

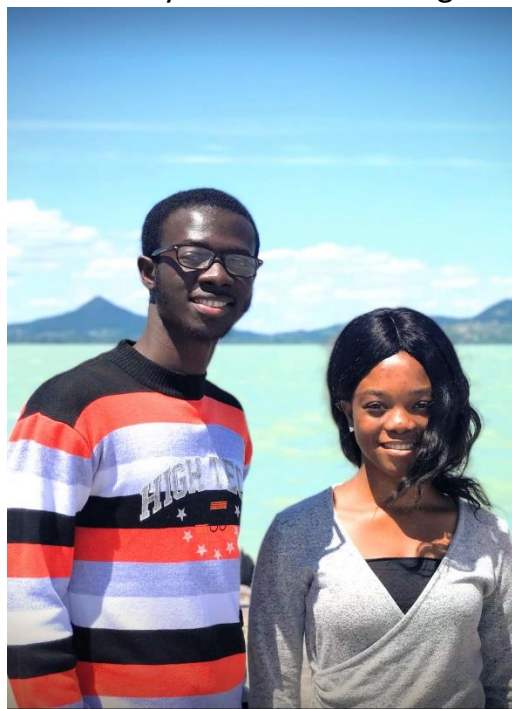
# ERASMUS+ REPORT

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## **STUDENT MOBILITY REPORT FOR THE 2019/2020 SPRING SEMESTER** **AT BUDAPEST BUSINESS SCHOOL (ZALAEGERSZEG FACULTY OF** **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION) IN HUNGARY**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the Almighty God for allowing us to partake in this wonderful Programme and seeing us through successfully. It was indeed a great privilege and an awesome experience for us, and



we are very much grateful to all the participating stakeholders in the ERASMUS+ project who worked tirelessly and provided the adequate support for the successful completion of this programme. A special appreciation goes to Prof. Daniel Twerefou at the University of Ghana and Dr Agnes Meszaros at the Budapest Business School (ZFBA) for facilitating this entire programme. Without their altruistic support, generosity and industrious efforts, things would have been so cumbersome for us. Their forever-appreciated liaison could directly be traced to the success of the programme, and we are very thankful for that. Also, our heartfelt gratitude goes to Mr and Mrs Guban, who took time off

their busy schedules to make us feel at home. Our stay in Hungary could not have been better without them. Dr Edit Berces, Dr Anita Antal, Dr Aniko Deakne Gal, Dr David Takacs, Dr Laszlo Szabo, all these lecturers played their roles to our maximum satisfaction and they have always been there for us, even outside class hours. Our predecessors for this Erasmus programme, Aba Gyesiwaa Arhin and Silas Adomako, have been of great help to us as well as Ms Stella Agyeman Duah. Lukacs-Gaal Eszter would not be left out. She played her role very well. Our peers, Akos Juhasz, Judit Zacommer, our Albanian colleagues and several others helped in making our stay a memorable one. The Erasmus programme and our stay in Hungary could not have been better without the support of these honourable people. We truly appreciate their good works.

## INTRODUCTION

The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) is a student exchange programme established by the European Union to



facilitate the mobility of students within the growingly convergent system of higher education in Europe. Students who get the opportunity to partake in this programme benefit in diverse ways which extend from educational and linguistic benefits to cultural and social benefits. The entire programme is funded by the EU through the provision of grants. The grant provided to each student is enough to cater for one's upkeep and comfort in Hungary. The grants issued pave way for every student to partake in this wonderful programme provided the student is eligible and meets the requirements for application. The University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) and the Budapest Business School, Zalaegerszeg Faculty of Business Administration (ZFBA) in

partnership with ERASMUS+ and other participating key stakeholders gave us the chance to study at Budapest Business School (BBS) in Hungary for the 2019/2020 spring semester as a replacement of our level 200 second semester at UGBS. The mobility period was arranged to begin on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020, and end on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020.

## ACCOMMODATION

On our arrival in Zalaegerszeg, we were warmly received into the student hostel. We shared rooms with our Albanian colleagues. The rooms were very comfortable and we had access to most of the facilities.

Since the student hostel was on the faculty's campus, the lecture halls were just a stone's throw away from the hostel so we did not face many problems pertaining to transport and lateness to class. Moreover, the lecturers saw to it that we were coping very well with the winter by then and feeling at home on campus. In fact, they were always willing to help us with anything we needed.

Nonetheless, due to the widespread of the coronavirus pandemic in Hungary, we were relocated on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to the BBS Finance and Accountancy faculty's hostel (Bagolyvar Kollegium) in Budapest. One room was allocated to each person. Safety and comfortability were still ensured. Since we were not closer to our lecturers, we switched to online learning just as the University management had commanded right after the spring break on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.

## ACADEMICS

Although we had a little backlog, our lecturers never hesitated to give us the reading materials to enable us to catch up very fast. In the first half of March, we had all our lectures in the lecture halls. We had the opportunity to sit in class with Hungarian students and other Erasmus students from Albania. The class size was very small which facilitated participation and easy attention to students' needs. Most lectures by then, were done in the form of group discussions especially in the case of Presentation skills and Intercultural communication. Economics classes were usually interesting because of Kahoot quizzes and effective class participation. Lecture slides and videos were basically used during Business planning, Accounting, Logistics, and European studies lectures. All in all, we had very good lecturers. The only challenge we had during lectures was that the students and some of the lecturers found it difficult getting our accent and some of the students also found it challenging to express themselves very well in English. However, there was never a dull moment in our classes.



*Lectures, presentations and group discussions at Budapest Business School, Zalaegerszeg Faculty of Business Administration (ZFBA).*

The MOODLE and Coospace systems operated by the school provided a forum where students could download lecture slides and submit assignments. These systems became very effective after the first half of March until the end of the semester. The Neptun system was also used for administrative purposes like exams registration, hostel fee payment, exams record, and among others. We were given Neptun codes and passwords to access these online resources. The main medium for communicating with our lecturers was via email. Facebook was sometimes used.

After the spring break, thus in the last week of March and the subsequent months, we began to feel the workload as we switched to virtual learning. Our lecturers were giving off their best despite the situation at hand to keep us always occupied. For that matter, we were given a lot of assignments and presentations to do. Moreover, we also had online class discussions on Microsoft teams. Written exams for some courses were done on Moodle in May whereas oral exams were conducted on Microsoft teams. We were given office365 accounts which we used to log in to Microsoft teams. Before the last week of May, we had all our exams successfully completed and results uploaded on Neptun.

## **EXPERIENCES**

- **Language Barrier and Culture shock**

Getting directions from some Hungarians we approached was a bit problematic. Hardly did we get some of our requests fulfilled all because of language barrier. Although some Hungarians are very fluent in English, others find it somewhat difficult to speak English fluently. Our accents made it a challenge sometimes too. In some instances, we had to use sign languages or google translator to facilitate comprehension.

Moreover, Hungary has a more improved transportation system compared to Ghana's. The combination of metro, trams, commuter bus lines, domestic trains and taxis made travelling within the country very convenient and fast. However, the challenging part in the case of public transport for us was how to get the readings right. Since it was different from what we have in Ghana, we found it difficult to pick the right tram or bus at the initial stage of our stay, but with time, we became used to the system.



Also, we tasted a variety of Hungarian foods. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, Dr Berces, one of our Hungarian lecturers invited us out with two other Albanian students for lunch. That was the first time we tasted Hungarian chicken soup. It was actually incredible since the soup looked and tasted different from what we were expecting. Some other foods



like langos and goulash tasted really nice. We often prepared food by ourselves. However, the ingredients, especially the spices we got from the Hungarian supermarkets tasted different from that of Ghana's. As a matter of fact, we had a little challenge with our diet for some time.

*Lunch with Dr Berces and our Albanian colleagues.*

## • Excursions



Excursions would not have been fun without our lecturers. We always felt loved and learnt a lot as well from our outings with them. While we were in Zalaegerszeg, we felt like every day was a time for us to explore and see the beautiful things around. We never did that alone because Dr Berces was always there for us. She drove us together with Antonio and Benard (Albanian students) to the House of artisans in Zalaegerszeg on 5<sup>th</sup> March where we saw beautiful artefacts. On 7<sup>th</sup> March, she went with us to Heviz to see different kinds of beautiful flowers and most importantly the Heviz thermal lake. Heviz is a nice place and a beautiful tourist site. We passed by the Festetics palace and headed on that same day to Keszthely to see the lake Balaton which happens to be the largest lake in central Europe.

*At the House of Artisans, Heviz and Keszthely*

Staying in Zalaegerszeg was pretty fun and the cost of living was lower compared to Budapest. However, we did not get the chance to explore more in Zala county because of the relocation due to the pandemic. On our arrival in Budapest, we used that opportunity to visit places around since there were no restrictions by then. We went to see the Danube River and the Szechenyi chain bridge.



*At Danube River and Szechenyi Chain Bridge with our Albanian friends*

After successful completion of the semester and when the lockdown was partially lifted, Dr Guban, the immediate past dean of ZFBA and his wife invited us for a dinner in their house in Budapest on two occasions, both after which we visited very nice places in the Capital city. On the first visit, thus 31<sup>st</sup> May, we went to see the Hungarian Agricultural Museum (Magyar Mezogazdasagi Muzeum), Heroes' Square, the Hungarian Parliament House, Castle Hill or Buda Castle and the Fishermen Bastion. On the second occasion, thus 29<sup>th</sup> June, we visited the Margaret Island. Over there we saw the Margitsziget mini-zoo as well. Although the place looked deserted because of the pandemic, we still had fun since it was our first time.



Dinner at the Guban's residence

Agric museum, Parliament and Castle

Margaret Island



We also had a great time with our female lecturers on two occasions. The first was a picnic which happened at Balatonfenyves, by the Balaton Lake on 8<sup>th</sup> June. It was intended to be a farewell programme for us (the Erasmus students). The other happened on 24<sup>th</sup> June at Fonyod where we went to Balatonboglár to see the metal globe.



Picnic at Balatonfenyves

At Fonyod and Balatonboglár

At Győr

Although we did not get the opportunity to travel outside Hungary because of the novel pandemic as it was part of our plans for the summer vacation, we enjoyed every bit of our outings with our lecturers, friends and even those that we went alone. Hungary is indeed a very nice country with amazing tourist sites.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OUR STAY

Hungary confirmed its first COVID-19 cases on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Initially, there was no interruption with our studies since we were in Zalaegerszeg and the cases were confirmed in Budapest. However, when the disease dramatically spread to many counties in Hungary and eventually a coronavirus-related death was announced on 15<sup>th</sup> March, the BBS management issued a directive to all the faculties to switch promptly to distance learning right after the spring break. This resulted in the calling off of most of the activities on the academic calendar. There was a sudden shift to a different calendar which resulted in the completion of the semester earlier than planned.

As we moved from Zalaegerszeg to the Bagolyvár Kollegium, Budapest, we were denied access to some of the recreational facilities in the hostel as part of coronavirus control measures. Moreover, movements within the hostel were restricted to the floor on which we were. In addition to the ordinary hostel regulations, were newly expressed regulations which we understood were established as a strategy to combat

the spread of the pandemic. We cooperated very well with the hostel administration in all regards.

Also, there was a temporary lockdown and strict movement restriction order passed on by the government. This, by then prevented us from exploring and seeing other parts of Budapest. The pandemic resulted in countries closing their borders too, hence shutting down our chances of travelling outside Hungary.

The mobility period ended on 3<sup>rd</sup> July as planned and our Albanian colleagues went back home but we could not leave since Ghana's borders were still closed. This created a little discomfort as we were soaked in uncertainty. Our residence permit also expired on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. However, since we were able to get a document from Ghana's embassy in Prague providing proof that Ghana's borders have been closed, we were being given residence permit until 31<sup>st</sup> July. Better still, we could not leave before 31<sup>st</sup> July, so we went to further extend our residence permit to 30<sup>th</sup> September.

We were evacuated from the Bagolyvar Kollegium to the KVIK kollegium (BGE Faculty of Commerce, Hospitality and Tourism hostel) on 10<sup>th</sup> July since we were informed that the former has to be refurbished. We stayed in the KVIK kollegium free of charge and even beyond the time period given.

Overstaying in Hungary became a trouble at a point in time. Formal communication lines between the Zalaegerszeg Faculty of Business Administration (ZFBA) and the Budapest Business School (BBS) got busted because the former was moved from BBS to Pannonia University. Due to this, it became very tough for management to decide on which hostel we should be moved to when the time to leave the KVIK kollegium was due. We then had to move to one of our lecturer's family vacation house at Fonyod on 31<sup>st</sup> August since the ZFBA hostel was not reopened by then. We enjoyed our awesome one-week stay at Fonyod. Finally, we returned to Zalaegerszeg on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

Our seven-month stay in Hungary was an intriguing journey for us. We could not have wished for anything better despite the negative impacts of Covid-19.

## **CONCLUSION**

We would like to urge all students who may want to partake in the ERASMUS+ programme to do so since it is an eye-opening experience. We have never regretted being a part of this exchange programme. Hungary is a lovely country to stay and it creates an avenue to have memorable experiences.