

# **International Semester / Erasmus + Program**

## **Copenhagen, Denmark**

### **Student Experience Report**

**Period: 06.02.2017 – 23.06.2017**

#### **Who I am?/Wer bin ich?**

I am student doing a bachelor-degree in Social Work at the ASH, Berlin. I just finished my third Semester in Copenhagen with focus on "People with Special Needs".

#### **My Motivation**

I always wanted to make my B.A. Studies as international as possible, therefore I opted to do an "Auslandssemester". Between all the available partner universities around the world I chose to go to Copenhagen, Denmark. I was always curious about the educational system in the Scandinavian countries and Denmark was the best option considering the distance and living costs. You can get there in an one hour flight or in 6 to 8 hours by bus. Denmark is at least twice as expensive as Germany but still the cheapest among the Scandinavian countries. In my opinion it's always an advantage to gain experience from other educational systems in other countries.

#### **Preparations / Vorbereitung**

In my experience, the applying process was quite long with lots of paperwork to do. Such as writing motivation letters, giving references, qualifications, professional background, etc. First, I applied for the option to do an "Auslandssemester" within my university. At the same time I applied to the partner university. After a few weeks I finally got a response saying that I was eligible to take part at the program and the partner university did accept me as well. I had never been in Copenhagen before but I was willing to give it a try. From what I've heard and researched online, Copenhagen is a nice small city with a vibrant student life.

#### **Accommodation and living costs / Wohnung und Lebensunterhalt**

Doing an "Auslandssemester" involves many preparations, such as tones of paper work, looking for an accommodation, networking and also beeing financially prepared. The two partner universities in Copenhagen offer accommodation for the international students however there are a few "catch's" involved. Usually the accommodations are located many kilometers away from the city center, they are expensive and in many cases you have to share a flat with more than 4 people and with a not really nice landlord/ladie. There is also a student dorm option, however they are as expensive as a room in a normal apartment in the city and on top of that, they demand the rent for the whole semester in advance, neither refundable nor negotiable. So, unless you would love to be in an unknown country many kilometers away from the city center, in a house with peculiar landlords/landladies with strange house rules or in a student dorm room size 9x9 and paying a fortune for it, I will suggest you to look for your own room/apartment a few months in advance. It's going to be expensive anyway but at least you will have the liberty to choose where and with whom you are going to live with and how much you are willing to pay for it. The living costs are very expensive in Copenhagen. Specially without savings or without help from your parents. Transportation, food, going out and clothes are at least twice as expensive as in Berlin. If you are willing to come here for a student exchange you must prepare yourself financially. I personally was lucky to get "AuslandsBAföG" and an "Erasmus+" Grant and a loan from "Daka Berlin". Without this financing I wouldn't have been able to make this possible. Almost everyone is eligible to receive these Grants and Loans, considering that you have to apply 6 months in advance, you need several references, you have to go to meetings and write motivation letters.

Here everyone rides a bike. You can either rent or buy one. It's cheap, cool and you can experience the city in a better way.

## **The University**

The University started the semester in September 2017.

The facilities at the Campus Carlsberg are super. The university is brand new and very well equipped with the highest of technologies. They have interactive classrooms, sound and projection systems in every classroom, you can use WiFi all over the campus. They have music halls, a theatre, 3 indoor-sport halls and pianos everywhere :). They have various cafeterias and a catering service. The food is affordable and of very good quality. They also have a student bar. Exchange students can visit the Danish language classes for free.

## **Copenhagen**

Copenhagen is a small, pretty and urban city. The public transport is expensive but very good. The city is also very clean and well planned. Copenhagen has many tourist attractions such as Tivoli, the food market, the port and various picturesque neighborhoods. But in my opinion the biggest attraction is the bike culture.

## **Intercultural experience / Interkulturelle Erfahrung**

### **- Danish people and Danish culture**

Being familiar with the German culture I must say that Danish people seem to be more relaxed, happy, polite and more willing to help than most Germans I know. From what I have experienced, there is no much "worry" or "fear" in the Danish culture. I had the chance to do 2 different Internships here in Copenhagen and the work dynamics were less competitive and less hierarchical comparing it with my own experiences back in Berlin. Danish people take their time to do things, there is no "rush". The language is difficult to speak but if you are fluent in German it will help you to understand many things. Nevertheless all Danish people speaks fluent English, which helps a lot.

### **- The Erasmus Students**

Erasmus Students come from all over the world. In my group were students from Ghana, Spain, The Netherlands, Italy, Thailand, Ireland and Denmark.

The study dynamics in general were good, however our course involved a lot of group work which doesn't always work if there are so many nationalities with different views and thoughts. In the field of Pedagogy and Social Work there is a predominant presence of female students and for me being the only male student was -quite frankly- very challenging. The Erasmus Student program attracts – in most cases- very young students. They are between 19 and 25 y/o and for me being 33 years old, I didn't find it very easy to deal with this. Nevertheless it is an opportunity to learn about other cultures, to be tolerant and to accept each other.

## **What did I learn from my International Semester in Copenhagen?/ Erfahrungsgewinn**

Denmark is a great country to study. The living costs are very high however it's worth having this experience. The fact that Danish people are so easy going, relaxed and many speak fluent English made it easier for me. If you are in trouble you will always get help from a Danish person. During my stay I've learned to be more tolerant and inclusive towards my comrades and other people around me. I also learn to accept and to understand other ways of thinking and be more open about it. I've learned new insights about people with physical and mental disabilities. I feel more prepared than before.

This international semester helped me to understand myself in a better way. It helped me to realize what I want and most importantly what I don't want for myself in my future as a professional. In addition, I took the opportunity to learn Danish. It is always great to know a foreign language. I would highly recommend it to everyone to make an international semester, however don't forget the time you need for planning, organizing and networking your stay.