

Polytechnic University student describes training and living in Bavaria in quarantine

Just another student of Polytechnic University told about her life abroad during the quarantine: Olga GOLOVAN is studying at the University of Friedrich-Alexander (Germany) as part of the Erasmus+ program. Read about the distance learning at universities in Bavaria at this complicated time for everyone, quarantine measures and much more in our interview.

- Olga, please tell us, when did you arrive in Germany? When did the country declare quarantine?

- We arrived in Germany in early March, just a few days before the well-known events. The semester was supposed to start on April 20th, but we needed to take intensive German courses before it. However, in connection with the spread of COVID-19 in Germany, all kindergartens, schools, universities, and offices began to close down. After a while, the Bavarian government decided to close absolutely all educational institutions and switch to distance learning; all shops were closed, except for grocery and drug stores, cinemas, museums, gyms and libraries. Bavaria declared quarantine on March 21, and Germany as a whole on March 23.

- What can and cannot one do during the quarantine period?

- All residents must stay at home. You can only go to a store or pharmacy; sports are also allowed: you can go jogging in parks or bike rides. You must not gather in groups of more than two people. The exception is if you live in the same living space. During walking, a distance of at least two meters should be observed. A fine is imposed for violators of quarantine rules; it can reach 25 thousand Euros.



- How did the people in the city respond to quarantine?

- Initially they were panicking: people swept literally everything they saw off the shelves of grocery stores; the police patrolled around the city, inquiring on your destination and recommending to go back home. However, a week after, the situation got stable, and now everything is under control.

- And what about your studying?

- They certainly had to cancel the courses of German in connection with the situation. As an alternative, we were offered several online platforms where we could choose the courses we liked and learn German ourselves. In my opinion, this, of course, is far from the amount of information and knowledge that we could've gained attending classes, and there is no substitute for live communication with a teacher. However, it's better than nothing.

- What can you say about distance learning in general? Is this format easy?

- In addition to studying at the university, I came to Germany to take internship at the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits IIS. Due to quarantine, a number of restrictions were also introduced there; for example, we even were forbidden to contact colleagues from the neighboring departments. The whole institute was

transferred to the remote work mode. At the same time, they organized everything extremely efficiently and provided their employees with everything necessary for work: they allocated working laptops to everyone, provided remote access to the Fraunhofer computer, and even allowed to take monitors home. It is quite tough for me to work remotely, because I'm not used to sitting at home all day and not talking to anyone, so I still came to work several times. The institute was completely empty; there were only a few employees as fearless as I was.

- So you are staying at home all the time?

- Despite the current situation, quarantine and bans, I still manage to travel in my free time. During the month of my stay in Germany, I explored Erlangen, visited several neighboring cities - Nuremberg, Fuerth, Bamberg, Würzburg. On ordinary days, there are crowds of tourists and locals in these places, but I managed to walk along the narrow and absolutely deserted streets of ancient German cities.

Certainly, when quarantine is canceled, I will return to these cities to visit museums, go inside churches, try local cuisine and look at the life of a city back to bustling.

- Olga, what would you wish other students who've got into a similar situation?

- Keep your chins up! For some reason, life has imparted us such tests, and we must succeed with them. We must find advantages even in this situation: we've got a unique chance to live and study in another country, know its culture and customs, make new friends and acquaintances, and see how European countries cope with the global crisis situation. Difficulties are temporary, and the impressions of this trip will stay with us for life!

- Olga, thanks for the interesting interview! We wish you success and good luck!

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