

ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT

Studienaufenthalt im Rahmen des Masterstudiums an der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg 2013-2016

Country of origin:	Bulgarien
University in Bavaria:	Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
Subject of study:	Master in International Business Studies

I. Practical experience and tips

1. Preparation of the stay

Leaving your own country on a long-term basis is very challenging step for everybody. That is why you should be very well-prepared, especially in terms of what to expect. The most valuable resource is considered to be not the financial one (even though it is a must-have), but the information. Before leaving the country (in my case Bulgaria), I would highly recommend to start reading at a very early stage all about the stay abroad. There is an exhaustive information about Germany in many official websites (e.g., German embassy in Bulgaria - <http://www.sofia.diplo.de/>), forums, websites with help for students (e.g. applying in Germany - <https://faq4uni.com/>; help when applying in Germany/Austria <https://www.facebook.com/groups/256788891047529/>).

The last two websites give very detailed information about all the required steps for an application in Germany. There are two options, either to pay huge amount of money to an agency to prepare it or do it yourself. I support the second option. It is not that hard as it seems! All you need is to just inform yourself what type of documents are needed for the respective application in the university and prepare them. First of all, the official documents have to be translated and legalized (high school diploma, transcript of records, etc.). All of this process is explained in the above websites. Also it should be considered what type of language certificate is needed and calculate some time in advance to get it.

When choosing a future university abroad, I again would recommend reading a lot! A person should try to collect as much information as possible. This is going to be the golden key to choose a major and place that would you one best! As many universities as you can should be checked, their majors in detail, what exactly a programme consists of, which courses it includes, are they all obligatory or how many are selective, are language courses offered (very important and necessary prerequisite). It is interesting to get to know the university infrastructure as well, how does the campus look like, are there dormitories in it, do they offer sports and where, etc.. If it is possible, you could travel to the chosen cities and check them out to get a grasp of the atmosphere there

and try to imagine if you could live there. A very important tip is also to find or get a buddy. Having somebody to call for help is always useful when one is alone. Especially, in regards to the settling issues this might be a valuable game changer.

It can be recommended to start looking for an accommodation early. Even if there is no official admission yet at a university, you have to get to know the local real estate market. Check all possible dormitories (the ones from the *Studentenwerk* and private ones) and apply early. It is one of the hardest things and for this reason, it might take a lot of time and effort. At first place, I would recommend living in a dorm, since you can get to know other students from your and other universities easier. But there is another very good option in Germany, called WG, i.e. shared apartments (<http://www.wg-gesucht.de/>). All in all, it requires you to be financially very well prepared as well.

2. Travel and arrival at the place of study

Germany has very good transportation infrastructure. It is very well connected to the whole world. You can reach it from Bulgaria by car, bus and airplane easily. I have personally tried all the three options. My first trip to Nuremberg was by bus (in order to be able to take all of my 3 suitcases). I was picked up by a friend and accommodated the first day at my current dormitory. My friend helped me out with all the registrations in the beginning, which are quite a lot. This is a normal process, since you are starting a completely new life in a foreign country. That's why I needed to get my address registration, bank account, health insurance, mobile number, and all these running around issues. In my case, it was quite easy, because I had my contract for my accommodation which is the golden key to get all of the above. I did my registrations for 2 days in total, but I was also prepared in advance where to go and what would I need.

3. Stay at the place of study

As I already mentioned, I am living in Nuremberg. It is very cosy and a beautiful place! I can proudly say it has everything I need. Very good transportation infrastructure, no delays and easily reachable places are part of its charm. It has a balanced living standard, since it is not a very big city with its approximately 0.5 Mio. Inhabitants. There are a lot of bike paths and the city is small enough to be able to reach every point also by bike. My scholarship amount was absolutely enough to have a regular, nice standard of living and get the things I need. Nevertheless, it also depends on your own lifestyle, but you could combine it all. The city offers variety of grocery shops and restaurants as well. There is a lot to do in here! Annually many festivals and concerts are taking place in the city and the surroundings, which are very interesting. There are numerous parks to spend your leisure time, swimming pools and all kinds of sports you can imagine. These are good ways to meet up new people, as well as, different round tables (*Stammtisch*) which are organized in the town.

II. Academic experiences and further qualifications

1. Study at your university in Bavaria +

My university is called Friedrich-Alexander-Universität (FAU) Erlangen-Nürnberg. It offers a diversity of courses and studies. It has a very stable background in medicine and engineering. But its

economic faculty is also very popular for its high quality and performance. It could be said it offers something for everybody. Currently I am doing a master's degree in International Business Studies and my awareness of the university is based on the experience around this programme. I am very satisfied with it, i.e. what courses it offers, what type of people I met and what I have learned. Except the courses I have taken, I have visited many guest lectures. Furthermore, I have been part of many group projects and seminars with international students and teachers. The programme gathers people from all over the world and thus, I was able to get to know a lot of different cultures and work in various ways adapting to them. I can truly say that intercultural competencies were one of the main strengths I could acquire here so far.

The university overall is well organized. The infrastructure of the economic department provides everything you need and with the help of your student ID card you are easily recognizable. You have access to several PC pools, the library with very rich capacity, cafeteria, canteen. The overall atmosphere is quite nice and cosy to spend your time daily in.

2. Involvement at the department

My programme is designed and managed by the Department of International Management. I have been supported during my whole studies by a programme coordinator regarding any questions or issues I have had. Additionally, the chair itself offers several courses within the programme, so I have been in touch with them the whole time. The department organizes a quality circle once a semester where it is discussed how the programme could be improved based on a survey among the students and overall feedback. Additionally, there is a MIBS forum twice every semester where students could discuss current issues with the programme and inquire all the information they need. Within my whole stay, I always participated actively in all these offers of bringing in my own ideas and thoughts of how to improve the programme.

3. Further professional qualification

As my programme offers a variety of courses, I was able - in addition to my core economic courses - to focus on the Business Informatics area. I have done several courses and seminars in the department for Business Informatics, namely, E-Business Strategy and Networking, Advanced Service Management, Interdisciplinary Business Project, Interdisciplinary Business Seminar, Case Solving Seminar, Innovation and Leadership. I have also taken one online course in the Customer Analytics area, which helped me to deepen my knowledge further in this area.

Besides my studies, I had the chance to do an internship in one of the market leaders in the sportswear business: Adidas. This has been one of my most valuable experiences where I learned a lot about their global presence and met very inspiring people. Moreover, I have worked by now more than a year as a student assistant in the Department of Business Informatics where I am responsible for the coordination of the projects in two courses, namely E-Business Strategy and Networking with the Project "Trendwatching" and Advance Service Management with the project "Gamification". Thus, I am able to get a deeper grasp of the overall educational process having the role of a tutor for the projects, while taking courses as well.

4. Assessment of the results of your study visit in Bavaria and its effects on your future career

I would assess my study abroad experience in Germany as excellent. The university and my programme offer a lot and you can get even more if you go out and search for it. There are several student organizations where you could be part of. I volunteered at one of them for the event Ludwig Erhard Symposium. I have been able to get to know many new areas of my interest like the Business Informatics, CSR, and Business Strategy. I managed to improve my learning and my teamwork skills. I have met influential people during the guest lectures which I have only read about (e.g. the CEO of Adidas, the CFO of Ryanair, Business Analyst from Amazon). Moreover, I got to know my teachers in person and I was able to work with them together, i.e. top-down and bottom-up approach. Many of them are working in cooperation with companies which complements the theoretical preparation with a practical approach by having projects with the companies during the courses. The university system is decentralized and very flexible. In a nutshell, all of this has contributed to the improvement of skills valuable for my future professional life, such as the above-mentioned as well as being more self-confident, more proactive, open and integrated. Most of all, the contacts, I have collected, and what I have learned from people from all over the world is the most valuable asset for me. Networking can be considered as an essential skill for your further development.

III. Your plans or activities after the Bayhost-funding

My scholarship has ended in March 2016. My studies will finish in July when I am going to hand in my master thesis which is in cooperation with the Fraunhofer Institut. It is related to the Innovation Management Processes. Afterwards, I am planning to look for a job in the region of Nuremberg, since I like the lifestyle of the city a lot. It is economically very well developed area and many headquarters or offices of international companies are situated in it. I am going to look for a position in the area of Customer Analytics, which I got to know during projects in the university. Most of all, I would love to be part of a traineeship programme, but a direct entry position would also be a great opportunity for me.