Travel Log

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Erasmus Mobility: University of Trento, Fall Semester 2017

As an Erasmus Mundus student, my Erasmus semester in Trento, Italy was officially part of the curriculum for my master’s degree. This meant that I had no particular reason for applying through the Erasmus + initiative, other than the fact that I was in need of financial assistance. While I’ve been fortunate to study in a different country for each semester throughout the course of my degree, my time in Trento was nonetheless unique on its own. I had never had the chance to visit Italy before, and I was thus excited to be in a place that I had read so much about in my home country of Sri Lanka.

The first month was especially great owing to the wonderful weather that gave the mountainous ranges of the dolomites a special atmosphere for outdoorsy activities. This also gave me the chance to meet other Italian students and members of the community, who were extremely friendly and hospitable. To me, this was a welcoming change from the relatively antagonistic sentiment of the general populace from the two other countries I studied in. The abundance of diversity in this small town may have contributed towards this.

The welcome office was also adept at handling the influx of incoming international students, with brochures filled with important information, one on one meetings, and even direct help with our endeavours at immigration; a stark contrast from the services offered to my peers and myself at Corvinus. However, while the staff at the University of Trento set the standards for the semester at a respectable level, this illusion was soon shattered once my mandatory classes began. While the crux of my criticism is directed towards the coordination of my program, I am implored to mention this here, as this log calls for my experience during this Erasmus semester. To avoid this issue would be impossible.

Without getting into unnecessary details, as I believe this is not the appropriate platform to do so, I will state that the administrative side of my program was completely ineffective at handling students’ requests and concerns. Classes were also repetitive, with several professors apathetic to the interests or participation of students. There were of course some wonderful teachers whom I had the pleasure of learning from, but unfortunately I cannot share this notion with everyone. Tutors were also more interested in noting attendance of students rather than being sources of guidance. This is all I shall share on the academic aspect of my semester abroad.

In terms of other features of student life in Trento, I found the accommodation to be rather expensive. With the grant of 500 Euros, the 310 Euro rent for a dorm was steep. The room itself was of course nicely equipped with the addition of a private bathroom, but while at the University of Regensburg the prior semester, I paid 160 Euros for a similarly equipped room. This to me was a significant difference. In addition, the monthly room checks the staff members carried out to assess the cleanliness of my room was absurd. If I’m paying so much, I expect the privacy to treat my room as a home and not have to be paranoid about a speck of dust behind the commode.

Overall, the city of Trento was brilliantly charming, and is a great place to be if you love the outdoors. However, the cost of living in Trento was the highest in all the three cities I lived in, i.e.
Regensburg and Budapest, and to me taking all this into account outweighs the advantages of the city. Having to be frugal and count my cents to manage each month does dampen the experience of an Erasmus semester. All this in addition to my experience with the academic side of things, makes me have mixed feelings about the entire experience. Alas, not everyone is privileged enough to have an ideal European Erasmus experience.