

## Experience report study abroad semester

# How was it?

*You may have heard this question more often now that you are at the end of your semester abroad. The International Center would also like to know how you evaluate your semester abroad and what you need to know. The experience reports will be published and serve to help orient others going abroad. The International Office would also like to use the contents for advertising purposes if necessary. We would therefore like you to keep this in mind when filling out the report.*

## 1. General information

*Please do not mention any personal information (name, e-mail address, etc.) in the experience report.*

I agree to the publication of the report and the attached photos:

Yes  No

Study program at EUF

*B.A. European Cultures and Society*

Subject combination (if BABW)

*Klicken oder tippen Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.*

Host country

*Spain*

Host university

*Universidad Rey Juan Carlos*

Semester abroad (e.g. fall semester 2020/21)

*Fall Semester 2021/22*

## 2. Your Experience Abroad

*At this point you can share the experience you made abroad. Sometimes it is not so easy to report on such experiences in such a compressed way. We have therefore prepared some questions to help you do this. At the end of the questionnaire, you will also find a free field for you to fill in, in which you are welcome to enter aspects that are not covered by any of these questions.*

### How did you prepare for the semester abroad?

*I took part in an online info session of the host university. During this info session an organization called "CityLife Madrid" informed among other things about housing options. I booked my flat with help housing and with the instructions of CityLife applied for a transportation card. Lastly, I applied for the buddy program of ESN.*

### How did you establish social networks in your host country? Do you have any tips on how this can be achieved?

*I met most friends through CityLife. They offer many activities for international students. Especially the weekly Pubcrawl is a good opportunity to meet new people. I also got in contact with other students from the university through joining WhatsApp groups or directly talking to them in between lectures.*

### Did you learn the local language, respectively how important did you think it was for your stay?

*I learned Spanish already before moving to Spain but I studied in English so learning Spanish is not that important. Most people I met in Madrid speak English but I think it is nevertheless helpful to know the basics for example for buying groceries. When arriving to Spain I had to apply for a NIE, a document for non-Spanish EU citizens staying in Spain longer than 3 months. For this appointment some people recommend bringing a Spanish speaking friend but again I think with basic Spanish this short appointment is possible.*

### How was the study program at the partner university structured?

**(e.g. premises, workload, language of instruction, examination forms, accessibility)**

*The study program has 8 semesters and no focus area can be chosen. As an Erasmus student I took courses from different semesters. I had no seminars nor tutorials and only lectures. The degree International Relations in Vicálvaro is taught in English and I found the diversity of offered courses really interesting. The final exam usually makes up only 40 to 60% of the final grade and during the semester there are many smaller assignments, group works and a midterm exam or presentation. It reminded me a lot of my school time with homework and regular control of the student's progress. Some of the assignments were graded,*

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while others were simply pass or fail, but nevertheless completing the assignments takes some time. University started late, with most of my lectures taking place from 5 to 9pm. Each course takes place twice a week. Professors communicate through WhatsApp groups with students so it is best to ask some Spanish students to be added to the WhatsApp groups.

### What intercultural encounters/competencies shaped your stay?

In Madrid I met many international people, especially through CityLife, and at university also got in contact with Spanish students. It was interesting to live in such an international environment. At university I soon learned that Spanish students do not take deadlines that seriously and also some professors are relaxed about it. Similarly, the international office of URJC usually sends documents a bit later than officially stated. Therefore, I learned to stress less about deadlines than I would in Germany.

### Which perspectives on the host country/country of origin have changed and why?

I thought it is exaggerated that Spanish people are not that picky with deadlines but at least for the Spanish people I met that was often true.

### What was your daily life like where you were? (e.g. living, shopping, leisure, inclusion)

I lived in an international flat with 11 flat members. Flats especially in the center of Madrid are expensive. Mine was around 520€ a month all bills included for 8sqm with a window but there are also cheaper flats a bit further from the center. I enjoyed living so central because I could easily take part in offered activities. I would recommend making sure that the room has a window because it is not that rare that rooms are completely dark. Transportation is very well developed and there are frequent connections. The transportation card for metro and bus costs 20€ per month for students. My university was quite far away from my flat in the center, around 40 minutes by metro. However, this was usually a good time to talk to some friends. Many different leisure activities exist and are mainly organized by CityLife. They offer parties, cultural events and trips to different cities. Some museums are free for students or on special days. This made it very easy to find opportunities to explore the city and the culture. Many shopping possibilities were available. Between 1 and 3 pm some shops are closed but most shops are open on Sundays. The pandemic affected my daily life way less than in Germany (I arrived in September 2021). In restaurants, shops and at university masks are mandatory but there is no contact tracing, clubs

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*are open as normal and apart from the airport, nobody ever asked for my proof of vaccination.*

### **What are the unique or special issues in the host country and what were the opportunities for engaging with these issues?**

*In Spain it is quite common to go out with friends in the evenings for drinks and tapas. I also recommend visiting the Christmas market at Nuevos Ministerios. Taking part in these activities is quite easy through friends from CityLife. As the capital, Madrid also offers many celebrations, for instance the Fiesta Nacional de España, that take place in the city center and are free to attend.*

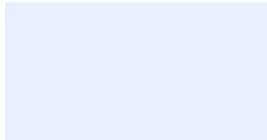
### **Is there anything else you would like to share? (e.g. anecdotes, criticism, etc.)**

*I highly recommend Spain as a destination and especially such a lively city like Madrid with a great variety of cultural activities and many international people. International Relations is a great interdisciplinary degree. It just takes some time to get used to the school-like atmosphere and it takes patience to get in contact with the International Office of URJC but the International Office of Flensburg helped with that.*

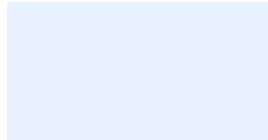
### 3. Photos

Finally, you can upload photos here, which visualize/represent your stay abroad well. If necessary, add a description. The following questions can help you choose the appropriate photos:

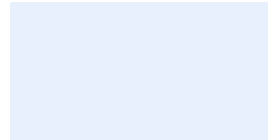
- Does the photo possibly reinforce prejudices or stereotypes about the country?
- Do you have the consensual consent of the persons depicted in the photos?
- "A picture is worth a thousand words!" What does your picture say about the country and your semester abroad?



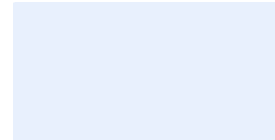
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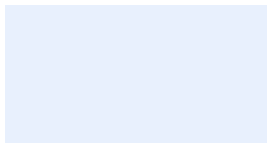
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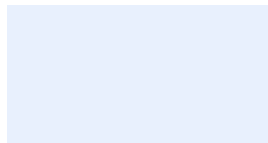
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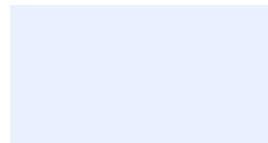
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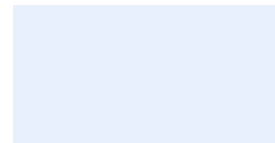
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**Many thanks for your support!**