

My Exchange Experience at the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences of the USB

Hey, my name is Lana! I am 22 years old and I'm from Bremen, a city in the North of Germany. From September 2024 until February 2025 I spent a semester at the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at the USB.

At my home university I study Midwifery and in the study programme I chose it is obligatory to spend a semester abroad. I found this very interesting from the very beginning because **I am really motivated to gain an international perspective on scientific topics, travel to places I have never been to before as well as meeting new people and making friends from around the world.** I mean living abroad for half a year and getting to experience another culture and style of living first hand is such a unique opportunity! I started preparing my stay approximately 5 months in advance.

The application process at the USB was very well coordinated and I always felt well informed about due dates and what the necessary next administrative steps are. Even though my home university was a bit inexperienced with the Online Learning Agreement and I had some questions regarding this topic I perceived the whole process as manageable because I received great and quick support from the coordinators at the USB.

Since I barely speak any Czech all the courses I took were in English. Following scientific lectures in another than your native language was a bit challenging in the beginning, but very valuable for improving my language skills and vocabulary. During my semester abroad I only had one Midwifery-related course and several other courses in the fields of Psychology, Social Work and Public Health which I experienced as very enriching since it was a great opportunity to work on a wider range of scientific topics being relevant for my future field of work. **Even though it brought some minor challenges it was very much possible to follow these lectures despite the fact that they are not exactly from the field I study at my home university.** I really enjoyed that all courses actually took place even though some of them had a very little number of participants. This fact offered the possibility to partially design the topics based on individual interests in agreement with the teachers. All in all, the communication with the teachers was great and I always received a quick response in case of any questions. Apart from the lectures itself they also gave me the opportunity to get an insight into a neonatal ward at the hospital and to do a project on first aid at an International School in a city nearby being valuable unique experiences as well.

In my free time I attended most of the events organized by the **Erasmus Student Network (ESN)** which I would highly recommend joining. All the events and trips were lovingly



planned and gave me the opportunity to discover several cities within Czechia I probably wouldn't have known about otherwise. These events also made making new friends so easy for they were an amazing possibility to meet new people while doing fun activities. Also, everyone was so open-minded and friendly that I found a close group of friends in no time who I am still in touch with. Apart from the events organized by the *ESN* we travelled nationally and internationally on our own as well. This way I got to see parts of Austria, Bavaria, Poland and Slovakia in only 6 months. Every city I had the chance to see was a highlight on its own and the fact that you get reduced train-tickets using the ISIC-Card made it even more convenient. If you spend your semester abroad over winter time, another highlight is the Christmas market in Ceske Budejovice itself where I had the chance to ice skate around the fountain at the main square feeling like a fairytale come true. And sometimes you just have to leave your comfort zone: Another international friend and me participated in different courses at a gym in the city centre having a lot of fun despite the fact that neither of us really understood any Czech.

Since Germany is relatively close to Czechia there weren't that many cultural differences, but what I experienced is that almost all Locals I met were way friendlier than people in Northern Germany. What did actually surprise me is the fact that it gets much colder in the winter than it does in my home town. So I would **definitely recommend bringing really warm clothes**. Having my gloves with me was an essential. Other hacks that helped me during my stay were **the app *Mapy.cz*** for orientation while hiking or walking around different cities and ***DPMCB*** for the means of public transport. For finding around your way in university life I can really recommend **participating in the Buddy System the *ESN* offers**. It was so great to get to ask your questions and just getting insider hacks from a local student.



When I returned back home my study abroad was fully recognized without any problems. It took me some time to get back to my home university routine, but staying in contact with my new friends helped a lot. **All in all, my semester abroad gave me the opportunity to work on my communication skills and cultural competences as well as the chance to meet a bunch of wonderful people from around the world and build friendships that might last a life time.** I can really recommend taking your chance to spend a semester abroad at the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at the USB!!

In case of any further questions feel free to contact me via email using lanaiwa@gmx.de

