ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT ÜBER STUDIENERFAHRUNGEN IN BAYERN

[Report on study experiences in Bavaria]

Herkunftsland [county of origin]:	Bulgarien
Studium in Bayern [program in Bavaria]:	von [from] 10.2024 bis [until] 10.2026
Hochschule in Bayern [university in Bavaria]:	Universität Regensburg
Studienfach [subject of study]:	European Studies
Abschluss [degree]:	Master

Practical experiences and tips

The **preparation** for my stay in Regensburg was very easy. Everything regarding enrolment at my university was clear, and all of the necessary information is available on the university website. My program coordinator was very kind, and she was ready to help everybody if we face difficulties with any administrative procedure. I only had one problem concerning my **European Insurance Health Card**. I didn't know that I had to send it to a German insurance agency so they could contact my university to confirm that my card is valid. The university staff helped me even with this small obstacle, for example, by giving me the details of an insurance agent so everything was settled immediately. My **communication with BAYHOST** was smooth and very helpful regarding accommodation tips and other administrative matters.

The International Office at the University organized an **introduction week** with various events, including session about how to register in the residence office, introduction to German culture, library tour and many activities for meeting new people. This week was a great initiative because you don't have to stress about all the unknown things in the new place and I also met some of my friends there.

I received a **student accommodation** in a dormitory. I had a specious furnished room. There were 2 bathrooms and a kitchen shared with 6 other students. The dormitory was located about 20 minutes on foot from the city center and 40 minutes from the university. Fortunately, there were two nearby bus stops with frequent buses.

Regensburg is very **well connected** to a lot of destinations. There are three airports – Nürnberg, München and Memmingen from which I can catch a flight to go back home in Bulgaria. The closest one is in Nürnberg, approximately one hour away by train. From Nürnberg train station you can find a metro, which goes directly

to the airport. During the Christmas holidays I flew from Prague, because it was the cheapest option. There are direct trains and buses from Regensburg to Prague, which makes the journey very convenient.
The **transport network** in Regensburg is excellent. I love walking and Regensburg is an extremely walkable city, but I can always rely on a bus since I can **travel for free with my student card**. There are even night buses on certain days, although I never used one, because I lived 20 minutes on foot from the central railway station. The university offers a lot of **sport activities and teams**, which you can join. Personally, I enjoyed running around the city.

My **rent was 328 euros**. My **biggest expense was groceries**, on which I spend on average 240 euro per month and around 20 euro per month in Drudgeries. When I had lectures at university, I always ate in Mensa. The price of a main course is from 2 to 6 euros, soup is 0,80 euro. There is always at least one main dish available for 2 euro. As far as I am aware this is a policy in Bavaria so every student can afford a warm lunch. Eating out in a restaurant, however, can be expensive, you might pay around €25 for a main meat dish and a beer.

I also traveled a lot around Bavaria because with **Deutschlandticket**, which allows unlimited travel on all regional trains in Germany. The Deutschlandticket costs 19 euro per month. You can travel with Deutschlandticket to Salzburg, Austria. There are a lot of wonderful places in Bavaria – castles, hikes, lakes, art museums. I can't name all the places that are worth visiting but some of them are: the opera in Bayreuth, Alte Pinakothek München, Eibsee, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Linderhof Palace, the palaces in München, Fuggerei, Rothenburg ob der Tauber and so much more. The bottom line is that the scholarship is more than enough to cover all your expenses and still leave you with money to explore the region.

I met a lot of **amazing people from all over the world**. In my course we are mostly international students, and it was easy to become friends. If I have to pick one disappointing thing from my whole experience in Germany, it would be that I didn't manage to make any German friends.

The university organizes a lot of **events with guest lectures and festivals** so there is always something happening on campus. Usually, there are posters around the campus with the upcoming events, but the university's Instagram page is also up-to-date and every week they share a schedule of new events. There is a university cinema, where students can watch a movie for 2 euros. I discover it relatively late, but it is a cheap option to watch a film.

Tip for the future students: try to learn as much German as you can before coming. I arrived with A1 German which was enough for basic conversation in shops, but I wish I had known more so I can participate more actively in university events.

Academic experiences and further qualifications

One of my favorite things about the university is its **libraries**. There are several across the campus. The ones I visited are Economics, Law, Philosophy and Theology (PT) and the Central library. Firstly, the selection of the books in German as well as in English is enormous. All the books that I need for classes and personal research were available. If a book is not available at the University of Regensburg, I could order it for borrowing from another Bavarian university. Secondly, the **reading rooms** are wonderful. The one in PT is said to be the second largest in Germany.

In the first semester we had to take **six compulsory courses** from three modules – history and politics, economics and law, cultural and literary studies. In the second semester we had the freedom to tailor our studies to our own interest. We had to pick one course from each module along with a compulsory course on intercultural communication. The **selection of courses** on history and politics and economic and law modules was great. At least for me the selection for the module cultural and literary studies was mainly literature courses, which wasn't my main field of interest, although I do love reading fictional books. I chose a course exploring utopias, which turned out to be a good literary course, with meaningful connections to the social sciences.

One of my **favorite courses** was Empirical Research Seminar - Maximilianstraße. The course focused on urban sociology and exploring Maximilianstraße. We had to define a research question and conduct a qualitative analysis. At the end we presented the results from our research. My topic was "How does M26 encourage the creation of an inclusive social space for a diverse community on Maximilianstraße?" M26 is a place for art, culture and sociality, located on Maximilianstraße 26. For this project I conducted interviews with the coordinator of the place and 2 members from the city council, who kindly responded to my inquiry. My professor was impressed with my presentation, and she expressed interest in publishing my paper. Hopefully, in the autumn I can see it published in a journal. I was also very satisfied with the opportunity to dive into European law and politics. The course on European Convention on Human Rights was excellent, and the professor was outstanding. Since my bachelor's degree is in economics, I already have a sound knowledge, and I was excited about law and politics. These three fields are interrelated and the knowledge I gained here gave me confidence that I am competent on working on European issues.

In the spring I took an **intensive German language course** and in the summer semester I enrolled in German language classes. When I arrived in Germany my level was A1, but I have **improved significantly** and plan to continue learning German in the future. The courses offered by University of Regensburg are very good. The intensive one was every day for one month and it was well taught by **qualified teachers**. This course is also a chance to meet new people as I met one of my best friends there. In the summer semester I continued with the German language course with the teacher Kristina Binder, who was amazing. She made learning German a fun activity and we focused on comprehensive skills and speaking.

I can hardly describe how much I gained during my first year in Bavaria. I improved my German language skills, I immersed myself in the German culture and I developed my **intercultural competence** not only by living in Germany, but also by speaking to people from all over the world. The **cultural enrichment** I experienced was one of the greatest benefits of my stay. I gained a lot of knowledge about Europe from different perspectives. In the first semester I built thorough understanding of Europe through the multidisciplinary approach on which our programs are based. In the second semester, I was able to focus on the fields that I interest me most in such as European Convention on Human Rights, Urban sociology, and European utopias.

Your plans or activities after the BAYHOST-funding

In the second winter semester I am going for an exchange semester in Lund, Sweden. I picked Sweden because, as a future European affairs expert I would like to experience different cultures. I have never been to Scandinavia so **spending a semester abroad** will help me gain a better understanding of the region. I am particularly interested in themes that Sweden is well known such as its welfare state and high levels of equality, and I am happy that I will have the opportunity to study them.

After the exchange semester, I have to write my master thesis. I plan to **apply for an internship or job** so I can gain work experience while I am writing my master thesis. In the future I would like to pursue a PhD. I had this desire even before starting my master's degree, but in Regensburg I realized that I love being in academic environment and researching a topic and contributing with the generated knowledge to the development of science or understanding social phenomenon. I am immensely grateful for the BAYHOST scholarship and the opportunity to live in Germany.