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UNIVERSITÄT
ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
ERASMUS Report 2016/17

Personal Information	
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Host university:	Lappeenranta University of Technology
Host country:	Finland
Study programme at host university:	Industrial Engineering and Management
Duration in semester (WS, SS or whole year):	Winter Semester
May the report be published?	YES
If yes, may name and e-mail be published?	YES, to both

1. Preparation (organization, application at the host university)

The planning and applying process were well-organized by the host university, Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT). The application process for exchange semester of Autumn 2016 started approximately in March. LUT provided exchange students with structured online-application called E-Mobility. Through the E-Mobility platform, the application process became easier. All the steps starting from the filling the application until the departure time were tracked. This made the important dates and to-do-list becoming more visible for students. Moreover, at the end of online application, student needed to send the signed original documents to LUT. It took almost 1 month to wait for the Letter of Acceptance arrived.

Initially, there should be a welcoming packet and Letter of Acceptance (LoA) sent directly to my address in Germany or FAU, but at that time, they changed the scheme. LoA was sent by email and welcoming packet directly given before the orientation day. During the application process and before the mobility, LUT accommodated the exchange students with Facebook group of "LUT Newcomers 2016/2017". This group was really useful. Once, I asked about housing and got fast responses from the responsible people as well as the suggestions from other exchange students. The most asked questions in the group were about room-mates, tutor, and driver.

2. Arrival / Visa (flight, train)

Since I don't have EU Citizenship, I was required to apply for Finnish Residence Permit. The visa-process was convenient and fast. It took only 2 weeks. The process consisted of two phases, online application and direct verification. For online application, I need to submit LoA from receiving university, means of support (Bank Balance and Erasmus Grants document), European Health Insurances, Germany Residence Permit, and Passport. Once all the documents had been submitted, I should verify and pay the visa directly to the Finnish Embassy in Berlin. The student-visa costed 300 Euro. Nevertheless, it was quite expensive.

I departed for Finland 2 days before the orientation, "Welcome Week". It was about 10 days before the official semester day started. Since I took the flight from Frankfurt to Helsinki, I had several transfers. I took IC train from Nuremberg to Frankfurt International Airport, flight from Frankfurt to Vantaa Airport, and train from Vantaa to Lappeenranta via Helsinki. In Helsinki, I needed to change my train from city-train to inter-city train with the destination of Lappeenranta.

Important Tips: It is better to book the flight earlier at least 2 or 1.5 months before the departure because the increasing prices will be really significant. Since I booked my flight only less than 1 month before my departure, I couldn't get any cheaper prices. Hence I decided to take the cheapest one which required me to transfer. It was not convenient for me to travel with heavy luggage. But it was still cheaper than other direct flights from Nuremberg or Munich. From Vantaa to Lappeenranta, you can choose either using Inter-City Train (VR Train) or Bus. The Inter-City Trains costs between 20-36 Euro, but the bus is far cheaper, only 6-16 Euro. Book in advance via websites. These are the links of Finland's Train and Bus:

<https://www.vr.fi/cs/vr/en/frontpage>

<https://www.matkahuolto.fi/en/>

Arriving in Lappeenranta train-station, I was picked up by the driver (some of LUT's students were assigned as driver) and brought to the student housing. At student housing, I was supposed to meet my tutor but the thing was a little complicated. I didn't meet my tutor and also she didn't contact me before my departure (later I knew that my tutor was changed). Normally, after picked up by the driver, the tutor will welcome their tutee at their accommodation. However, overall, I was grateful that LUT had such an organized system for taking care the arrival of new international students.

Important Tips: Before the departure, make sure you have submitted your departure information in E-Mobility on time. Don't forget to contact your driver and tutor for verifying your departure time because sometimes there was some overlapped or missed schedules for the late departure-date submits.

3. Accommodation (student residence hall, private apartment)

During my semester in Lappeenranta, I lived in two places. Those were Emergency Housing provided by LTKY (Student Union) and Sharing Apartment in Karanko 4 organized by LOAS (Lappeenranta Student Housing Foundation). Since I couldn't get any house from LOAS before my departure, I applied for Emergency Housing. It was a solution for students who were in the LOAS' waiting list. The prices for first month were 30 Euro/weeks, and later the second month were increased to 50 Euro/weeks. Living in emergency housing, I needed to share my spaces with almost 15 girls. We slept at bunk beds and shared the same bathroom and kitchen. I lived there for 1 month 10 days.

Even though it was temporary and so crowded but I was glad that I ever lived there because I got to know many people and became good friends with them.

In the second month, October, I got offered from LOAS to live in Karankokatu 4. This student housing is usually intended for international students and my room fee was 317 Euro/month. It was a full-furnished sharing apartment with 3 bedrooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen. Most of international students lived in Karankokatu 4 and Punkkerikatu. Karankokatu 4 is located in the middle between campus and city centre, approximately 2-3 Km from the campus area. Meanwhile, Punkkerikatu is only 8-10 minutes walking distance from campus area. Anyway, LOAS usually separated the housing between Finnish students and international students. During the application of student housing, LOAS defined which apartments were available for exchange students.

LOAS provided a completed facilities ranging from free laundry room until sauna room. All the student housings had its own Sauna Room. It was one of the best thing living in Finland. Every Tuesday and Friday, students could enjoy free Sauna in Sauna Rooms. Laundry and Private Sauna should be booked online through LOAS Website. It was very convenient and organized.

Important Tips:

- If you intend to live in LOAS' apartment, pay attention for the deadline dates. I applied in earliest of July and was already in waiting list until October. It is better to apply earlier for example in the of May or June, right after you submit your application to LUT. Moreover, if you know somebody or friends who are also going to the same exchange period with you, you can simply apply for "Family Apartment" to LOAS. The prices will be slightly cheaper.
- LOAS doesn't provide mattress, pillow, and bed linen. Students need to buy it buy themselves. However, there will be a student organization which lends it for affordable prices at the beginning of Semester. But be quick!

4. Study at the host university (Courses / Language Courses / Timetable)

I studied Industrial Engineering and Management at LUT. The courses for exchange students were fully taught in English. Exchange students were allowed to take courses from any faculty depending on their preferences and class-quota. Since most of my courses were about IT Business and Entrepreneurship, then I combined courses from Industrial Management Faculty with Business Administration Faculty. The courses I've taken were interesting and intriguing. Since I have strong interest in Start-Up and Product Development, the courses stimulated us to have real experiences of solving the start-up cases and developing product idea.

In each courses, the grades were basically generated from examinations, group projects, class participation, and homework. Moreover, all the LUT's professors always utilized the e-learning platform. It is called "Moodle". Professors put all the assignments, grades, and student's attachment on the Moodle. Students needed to check Moodle frequently. In LUT, the teaching period in one semester is divided into two periods; Period 1 and Period 2. Each period is separated by examination week. Most of my courses were taught in Period 1, but some of group projects lasted until Period 2. However, since I have no courses in the Period 2, I decided to register for an additional course and allocate more time for travelling.

All of language courses were totally free and students could take as much as they want. Furthermore, LUT's language center offered free language courses for the students. I took course of Finnish 1. During the class, students were taught about the basic "survival"

of Finnish languages. The examination grade was only Pass/Fail and students could ask for the language certificate if they passed it.

Important Tips:

- During the registration phase, you can register for courses as many as you want. If you still hesitate, it is better to just register all the possible courses first. It is because sometimes the classes can be cancelled for exchange students. Otherwise, after the registration phase, if you still want to enroll or substitute the courses, you need to pay 10 Euro/course to LUT's Student Services.
- If you take Finnish Courses, take the examination, and pass the test, then don't forget to ask for the certificate directly to LUT's language center. They won't give you that in the class.
- If you are planning to travel a lot during your stay in Finland, please pay attention to the courses schedule and in which period because some courses need compulsory attendance and intense group work.

5. Support service at the host university (International Office, Department)

International students were fully supported by LUT International Office. International Coordinator and student services were very welcome. They also made a specific program of "Tutoring Program" which helped the new international students getting know all about the university during the orientation day. It was like "from student, to student". So LUT's student committed to become the tutor for a group of international students. Tutor was responsible to guide the students through the series of orientation day activities such as campus tour, freshmen Olympiad, bank opening, until registration to the police. Sometimes, tutor and tutees even had parties together!

During the "Welcome Week", exchange students were introduced to Finnish student culture and "typical of Finnish". It was fun and refreshing. LUT also provided a welcome fair for introducing some students' organization (LTKY and Guilt), sports, and important organizations that would be probably needed by the students during their stay in Lappeenranta. Besides, there was also an exhibition at the city fortress held by City of Lappeenranta. The students could enjoy the local artists' performance and get to know more about the city.

Actually LUT and Lappeenranta's Church Foundation also provided program of "Meet Local Family" which promoted a culture exchange between local Finnish and international student. This was a great program. I joined this program and got myself a local family for 3 months. It helped me to adapt and experience how to live like a local. My local family and I met almost every week and we always did something fun such as watching floor game (Finnish traditional game), kids' dance performances, drinking coffee together, and staying the night at their home. For me, it was an efficient way to get Finnish people better, exchange the stories, and adapt with the local environment.

Important Tips:

- Sometimes if you are unlucky, there will be miss-information about the assigned tutor. If the tutor has not contacted you before the mobility, you need to ask the international coordinator as soon as possible. First day I came to LUT I was tutor less because the tutor cancelled her involvement on last minutes. Fortunately, I got assigned a new one days later after I talked to the international coordinator through the Facebook group "LUT Newcomers 2016/2017".

6. Facilities at the host university (library, computer pool, etc.)

LUT offered a sophisticated environment for studying. The learning facilities were modern and cozy. In every building, LUT provided learning corner for students. There were couches and chairs. What made the learning corners special was there are some corners which had its own kitchen appliances such as refrigerator to keep your food and microwave to heat your food during the study. Moreover, one of my favorite learning spot was Piano Hall. Students could play the piano while the others could enjoy the music. LUT made sure the students feeling comfortable. In fact, that was the way I felt. I could study and spent hours in university without feeling boring.

LUT's Library were also spacious and cozy. There were a lot of learning spots inside the library and students didn't need to worry for not getting the spot. Besides, the books' collection was great and complete. Libraby had been integrated to a good information system, so the book borrowing and returning became so convenient and fast. LUT's Library also accommodated group working by providing discussion room. Students could book the rooms via online and it was opened for 24 hours.

For sport facilities, LUT provided students with fitness studio, mirror hall, and sports hall. By paying 15 Euro/Semester, I could use fitness studio and do group sports such as Badminton. In the other hands, canteens and cafeteria were also provided for the students. The prices were fairly cheap ranging from 1.8 Euro to 4.6 Euro.

7. Spare time activities (sight seeking, bank, mobile phone, jobs)

Lappeenranta is a small city in the south eastern Finland. With the population only about 75.000 people, it was not as crowded as in Nuremberg. Usually after dark, city center drastically became so empty. However, Lappeenranta is infamous of being acknowledged as Finland's Summer City as it is located directly at Lake Saimaa, the biggest lake in Finland. Students could enjoy the Saimaa Lake and do sports like kayaking or swimming. During my first weeks there, it was still the end of summer times. So, I had chances to enjoy the vibrant of Finland's harbor and hang around the city during sunny days. My friends and I also went to the beach side, sat by the bonfire and had BBQ together. Meanwhile, during my winter time, there was nothing much to do except joining students' events or throwing dinner/parties together within our international students' circle. But sometimes, I also went to the frozen lake and watched some Finns did ice fishing. The perks living in the northern part of the earth was the chance of seeing the northern light, Aurora Borealis. The dancing light was also visible on Lappeenranta's clear sky sometimes. Usually, I got to know the Aurora's probability by watching the page of Finland's Aurora Catcher.

Finnish Students culture was exceptionally interesting. They have a strong root of student culture. Finnish students organized many students' events such as freshmen Olympiad, parties, sauna evening, sport events, and sitsitz party (traditionally academic dinner). During the week, at least two parties were thrown for the students. Weekly Sauna Evening was my favorite. There were two sauna rooms provided each for boys and girls. After Sauna, all the students could gather in the communal room, enjoy each other company, and play certain games. It was the perfect time to spend time with friends after tiring day at the university. Besides, I could always make new friends with Finns. Actually, Sauna had been the important part of my life in Finland. At least 2 times a week, I went to sauna and sometimes my friends invited me to "Sauna Party". "Sauna Party" was started with eating dinner, then went to sauna, rolled on the snow, and finally went to club together.

Regardless as international student, I also joined ESN (Erasmus Student Network) Lappeenranta. ESN provided several activities for international students such as

gathering, group travel, parties, Finnish Evening, Sitzsitz Party, and winter sports. It was a nice organization to get know other international students. ESN also provided group travel/cruises for international students. Personally, I'd prefer to travel with my friends instead of with ESN, but it depended on the students. Travel with ESN was more convenient and less-hecktic because students didn't need to prepare everything by themselves. Anyway, the lists of possible travel destinations in Lappeenranta were:

- St. Petersburg (Visa-Free ESN Trip or self-organizing with Visa)
- Savonlinna (Beautiful city in the eastern Finland, self-organizing)
- Helsinki (Self-Organizing Trip)
- Tallinn, Estonia (ESN Trip or Self-Organizing Trip)
- Lapland (ESN Trip or Self-Organizing Trip, but it is better to travel with ESN)
- Repovosi National Parks (ESN Trip)
- Stockholm cruise of "Pirates of the Baltic Sea" (ESN Event)

In Finland, credit card was widely acceptable. Whether in shops or university, the payment systems were preferably using card (Visa, MasterCard, and Maestro). During my stay, I didn't use cash much unless for buying student event's ticket held by student organization. For mobile service provider, I got local sim-card with 8 Euro balanced given by my Tutor during the orientation day. At least, I needed to pay 15 Euro/month for fast internet connection.

Important Tips:

- If you are using Maestro Card or other international Banks, the ATM withdrawal fee will be charged approx. 3.5 Euro/transaction.
- If you are not brave enough to go Sauna naked like Finns, don't forget to pack your swimsuit/bikini/short pants.
- During my stay, until 26th December, it was not possible to skate nor do winter sports due to thin layer of frozen lake. Otherwise, students could still do snow mobile, skiing, or other winter sports during the Lapland Trip.
- Finding part time job is difficult because you need to speak fluent Finnish. But in the university, there are some student's part time job offered. Just go to LUT's Career or Student Services and ask.

8. Finances (cost of living, grant)

As everyone has known, Finland is an expensive country. The first time I came to the local supermarket, I was surprised how expensive the food prices were. It was approximately 25% more expensive than in Nuremberg, Germany. However, it was different with the food prices at university. The student's lunch was fairly reasonable, only for 2.6 Euro. It consisted of main courses, salads, bread, milk, or juices. I could eat as much as I want. In the other hand, the bus fee was 41 Euro/Month for the students. Actually, for the student who lived near the campus area and rarely needed to take the bus, they could choose the one-way bus fee costed 2.6 Euro at 7 A.M to 7 P.M and 1.6 Euro after 7 P.M.

Usually if I needed something such as electronics or clothes, I could buy those things second-handedly. I searched through the Facebook Group "Buy and Sell Lappeenranta" or directly went to second-hand shop such as "Kontti" or "Euro Kippis". The prices were far cheaper than the new one. By the way, to support my life during my semester abroad, I received Erasmus grants for 360 Euro/month and it was enough for accommodation and transport. The rest of my daily life costs differed from month to month depending on the food choices and extra activities.

Important Tips: If you want to save some money, using bicycle can be a perfect choice. The second-hand bike costed about 50 – 100 Euro. But during the winter time (starting from mid-October), it was a little inconvenient to use the bike due to the slippery road, heavy snow, early darkness, and biting coldness.

9. Conclusion (best and worse experience)

Choosing which best experience was quite hard for me as I enjoyed every moments staying in Finland. I found out myself like Sauna that much. My favorite experience was having sauna at sauna place besides the lake. We heated ourselves in sauna and cooled ourselves off by jumping and swimming into the lake with the temperature of 8-10 degree Celsius! In fact, I also made my dream of seeing northern lights coming true. I have seen the beautiful Aurora Borealis with my bare eyes.

However, it was not only about having fun but also the friendships that were built during my short stay. I found good friends (European, International, and Finnish students). We had group works together, had fun together, and even travelled together. Then, I also got my local Finns family. They were really welcome and taught me about Finnish Culture such as Finnish languages and how to bake Finnish Christmas' cookies. Therefore, I could say that I had accustomed to the way of Finns living. It seemed like being at home.

Meanwhile, the worst experiences were to let go and accept the semester abroad over. I must face the reality that It was only a temporary living that I must come back to Germany. During the last week, it was the saddest moment because we knew that we needed to leave sooner. I watched one by one my friend leaving Lappeenranta and flying back to their home countries. So, the dream is over, pal!

In the conclusion, I am grateful that I decided to take exchange semester in Finland. Even though it was only 4 months but it already become one of the incredible moments in my life. After coming back to Germany, I know I am not the same person anymore. I have changed, in the better way. Semester abroad has opened my horizon and expanded my mind. I have realized that there are many nice and inspirational people from all over the world whom I need to meet and learn from.

10. Important contact persons and links

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LUT Uni-Portal:
https://uni.lut.fi/en/web/lut.fi-eng/?languageId=en_US

LUT International Services:
<https://uni.lut.fi/en/web/lut.fi-eng/international-services>

LOAS
<http://www.loas.fi/en>

Transportation:
<https://www.vr.fi/cs/vr/en/frontpage>
<https://www.matkahuolto.fi/en/>

LUT Newcomers:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1684986985086221/>

Buy and Sell Lappeenranta:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/138086963027342/>

ESN Lappeenranta:

<https://www.facebook.com/esn.lappeenranta/?fref=ts>