject of study:	Betriebswirtschaftslehre und Umweltwissenschaften

I. Introduction

Having earned a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting at the Corvinus University of Budapest and worked in the banking sector in Hungary for two years, I decided to continue my academic education abroad. I started my master's studies in Business Administration and Environmental Studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU) of Munich in October 2014.

II. Practical experience and tips

1. Preparation of the stay

The preparation and admission process to study in Munich took about 8-9 months altogether. In the following, I give some insight into what steps I went through during this period.

I considered the following criteria while searching for the country, university and graduate program which best matched my expectations. First of all, I was planning to complete either an interdisciplinary master's program at the nexus of business and environment or two separate programs in the two fields at the same time. Second, I intended to improve my German and English skills while pursuing my master's education. A further important factor was the university's international ranking. Finally, I also considered the financial side of my decision: the tuition fees, living costs and scholarship opportunities in the given country, region and university. Based on these criteria, the Business Administration and Environmental Studies programs of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich proved to be the optimal choice.

In order to be considered as an applicant, I needed to take internationally recognized standardized tests. These were a German and an English academic-level language test and a GMAT test which measures the analytical, writing, quantitative, verbal, and reading skills of candidates and is broadly used to compare applicants for graduate management programs with different backgrounds. These three exams were the prerequisites to enter the general (administrative) admission process, as a part of which one had to submit a copy of all the relevant personal and educational

documents via post and fill an online form. Once the pre-selection took place, successful candidates were invited for an interview which, in case of international students, took place via telephone. I got the admission letter from the faculty in early June, then I had to submit a verified (notarized) copy of all the relevant documents to the International Student Office of the university. Once everything was accepted there as well, I received a general admission letter from the university too.

As the process took long and the final decision was made relatively late, I started to look for accommodation already during this period. I soon realized that I could not find a room from Hungary, so I traveled to Munich to be able to search on the spot.

My advice to all those planning to apply for similar academic programs is to start as soon as possible and be patient. If you have the chance, travel to the destination of your studies at least for a few days well before the semester starts because it is easier to get to know the city and look for accommodation during the non-peak periods. Further, I recommend contacting someone who studied or lived in the city. It is always helpful to hear people's first-hand experience and maybe they can even help you with finding accommodation or finding your way in the city in the first days.

2. Arrival and stay in Munich

Upon my arrival, I faced various administrative difficulties. Registering for two study programs at the same time was not common for international students, so it took some time to explain my intentions to the program administrators, complete my registration and get access to all university systems. However, I did not have any major administrative issues after that neither in the city, nor at the university.

The two and half years I spent in Munich were beautiful and fulfilling, a great experience of my life. Altogether, Munich is a great city to live in. Its closeness to nature has always fascinated me: beautiful lakes and high mountains are just an hour away from the city center and there are big parks and green areas in the city too. Culture is abundant and there are many opportunities for sports and leisure activities as well.

The living costs are high but manageable even for Eastern Europeans. One big cost one should calculate with before moving to Munich is the rent. It can easily be 4-500 euros for a single room and it is difficult to find something even at this price. I was lucky to have found accommodation near the city center, it took only half an hour by bike to get to the university. I can absolutely recommend this means of transportation as it does not cost much and the bike infrastructure is very good. Services are also pricey in Munich but otherwise, the general cost level for students is not so high. Students are eligible for public transportation tickets at a significantly reduced price for the whole semester, university sport classes are also relatively cheap, food and other consumables bought in supermarkets are not expensive either. To get a sense of the typical price level in Munich (or in any other cities), I suggest consulting this homepage:

<https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/>.

3. Contact with other students

My contact with other students was quite intensive from the first day on. In the Environmental Studies program, we had many group activities, workshops and interactive classes which helped a lot to build relationships. In the Business Administration program, it took a bit longer because at the beginning, most classes were theoretical introductory courses which required little active participation and group work and thus, did not catalyze conversations and connections among class participants.

To be in touch with local and international students, I can recommend participating at extra-curricular activities, sport classes, workshops offered for international students and events organized by various student groups. These all help to find like-minded people. I frequented many such events and became member of the Bavarian university folk dance group, an experience which helped me to make friends already at the beginning and enriched my years in Munich with beautiful memories.

III. Academic experiences and further qualifications

1. Studying at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (e.g. offered courses, participation in conferences and seminars, libraries etc.)

The Ludwig Maximilian University is one of the best ranked universities worldwide. The key reason for this is the university's research excellence. All faculties and departments are motivated to carry out high quality, internationally significant research and both the level of the education and the research facilities are in line with this endeavor. The libraries and PC rooms are well-equipped, top international journals are accessible for LMU students. Master students are expected to read, analyze and interpret research papers and design their own research based on them. While certain departments are rather theory-oriented, others prefer empirical research, so students have the opportunity to choose which one fits their mindset and interests.

In general, I was satisfied with the courses offered and the topics covered in both programs. Although the introductory courses of the Business Administration MSc left room for improvement, the advanced, more focused classes provided students with up-to-date knowledge. I specialized in organizational behavior, innovation and human resource management and was content both with the courses offered and with the teaching methods. I especially liked project courses within the frames of which master students were required to solve a real-life problem of a company in a group of four or five students. It was expected to approach the problem from several perspectives and to provide a solution which fits relevant theoretical frameworks but works also in practice. These courses required 4-5 months of intensive work and a wide variety of skills. Good team management and teamwork as well as high-quality individual work were expected at the same time. Results had to be presented frequently both to the department and to the company, so presentation skills were continuously tested and improved too. As the output of the course was a 40-50-page report, academic writing skills were also deployed and improved during the process. Altogether, these courses were a good preparation both for the master's thesis and for real-life (work) situations.

Regarding the Environmental Studies program, it offered diverse courses, workshops and other activities, most of which were built upon group work and active participation. The program required students to pick courses according to their interests from the fields of Environmental History and Society, Environmental Practice, Environmental Politics and Ethics, Human Ecology and Natural Sciences, and offered several further opportunities to broaden and deepen their knowledge during place-based workshops and other events. I particularly liked the fact that I could choose courses from a range of subject areas and could learn from top professors how to approach problems from different perspectives.

Having a research-oriented mindset, the profound theoretical and methodological training I received in the two academic programs fulfilled my expectations to a great extent. I also appreciated the opportunity to be in direct contact not only with faculty members but also with (international) research fellows. During my final project in the Environmental Studies program, for example, I was advised by two outstanding international researchers as well as by my teachers and faculty members. This helped me to design my own project and develop my ideas while getting a deep general knowledge about the topic but still staying focused. At the Faculty of Business Administration, I wrote my master's thesis at the Institute for Leadership and Organization. Here, I also had a direct contact with my thesis adviser and was involved in one of the department's research projects, as a part of which I could set my own research focus.

3. Further professional opportunities (e.g. subject focus, methodological training, research results)

During my studies, I also had the chance to participate at large national and international conferences in the fields of business and environment. The most significant ones were "EARIE 2015", a large industrial economics conference held at the LMU and "Tage der Zukunft 2016", an international interdisciplinary conference on technological and societal advances towards a sustainable future, held in Arnoldstein, Austria.

Studying at the Ludwig Maximilian University helped me to discover and be part of various other opportunities to which I otherwise would not have had access. I was a teacher's assistant at the Institute for Strategy, Technology and Organization and as such, I could contribute to the organization of the EARIE 2015 conference mentioned above. Later, I was also active as a voluntary student consultant as a member of the 180 Degrees Consulting student organization, and could support the operations of a non-profit organization with free consultancy services. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to teach computer skills to migrants within the frames of a project at Handicapped International. Finally, I was also engaged as a teacher's assistant at the Institute for Leadership and Organization at the LMU.

BAYHOST also played an important role in my master's education. Not only by supporting me financially but also through the weekend seminars which were offered every year in different topics. Interestingly, the two seminars I participated at as a scholarship holder covered exactly my areas of interest: the topic of the first one was energy and energy transition from a technical and socio-scientific point of view, whereas the second one was on entrepreneurship. Being interested in social entrepreneurship and in creating businesses which hit the triple (economic, social and

environmental) bottom line, this weekend was especially interesting to me and complemented well what I learned at the Global (Social) Entrepreneurship Summer School in Shanghai, China, where I had taken part just a month earlier.

Altogether, my education in Munich provided me both with deep theoretical and methodological knowledge and practical experience, and let me be part of an intellectual and international research community where I learned a lot. It helped me to gain profound knowledge in the fields I was interested in, to develop a mindset and mental framework and to sharpen many of my skills, such as my writing and presentation skills. My stay in Munich was a decisive period of my personal and professional development and helped me identify my fields of interest and arrive well-prepared to the job market.

IV. Future plans and activities

As outlined above, my main areas of interest are sustainable development and solving global environmental and social issues. I imagine my future in this field because this is, I believe, where I can contribute the most. From April on, I have been working as a grant and innovation consultant in the field of bioeconomy in Brussels, and this seems to be exactly the position where I can realize my dreams and can actively strive for a more sustainable future at a larger scale. I am sure that without my combined environmental and business studies in Munich, I could not have obtained such a position.

I am grateful for BAYHOST for having supported my ambitions as well as for having organized outstanding programs for scholarship holders where I could meet like-minded students. I hope I will have the chance in the future to express my gratitude and further contribute to the success of the scholarship program as an alumni.