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## Meine Erasmus-Erfahrung an der LMU, SoSe 2021

Professor Marsha Siefert, my supervisor at Central European University, always encourages me to plan my academic activities and mobilities well in advance. Following her wise advice, in January 2020, I was working on my application for the Erasmus+ Study Mobility Program, which provides an opportunity to spend a study period up to twelve months abroad at a partner educational institution. Since I was learning German enthusiastically for quite some time and was a little familiar with the German academic environment, I did not doubt the country of the mobility. Likely, my university had an agreement with several German universities, from which I chose the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, the high-ranked university with a strong focus on international projects and interdisciplinary cooperation. The Institute of East and Southeast European History, associated with the Department of History, proved to be a perfect destination for students and young researchers who explore the region beyond national histories and are open to discussions about its interconnected past and present. By a twist of fate, I had submitted the application just before the Covid-19 was declared a pandemic. My carefully prepared plan almost failed, since the program was terminated in many universities, and nobody could guarantee that the semester abroad would happen as planned. Despite the great uncertainties, I was still lucky enough to get an unusual experience of doing the Erasmus exchange semester amid the pandemic in Munich.

From April to August 2021, I was enjoying rich opportunities of learning and researching at LMU. At first, everything was a little complicated: an incoming student has to figure out how to find and register for the relevant courses, how to communicate with professors, how to build an effective learning and writing routine in a new environment, how to use libraries, and so on. Thankfully, a very friendly team of the International Office and Dr. Daniel Mollenhauer, Erasmus coordinator at the Department of History, were always ready to help. Although there were a few courses in English offered by the Institute, I had a rather tight schedule. I participated in the regular departmental colloquium, visited lectures, joined two seminars, and had a language course in academic German. All the courses were running online. I was curious to participate in different types of courses offered by the department since the German system differs from what we have at CEU. For example, with Dr. Kornelia Kończal we had a “chamber” reading course *Conceptualizing the Micro-Macro Links in Social Sciences and Humanities*, where we read suggested texts in advance, prepared questions for the discussion, and tried to find answers to them together. In addition, I took one seminar entirely in German and passed it successfully. It was worth trying: I found out that my level of language



Munich is a perfect place for library lovers.  
But sitting in a mask is quite tiring.

proficiency allows me to participate in academic courses in German and to enjoy learning in another language.

Usually, doctoral students are not obliged to take courses and have a chance to concentrate on research and writing and to consult with local academics. However, I recommend all the visiting students participate in the departmental colloquium. It is a great opportunity to get to know the faculty and other doctoral students and to learn about recent discussions in the field. I am grateful to all the colloquium participants and to Professor Dr. Martin Schulze Wessel for the opportunity to present my research and receive valuable feedback that helped me to see the new directions to improve the study.

Another important advantage of doing Erasmus at LMU is access to the largest university library in Germany. When I requested books through

Interlibrary Loan at CEU, I noticed that most of them were from Munich. Being enrolled as a visiting student, I received a card, which granted me a privilege to use all the university's libraries on campus as well as the Bavarian State Library. The book collection comprises a wide selection of rare books, which may not be available elsewhere. On weekends, I sometimes visited museums; an entry fee to many of them is only one euro on Sundays.

My Erasmus experience was Covid-distorted: the pandemic situation imposed its own difficulties and limitations. It was exhausting to sit in front of the laptop all day long and to have limited contact with other people. To get rid of the online-fatigue, I was strolling around the English Garden, next to which my dormitory was located. What also helped — urban hiking with a “walking buddy.” My friend Iurii Rudnev from the Medieval Department at CEU, who started the Erasmus at LMU one semester earlier than I, told me about the “Walking Buddies” project and invited me to join him and his buddy to explore Munich, its parks, and suburbs. Unfortunately, I did not travel much (as Erasmus students usually do), but we made a short trip to Regensburg, which is just amazing.



*Exploring Regensburg*



*Hiking around Munich*

Besides getting to know better the natural landscapes of Bavaria, Erasmus+ Study Mobility Program helped me to better orient myself in the German academic environment. A greater immersion in the local context and consultations with colleagues helped me find a place for my next academic residence. After Munich I moved to Berlin as a visiting researcher at the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History (Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung – ZZf), which is located in Potsdam. I am grateful to everyone who supported me during the application process and the mobility period, and I am very pleased with my, perhaps not quite ordinary, Erasmus experience. I would warmly recommend the Institute of East and Southeast European History as an exchange destination to anyone who is now thinking about doing Erasmus at LMU.