

## **Internship Experience Report – Erasmus+ Placement at Marmara University (Feb 1 – Sept 22, 2025) – [REDACTED]**

### **Preparation:**

I secured this internship through proactive networking and the Erasmus+ program. With guidance from my professors at Ruhr-University Bochum, I identified the Center for Population and Social Policies at Marmara University as an ideal host. I contacted Prof. Dr. [REDACTED], the center's director, and Dr. [REDACTED], who agreed to supervise me. After an interview discussing my interests and qualifications, we finalized a training plan. I then completed the Erasmus+ application process, including a Learning Agreement that outlined my duties from February 1 to September 22, 2025, and obtained approval from both the sending and receiving institutions. Once accepted (and with Erasmus funding secured), I moved on to practical arrangements. For housing, I rented a small apartment near the campus in Istanbul, based on advice from previous Erasmus students – this provided a convenient commute and a comfortable living situation. Before departure, I also prepared by handling necessary insurance and travel documents. Thanks to thorough preparation and support from both universities, I arrived in Istanbul ready to begin the internship smoothly.

Finding accommodation in Istanbul proved to be a smooth process. Unlike many international students who face challenges in securing suitable housing, I was fortunate to have friends already living in the city. Through their support, I was able to rent a spare room in their apartment for the full nine-month duration of my stay. This arrangement not only saved me the stress of navigating an unfamiliar housing market but also provided me with a welcoming environment where I could quickly adapt to daily life in Istanbul. The stability of this housing situation allowed me to devote my full energy to my internship responsibilities from the very beginning.

### **Implementation:**

My role as an academic research assistant at the center involved a variety of tasks that gave me a taste of both research and administrative work in an academic setting. Each morning began with a daily news review: I monitored Turkish foreign policy news and international coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, then summarized the key developments for my supervisor and colleagues. This routine kept the team informed and improved my ability to communicate complex

information clearly and concisely. It also sparked short discussions where I could practice presenting my analysis verbally, further strengthening my communication skills.

Much of my work centered on research support projects. I built a detailed database of bilateral security agreements and official state visits. This involved gathering information from various sources and organizing it in a structured format, creating a resource useful for ongoing studies. Another significant project involved surveying academic programs: I created an overview of top universities offering courses in International Middle Eastern Politics, analyzing their syllabi and course content. I also compiled data on prominent Turkish politicians and their social media profiles, which aided a political communication research initiative. These databases were valuable contributions to the center's knowledge base and required attention to detail and analytical thinking.

I also took on tasks related to academic writing and curriculum development. Notably, I was entrusted with designing a master's course syllabus on "Business and Developmental Diplomacy" for a partner institution. I developed weekly topics, reading lists, and evaluation methods; the final syllabus was well-received and demonstrated my grasp of curriculum design in higher education. Additionally, I researched and wrote a policy paper on people smuggling between Vietnam and the UK, tackling a complex transnational issue. Completing this paper improved my research skills and my ability to formulate policy recommendations clearly. Additionally, I developed profiles of key United States officials involved in Black Sea security issues, analyzing their backgrounds and any past controversies to assess potential risks in international cooperation. This biographical research exercise honed my ability to distill information into relevant security insights.

Alongside my internship duties, I also had the opportunity to co-author a book with Prof. Dr. [REDACTED] entitled *The Role of International Law in Combating Climate Change and Protecting the Environment and Forests Worldwide*. This project enabled me to merge my practical experiences at the center with a broader academic endeavor focused on global environmental governance. My contribution involved both extensive research and drafting sections that examined the intersection of climate change, international law, and forest protection. Working on this book sharpened my academic writing skills, deepened my understanding of environmental law, and reinforced my commitment to scholars at the nexus of law, sustainability, and international cooperation.

Beyond research and writing, my internship duties included contributing to the center's ongoing activities. I assisted with proof-reading academic articles, which sharpened my eye for detail and acquainted me with scholarly publishing standards. I also helped with the administration of a Horizon Europe exchange project, coordinating documents and communication for this international collaboration. This gave me practical insight into how large academic projects are managed and how European Union programs are implemented in a Turkish academic context. Occasionally, I supported event preparation by drafting briefing notes or creating presentation slides for conferences and seminars. A highlight of my internship was the opportunity to present my research at an international conference. With my mentors' encouragement, I submitted an abstract based on my policy paper, and it was accepted for presentation. Delivering my talk to an academic audience was a rewarding experience that boosted my confidence and public speaking skills.

Throughout the placement, I maintained a full-time schedule and integrated into the center's team. A typical workday started around 10:00 AM and ended around 6:00 PM. Mornings were for news reviews and quick meetings, while afternoons were devoted to project work – whether updating a database, writing, or assisting a colleague. I frequently interacted with my peers; we shared progress updates and provided feedback on each other's work. The working environment was collaborative and interdisciplinary, exposing me to different approaches within social sciences. Balancing multiple responsibilities at once became the norm, and I learned to prioritize tasks and manage my time efficiently. This day-to-day experience offered a realistic preview of the workflow of academics and research staff.

### **Evaluation of the internship:**

Overall, this Erasmus+ internship was an extremely rewarding experience that significantly contributed to my personal and professional growth. One of the biggest highlights was successfully presenting at the international conference – having my work recognized and engaging with experts in the field was very fulfilling. Another rewarding aspect was the strong mentorship I received. Dr. [REDACTED] and Prof. [REDACTED] provided invaluable guidance, from improving my academic writing to advising me on doctoral program applications. Their feedback helped me understand how to approach tasks methodically and meet high academic standards. They also included me in

discussions about ongoing research and institutional projects, which made me feel like a valued member of the team and clarified the role of an academic assistant in a research environment.

The internship also came with several challenges, which taught me important lessons. At first, adjusting to the broad scope of my duties was difficult – I was dealing with topics ranging from diplomatic agreements to social media data to migration policy. This pushed me to become more adaptable and quick to learn in unfamiliar subject areas. Managing time and deadlines was another challenge; I often had to juggle the daily news briefs with long-term projects. I addressed this by staying organized (using a detailed calendar and to-do lists) and by communicating with my supervisor to set clear priorities. Working in a new cultural setting was a further challenge and learning opportunity. I needed to adapt to the Turkish academic context, which meant understanding different communication norms and organizational hierarchy. With an open mind and support from colleagues, I navigated these differences and improved my cross-cultural communication skills. Overcoming these challenges gave me confidence in my ability to work under pressure and in diverse environments.

This internship has had a powerful impact on my academic development. I gained deeper knowledge in international relations and learned how to conduct research more systematically. For example, designing the research databases and writing a policy paper taught me how to structure a project from initial data gathering to final analysis. I also observed first-hand how academic work is organized within a research center – from planning studies around current geopolitical events to collaborating on publications – which has demystified the process of academic research for me. Equally, the experience was a boost to my professional development. My communication skills (both written and oral) have improved through constant practice and feedback. Collaborating with colleagues from another country showed me how to work effectively in a cross-cultural team and appreciate different perspectives. Being part of the Erasmus+ program itself gave me insight into the dynamics of European-Turkish academic cooperation. I saw how international funding and exchange programs can foster innovation and mutual learning in academia. This understanding of the broader context – how the European Union and Turkey can jointly contribute to research and education – has broadened my outlook on where my future career might take me.

In conclusion, my Erasmus+ placement at Marmara University was a rich learning experience that exceeded my expectations. I was able to apply my theoretical knowledge to real-world tasks,

improve existing skills, and acquire new ones in an international setting. The mentorship from my supervisors and the supportive environment at the Center for Population and Social Policies were key factors in my successful experience. I faced challenges, but each one taught me how to be a better researcher and team member. I come away from this internship more confident and better prepared for an academic or policy-oriented career. Overall, the internship not only helped me grow academically and professionally, but also provided meaningful insights into cross-cultural academic collaboration and the value of international exchange programs. I am proud of what I accomplished during this period and excited to build on these experiences as I continue my academic journey.









