

Free Report of Erasmus 2013/14 in SLU

In the third semester of my master study of Agricultural Economics in University of Hohenheim, I did a five-month exchange in SLU, Sweden. I started to contact the program coordinator Dr. Klumpp and to prepare documents for application from February 2013. At the beginning I put four universities on my application list and handed in the required documents (a motivation letter, a transcript of records, a list of university preference, etc.). My priority was Copenhagen University, but my grade wasn't good enough to get me selected due to the fierce competition. Therefore, I decided to apply for SLU instead, which was also on my application list. To complete the application for SLU, a study plan and an online application were required. On the study plan I had to indicate what modules I would like to take in SLU. I got the information I needed on the website of SLU homepage, which was very helpful to finish the study plan. For the online application, there was nothing difficult but I had to choose preferred date to move into the dormitory offered by the university. That means I had to organise the time concerning arrival and leaving quite early before my actually start the exchange programme. However I wasn't thoughtful enough to choose the dates and added some trouble in the end.

After being enrolled in SLU, there were still a few steps left in the procedure of preparation for the Erasmus: 1) First was to sign a learning agreement which was given by SLU; 2) Second was to apply for a Erasmus grant from the International Affairs Office of University of Hohenheim; 3) Third was to deal with visa and residence permit in Sweden. As I'm not an EU-student and my German visa would be expired in October, so I extended my visa before I leaving for Sweden. As to the residence permit, I didn't apply for a residence permit and just used my German visa which allows me to stay in Sweden continuously up to 3 months. I just left for Finland for a couple days after the first three months and went back to Sweden to continue the programme. 4) Fourth was to make sure there were no exams registered in University of Hohenheim and submit a Leave of Absence.

In the end of August I started my exchange life in Uppsala in a nice sunny day. The first thing to do after arriving was of course to get the key for the dormitory offered by the university. As my buddy, who is from the SLU "buddy program", was not available on the day I arrived, I went directly to the housing department and got the keys quiet easy. The second thing was to go to the IT Service Center to register for an account for internet, which was also not complicated at all. I just went to the office which is on the campus and filled a form and that's it. After these I finally got to my new place in Lila Sunnersta, which was located in a quiet neighbourhood near forests. The room was equipped with a bathroom and a kitchenette and was fully equipped. They even offer full set of cooking tools and a television! This was the thing I liked, which made my short-stay exchange life quite easier. However, the only shortage of that dormitory was the inconvenience of the location. From Lila Sunnersta it took about half an hour to the city center and 5 minutes to the university by bus. It seems not so far, but the buses usually come every half an hour and not as punctual as that here. With bicycles it will be more convenient, but the tough weather in the winter semester is a big challenge for me.

After settling down, I started the study in the beginning of September. I took three modules which add up to 30 ECTS. Compared to the blocked modules in University of Hohenheim, those in SLU have longer durations and are intensive as well. Each module lasted about two months, which allowed the contents to be delivered well and more time for discussion. I had lectures almost every day but usually they only took half day, so that I could also have time to do self-study or other activities. The lectures I took were good, because of the comfortable atmosphere for student discussion, interesting course contents and nice professors. One of their ways of teaching that I liked most was the group work. In all the courses I took, a group

project including choosing a concerning topic, giving a presentation and writing a report was compulsory and accounted for the final grade. In general, doing the projects helped me to understand the models, principles, specific software, etc. better, to relate economic theories to real farming activities better, to have more experience on working with others and to develop a better ability to manage time. In one of the modules (Production Economics), the groups were arranged by the professor according to the backgrounds of students. It benefited me a lot by getting more practical information about farming from my group partners who had experience from farming activities before. We had a very encouraging and productive process by working together and received many helpful advices from the professor. The exams I had were all written exams which were close related to the contents of the courses. Before the exams there were usually three to five days for preparation, so I didn't feel too much time pressure before the exams. All in all, I liked the courses I had there.

Though the study took my many effort and time, I also enjoyed my free time in Uppsala. As a town of university, there are a lot of activities for students there. There existed many student organizations which are called student unions and have different characteristics. They offer less cost restaurants, bars, clubs and many activities such as excursions for students. I joined one of the unions but didn't make full use of it as it was not so convenient to go downtown from my place. However, I went to student clubs a few times. It gave me a good chance to meet friends, get to know more people and experience the young people's life there. They also organize excursions to museums, gardens and Stockholm and interesting activities such as night walking in nearby forests. Apart from the union activities, to enjoy the view of the old small town and to try the very delicious cinnamon buns and coffee in the cafes were also one of my favourite things there. Moreover, as lived close to the forest, I took several forest trips during September and early October with friends. The astonishing landscape impressed me a lot in the forest and by the lake. It was really nice to enjoy the summer time in the nature in Sweden.

To conclude, I liked my exchange in Uppsala. It gave me an experience of living and getting to know something deep in another European country. What I harvest best is the practical knowledge I got from lectures there. It opened another door leading me to a more agriculture related world. However, the isolation of the dormitory made my daily life not so convenient. I would prefer a place in the city if I had another chance to live there.