

Erasmus Exchange Project Hochschule Bremen (assignment)

With this assignment I would like to help my fellow students at the faculty of Electrical engineering who would like to participate in the Erasmus Project and especially all those, who would like to do that at the Hochschule Bremen.

My name is Zsolt Szépfalvi. I'm an undergraduate student of Electrical engineering and I would like to share my experiences, thoughts and impressions about my time in Bremen. I think everybody should spend at least one semester abroad, because it opens your mind for new things, you really meet lots of people. During my stay in Bremen, I've felt really alive and free.

Before you embark on the programme, you should make sure to get several things done. You should be able to speak a little English and/or German. If you can do that, especially both languages, you won't have any trouble while you are there. The project starts with the application. It is recommended to attend the informational evening for the Erasmus exchange programme, which takes place in February, but before you do that visit <http://erasmus.uni-obuda.hu/> and state what your questions are. This is better than to go to the International Office with every single question you might have. The application process is very simple: there is a check list and you have to go through all the points by providing the necessary documents and form sheets.

If you have won a scholarship, you can start the preparation for staying abroad. There are some key elements which have to be done before you travel. First of all, you have to open a bank account based on Euro currency. The best I found is the offer of Raiffeisen Bank after little bit of research. Then you can sign the contract at the International Office.

Before you travel out, you have to keep in mind that in Bremen there is higher demand for furnished accommodation than supply and therefore start looking early to find a room on the internet. This year especially, the situation was very bad, since the 13th year of German high school was closed, so even the local students were twice as many than normally plus there were even more exchange students than usually. You should start the search as early as August - from September onwards it is really difficult to find a room and in October the school starts.

However, the Hochschule has a great database of individuals, who have rooms to offer. It's best, if it is close to the Hochschule - it is in a very central location - a little separate from the host or host family, and it should cost less than 300 euros. The person in charge of this database is Christina Timmerman. She is very helpful. The International Office leader, Andrea Thode, will get in touch with you soon after the application deadline. You can also apply for dormitory places at Studentenwerk Bremen, but since there is a long waiting list, you will have to do that five months before your arrival in Bremen. Finally, you can send emails to individuals who are advertising rooms on the sites www.wg-gesucht.de and www.schwarzesbrett.bremen.de, but it is hard to find a room on there, because often you do not get a response. However, you can find something there for „Zwischenmiete“ - Short term” as it is more affordable than a hostel.

If I would go again, I would move in July and work there in a student job. There are lots of agencies, like here, they just arrange student work. For me, the exchange was an excellent experience. I travelled by train to Hamburg from Budapest. I think that is the best solution if you have more luggage. The „Europa Special” train is the best offer. You can buy the ticket a few weeks before departure very cheaply. In Germany, buses between the cities are cheaper than the trains, but if you get your student semester ticket from the Hochschule, after you paid the fee for it, you can travel in Bremen and from Bremen to the next bigger towns, so to Hamburg as well. The ticket is valid from September until the end of February or from March until the end of August. For Christmas, I came by airplane from Dortmund.

I will now continue to talk about Bremen as a city and the Hochschule Bremen.

Bremen is an old „Hansestadt”, i.e. a merchant town near the coast, along with several other coastal cities in Germany like Hamburg and Lübeck and also Swedens. The Hanse was both a trading and military defense alliance in the middle ages. As an important harbour, Bremen was importing and exporting goods, which were arriving by ships from other harbour towns and even from the Netherlands. It became very rich a few centuries ago and an independent city and state, which means it has been led by the business people rather than kings. The symbol of the city is a key, which symbolises the key for the door of freedom. This symbol you can find on Beck’s beer bottles, because the Becks brewery is in Bremen, just a few blocks away from Hochschule.

After the second world war, the town lost its important position and was ruined then, but as they were rebuilding it, the concept was for it to look just like it did before the war. Wilhelm Kaisen was the Mayor of the town then, so the bridge over the local river Weser that leads us to the city center (Domsheide) is named after him. From the city center the central station (Hauptbahnhof) is only a few tram stops away. The tram runs around the Wallanlagen – the previous city walls which are now a park - to reach the main station. Next to the Cathedral (Dom), which is over a 1000 years old, you can find a lot of nice things, such as the Schütting house, the 15th and 16th century market square, the city hall and the famous statue of the Bremen town musicians – a donkey, a dog, a cat and a cockerel.

Amongst the 16 German federal states, Bremen is the smallest and one of the poorest, as it has far less taxpayers and companies than Bavaria for example. However, the concept of „poor” is relative, as it is still a very green, clean and nice looking city with about 650,000 people living in it. Strangely, Bremen has also the most millionaires in Germany relative to its population.

Bremen does not have that much money for education, but still a lot more than we have, unfortunately. Mostly, the lessons are at least 4 times 45 minutes, which is enough time to get involved in topics very deeply, which I like. I think the standard of teaching is high at the Hochschule Bremen and I’m glad I came here to study.



