

ERASMUS Internship in Lisbon, Portugal – Experience report

During my Bachelor studies in the field of psychology at the University of Bochum, I decided to pursue my internship abroad. The fact that I already completed my first ERASMUS semester in Mallorca, Spain, made it easier for me to apply again since I already knew the procedure. I had the option to do my internship in Germany, as the majority of my university colleagues did, but the idea of going to a different country, meeting new people, and experiencing a new culture

was more exciting. My internship lasted almost 4 months, from the 15th of October 2023 until the 30th of January 2024.



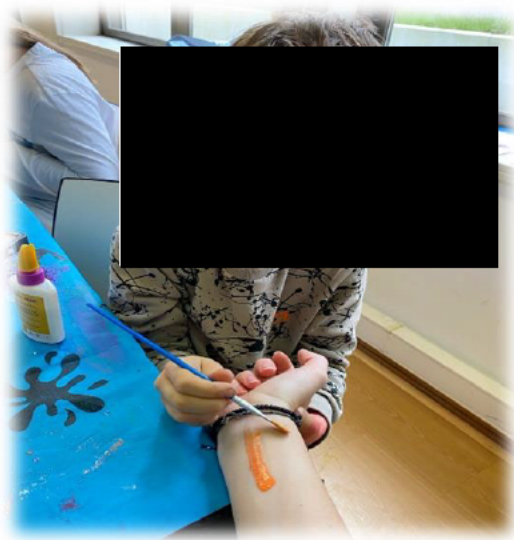
My favorite viewpoint – Miradouro de Santa Luzia

Preparation: looking for an internship and an apartment

I decided in my 4th year of studies that I was going to do another ERASMUS program. This time I had to search for psychology offices and places that were looking for interns and that would be willing to have me. I started officially searching in March 2023 and it took me 3 whole months to find the place I was looking for. Searching for psychology internships was pretty

challenging, given the fact that in many of the offers you had to pay yourself a monthly price to work. Automatically that option wouldn't work for me, as I know that living abroad can be already expensive enough, and I wasn't willing to pay for working. I started searching for offers in countries where I would love to stay. I started looking in all the cities of Spain, sending emails to every institution, office, or university I would find, with few responses. I continued searching and I didn't stop trying. Portugal was also a very interesting country for me, being in the south of Europe with warm weather, friendly people, interesting cities and amazing nature. I did the same procedure as for Spain. Again, not many positive responses, as almost no one was looking for interns. In the end, I had some offers from 2 cities in Spain and Lisbon. One was about research at a university, the other was about psychological school education, and the last one was about mental health support for Ukrainian refugees. I chose the one in Lisbon since it was the most interesting topic and a field that I would gladly like to work in the future. So far, I have had 3 interviews, and this was my last. I had a ZOOM Interview with my future supervisor, Magdalena Kishizawa psychotherapist and counselor, who was very kind and friendly. She explained to me the purpose of the organization "United in Crisis", providing mental health support for Ukrainian kids, parents, adults, and families who left their homes and started a new life in Lisbon. This was very motivating and touching and I agreed immediately that I wanted to have a contract with them. After contacting the secretary of my university for the necessary documents and after submitting them I got accepted end of June 2023.

After my acceptance, I started looking for accommodation. This can be also a big challenge since Lisbon has very expensive apartments and not many options. After contacting different people from Facebook and WhatsApp groups, I started looking at official pages in which the possibilities of getting scammed were low. I searched on 2 pages, Uniplaces and Spotahome. My applications were only in Spotahome since I found cheaper options. I got 3 times rejected because the property was already rented to other people by the time I applied. In the end, I got accepted into a shared apartment with 4 bedrooms. The place itself was pretty nice, although my bedroom was quite small. The rent was 400€, including all the expenses such as electricity and water.



Working with the Kids

Implementation: tasks and support, conflicts and solutions, everyday life and free time

Before arriving in Portugal, I didn't know anyone. I directly joined the ESN organization and went to as many events as I could. I met people from different countries, Italians, Turkish, Spanish, Canadians, Latin Americans, and more. Making friends was not as easy as I expected since most of the Erasmus people were going to university, and they made their groups from there. Arriving in October might have also not been very ideal and helpful for making friends, because the university in Lisbon starts in September and everyone had arrived earlier, meaning that they were not so open to making other friends, which I was not expecting. Furthermore, my flatmates were also not so interested and willing to do things together. After some weeks everything became better. In the beginning, things appeared to be difficult, and we had to start over in a country in which we did not know anyone, but I wasn't alone in this, everyone goes through it. Thanks to the ESN events I made many friends and loved this experience as well.

Regarding my tasks, we used to meet every Tuesday in the office to discuss all the activities or problems that would appear during the sessions. Every Friday we would meet online with the whole team and catch up and inform each other about events that maybe someone couldn't attend, and also discuss future implementations. On Saturdays I always used to go to the other office, where the sessions would happen. Every Saturday we had Mums and Kids Club. I used to be in the room with the kids and play or paint with them. The rest of the weekdays I used to work from home, operating on the tasks that my supervisor would assign me. Moreover, I

always had the support of my supervisor and the whole team as well. One difficulty was the Ukrainian language. I didn't understand many things unless someone was translating.

In my free time, when I was not working, we would go on excursions or trips with my friends or join some ESN events. We went on trips such as Madeira and Azores which I highly recommend to anyone who will go to Portugal. On the weekends we would always meet up and go either to some Bar in Bairro Alto, where students used to hang out, or to a club. Regarding my daily life, I mostly used to work during the day and go out at night. The transportation was not the best if you were not living somewhere close to the metro. The busses used to not come on time and also take very long during the rush hour from 17:00 to 20:00. On the other hand, we used to use Bolt a lot since it was very cheap and sharing it was very worth it. If you are living in the center the distances are not very big, but the way can be difficult since Lisbon has many uphill and downhill.



Praia da Ursa. A day trip with my friends.

Evaluation: best and worst experience

The best experience was living in a different country, being independent, meeting new people, working with refugees and helping them, making friends, traveling around Portugal, and appreciating its nature. I am grateful for having this opportunity, and I would recommend to everyone to at least experience ERASMUS once in their lives. Some tiny bad parts of my experience were finding a livable place to stay and also the location of my apartment, which was possible by bus but many times I had to wait in traffic and be late, or other times the bus for work would either not come or be very late. Furthermore, a couple of times my work colleague would forget to inform me that the meeting wouldn't take place, and as a result to have gone there for no reason. I would conclude that my time in Lisbon was great, and I can't wait to go back again and have a reunion with the amazing people I met.