

Report on Erasmus Exchange to Sweden

During the spring semester 2017, I took part in the European exchange program for students, which brought me to Sweden. The following report should give some brief overview, over my stay in Uppsala and my studies at the Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitetet (SLU) in Ultuna.

Preparation

As I started my master program in German summer semester 2016, my application to the exchange studies did not come up in time. Therefore, I received a place, which had not been used. As I had asked the responsible coordinator for international studies at the agricultural faculty of the university of Hohenheim, I could receive a place at the university I aimed for, the SLU.

During the application process, I had to give prove of my language level, as the studies were in English, write a letter of motivation and hand in a curriculum vitae. This whole process took about 2-3 weeks. After that, I received the confirmation from the international office of the university of Hohenheim.

In the next step, I had to apply at the SLU, where I had to fill in a form, which studies I aimed for and what was my background. Therefore, I also had to hand in an overview over my courses, I had done so far.

As the courses at SLU usually include more than 6 ECTS, the amount of courses was limited, but according to the requirements from the university of Hohenheim, I had to do courses on an equivalent of 30 ECTS. Finally, I chose two courses of 15 ECTS each: Animal Environment, Welfare & Housing Systems (first half of the semester) and Forage Crops and Feed Sciences (second half of the semester). For the courses' acknowledgment I had to fill out the Learning Agreement, where I had to name the courses, the amount of credits and how I would have liked to have the courses acknowledged at the university of Hohenheim. This had to be signed by the coordinator for international studies at the agricultural faculty, the chairman of the examination board and the international office of the university.

The approving of the SLU finally arrived in November 2016, which gave me two months, until the studies started at 16th January 2017.

Accommodation

Unlike domestic students in Sweden, accommodation was not the biggest point of concern during my stay in Uppsala, as the accommodation was provided by hosting university. During the preparation for my stay I received the information about my accommodation as an e-mail.

As many exchange students, I received a room in a corridor with five flat mates, where we shared bathroom, toilets and kitchen. The room was furnished and had a sink, but was at the edge of refurbishment, as the whole dormitory, which is to be done in summer 2017. Fortunately, the

dormitory is situated close to the city center of Uppsala, in Rackarbergsgatan. This offers good opportunities to walk to the city center, have a close supermarket and sufficient connections to the bus system. As the university is located 6 km outside the town, on a separate campus, many students decide to cycle to the campus, which can be done quite well, with good cycle lanes. I decided to commute by bus, which required me to walk to the closest bus station, where a direct service to the university was possible, which was a 1 km walk. If one joins the student union, bus tickets can be purchased to a lower fare, the best choice is the monthly ticket for 555 SEK.

Studies at SLU

The SLU is the only university for applied life sciences in Sweden and offers many different studies, which include for example urban planning and bio engineering. I chose to study Animal sciences (Husdjurvetenskapen) in the master. The choice for the courses includes the choice for the corresponding profile, changes between the profiles are difficult and not intended, as one profile acts as a whole study, from bachelor to master.

The courses are much smaller and more personal than in Germany, it is common to call the teachers by their given name (which is common throughout the whole country) and compared to my German experience, teachers are more engaged in their teaching and the relationship to the teachers is closer. Unlike in Germany, there is no clear hierarchy within the teachers, most are considered scientific personal, which still means, they take leading roles in their corresponding departments.

Studies in Sweden are generally more project oriented, which gives great insight in potential works in research and attached areas to agriculture. Therefore, time management is much more important, to be able to write the required project works on the available time budget, while still also preparing for the lectures and the final exams of the modules. During the Forage Crops and Feed Science module, huge laboratory exercises were part of the module, these exercises showed the feed analysis according to the Swedish standards, which differ considerably from the German ones.

At least for master students, the course contents should be generally known, new contents are more about the different standards and assumptions applied in the different countries. As the courses are generally in English, the focus is much more on the international research and advising than in Germany. Swedish standards and solutions are considered the basic requirements, which should be known by the students, when they finish the courses.

Everyday Life and Free time

Everyday life in Uppsala and Sweden in general does not differ so much from everyday life in Germany. Most obvious differences might be that people tend to pay almost everything by card. Depending on the own bank in Germany, one can adapt to that, payments in cash are still possible, but not, for example, in the buses in Uppsala. Other means of everyday life, such as supermarkets,

are similar to Germany. Close to the dormitory, I stayed in, there are two ICA supermarkets, of which the closer one is slightly more expensive. Food is generally slightly more expensive than in Germany, alcohol is much more expensive and can just be bought in pubs and in Systembolaget stores.

Compared to German studies, the attendance times at the university might seem quite short, with different stages of attendance during the different periods of the module. As the studies are much more project based, the off time should also be used to prepare for the projects, the exams, etc.

Depending on personal interest, all activities can be done in Uppsala, all different sports are possible and many student projects, such as choirs and other groups offer their activities also to international students. Language differences are not of much concern, as long as one does not leave the circuit of the university.

As there are two universities in Uppsala (SLU and Uppsala universitet) many activities are shared and a central meeting point are nations, which act as informal student unions. Nations offer many activities, such as sports, choirs, orchestras and parties, one must be member of one nation, to use whichever other nation in town. The choice of the nation is a matter of taste, all nations are good and, unlike student unions in Germany, are not political. I decided to join Värmlands nation, which half of the international students also joined, the other half joined Södermanlands-Närkes nation (Snerikes). Huge benefit of nations is that alcohol is much cheaper in nations than in other pubs or discos. The nation membership costs 250 SEK per nation and semester.

To get student discounts, such as for the bus ticket, railway tickets and for all different activities, SLU students must join the Ultuna studentkår, which acts as the general student union for SLU students. This also costs 250 SEK and gives the chance to eat at the union house during lunchtime.

I decided to improve my Swedish, so I took Swedish classes at Folksuniversitetet, which helped me a lot to get into closer contact with Swedes and to understand the country better. Furthermore, I used the opportunity to travel within Sweden and visit different places I was interested in during my stay.

Conclusion

Concluding one can say that the decision to go to Sweden as an exchange student was a good decision for several reasons. I learned a lot about other approaches on agriculture and animal production, I got to know a slightly different education system and I learned about a different country. As I met people from various different countries, I got a wider horizon on many questions. On the negative side, there is of course the preparation work it takes, to study abroad, the organizational stuff, which differs slightly in Sweden and the fact that the semesters in both countries are not entirely running at the same time.