Final Report

I have decided to do this internship for two reasons. First of all, the stay abroad in an English speaking country is a requirement and part of the curricular at my department in the University. Secondly, I wanted to get more experience and get more skillful in the work that I had been doing here in Germany, which was a part-time job in a hotel at a reception desk. I wanted to change the environment and conditions of the routine work that I had been doing of a year back then.

I started with just searching on the world wide web for different kinds of jobs and internships. It lasted for months and I still couldn't find the one where either my citizenship or lack of experience were not an issue for the potential employer.

Ireland was not the priority country where I wanted to go. As I am a citizen of a non-EU country, which is Ukraine, I had to get a visa permit for any English speaking country. Thus, I put a thought into where it would be not as difficult, expensive or time consuming to get a visa to, which turned out to be Ireland. Moreover, it was not far from Germany, so that a return plane ticket would not cost me a fortune, as my income was my part-time job salary exclusively.

Luckily for me I got an email from a secretary of one of my University professors with a link to a website of an internship offer in Ireland. It was http://erasmusintern.org/ website. I looked through that particular one, which was a full-time language assistant job in a language school in Galway. Their website is http://www.galwaylanguage.com. Eventually, it was not a suitable position for me as they did not provide neither financial compensation, nor accommodation. Nonetheless, I had a closer look at other offers given on that website and found a few potential and suitable for me. After all I applied for a bunch of them.

In about a week I got a reply from an agency called Educate International which was dealing with helping students to find suitable placement offers and preparing the needed documents. Their website is www.Educate-International.com. It is not a free of charge service though. For the service of finding the placement, accommodation, getting an interview and contacts of a potential employer I paid a fee. Apart from that, the agency assured me I would get some help in settling, finding my way in Ireland and just general help in preparing documents. I received some partial help though. They did find me a placement and made sure I had my accommodation there (for an extra fee however), but nothing else than that.
Although, they visited me in about a month after I arrived in Ireland started the internship. They were curious if I settled well, if I liked my room etc. I did not find this any helpful as I already stayed there for a month and had some help from my colleagues and my supervisor/manager in the hotel.

Through the whole application process I was in contact with Mrs K. O'B., the executive manager of the agency. First of all, I had a Skype interview with her where she would check my work and academic experience in order to be able to find and offer me a proper internship. After that she offered me two positions: one in Dublin, and another one in Shannon. I opted for the job in Shannon, as they would provide me with free accommodation and food instead of the financial compensation and it was exactly the kind of job I used to do here in Germany – reception and reservations.

In order to be approved at that place I had a short phone interview with one of the front desk managers at that hotel Ms B. This is how I found an internship placement in one of the hotels in Ireland. Now I had to get all the required documents and of course a visa.

Visa was another major issue for me. I did some research on what is the easiest and safest way to get a visa to Ireland for me. Erasmus+ programme was the most appropriate and suitable variant. As it turned out I needed the confirmation of my internship placement and financial capability, as well as a list of other supporting documents to be liable for taking this programme.

As I had to prepare all the documents and most important get an approval from Erasmus and the Embassy of Ireland in Berlin, the period of my internship placement was postponed for approximately 6 weeks. Unlike Erasmus application which could be done via email and contact with the Student und Arbeitsmarkt, Career Service of the Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich, namely the supervisor Mr J.H., all the documents for visa including my original passport, German residence permit, confirmation of the placement, financial capability etc. had to be sent to the Embassy of Ireland to Jägerstraße 51, 10117 in Berlin via regular post. Their website is https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/Germany/. One can have a look and check if they need a visa, and if so – what kind of visa.

Finally, I had my Erasmus and the visa and I could go to Ireland. I did not need any language preparation for the internship. However, I had an intercultural workshop held by my department of the University. It was a part of the curriculum of the intercultural project that this all internship was for me actually. It is compulsory for all the students of our department, who are going abroad.
In Ireland I was warmly welcomed at the hotel where I would work for four and a half months. My accommodation was a room with a bathroom at the same hotel. It looked quite shabby and was not refurbished for a long time, the bathroom utilities were old, but I did not have to pay for transport in order to commute to work and it saved some time to get to work, as I had to start at 7 in the morning, or finish at 11 in the evening. I lived in that room on my own for 3 months, the rest of the time I shared it with another intern who arrived later.

At first the room was too small for us both. It had two beds, a desk, a tiny fridge, an armchair, a chair, a small wardrobe and a pantry which made it seem even smaller than it was. But as there was no other room provided for a second intern, we were obliged to share. What was suggested is making some changes in the room. The pantry was made into another wardrobe, the bigger bed was substituted with a smaller single bed and we received an extra sofa and a coffee table. My roommate and I did our best to make the room more comfortable and convenient for us to share. We were given a couple of pictures and a mirror to hang on the walls to make it cosier too. It all made it easier to co-live in such small space together. However, the days we worked different shifts could make it uncomfortable as when I finished at 23:30 I went to the room I could wake my roommate up, or visa versa: she was getting to work at 6 in the morning while I went back to late to be able to wake up that early. Eventually, we got used to it.

The working hours were divided into three shifts: early from 7 until 15:30, late from 15 until 23:30 in the evening, or night shift from 23-24 o’clock until 5-7 in the morning. I was working mainly early and late with some exceptions at night, merely to get to know the whole process that the front desk went through 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The plan for shifts for all the employees including myself was made weekly by my supervisor and the front desk manager Mrs J.K. . She was a great help in settling in the hotel, finding my way in the town, getting started with the work and just generally throughout the whole period I was staying there.

My main responsibilities at the front desk and reservations included checking the guests in and out, settling their accounts, answering the phone calls, performing daily reports, making phone and online reservations, and taking care of the general email-correspondence. The times when I worked night shift I was preparing meeting rooms and early grab-and-go breakfast for the following day. After about a month of practising I started working at the front desk early and late shifts on my own, having only a duty manager as an emergency help; the night audit/shift was always performed by two people, so that I would always have a more experienced co-worker with me (for security reasons as well).
It was not as difficult to get used to work in the hotel, nor was it hard to learn their system. However, there were some miscommunication issues. One of them was general misunderstanding due to the fact that I was not used to hearing Irish accent, which is quite different from the accents I learnt at school and then studied at the University. It took me a month of careful listening to people speak in their indigenous accents (depending on a region they come from in Ireland) in order to be able to understand them properly and respond accordingly.

I got acquainted with my colleagues by working with them day by day, one by one. I was introduced to other employees from other departments of the hotel by my supervisor and former front desk manager Ms H. B. She was replaced by another manager Mrs J.K.. Both of them took good care of me, making sure I felt as comfortable as possible at my working place and the hotel in general. When Ms B. left I was supervised by Mrs K. will the end of the internship. She was really nice to me and helped me settle in the new and unknown environment for me, which Shannon town and Ireland was.

This was another challenge for me. I had lived in Germany for two years back then, and was almost used to the place and people around. But then I had to move places again. I had to change my primary language of communication from German to English, as well as people I used to spend time with. It was all new again.

I did not meet any Erasmus students there. However, there was a College of Hotel Management nearby and some of the students either worked part-time or had lectures in the hotel. On my days off I would always try to go to another city and visit some nice popular places to get to know Ireland more and just enjoy my stay here, not just as an intern but as a tourist as well. As Ireland is not a big country, it was easy to have a day trip to many nice sightseeing places or just go to the nearby city Limerick to do some shopping or to have dinner with some students from the college that I got friends with. The transportation was quite expensive though.

The holidays were hard for me too. I did not want to spend them in my room by myself. But because I had nice friendly relationship with most of my colleagues, for the New Year's I was invited over by one of the co-workers of my age. I visited her the next day after Christmas as well. We had nice dinner with her friends.

The last month I was staying there I shared my room with another intern. It was a nice and friendly girl from the Netherlands, with whom I could go to other cities and places when we had our days off on the same date. When I asked Mrs K., she was so kind as to give us both two days off on the St. Patrick's Day, so that we can go somewhere and enjoy the holiday
together. That is why I had an amazing opportunity to go to Dublin and see the parade and enjoy this well-known Irish holiday fully and with great pleasure. We had nice time there.

Would I suggest this particular place as an internship option for another student? I cannot say for sure, as it all depends on person’s expectation and goals. Shannon is a small town and the hotel is actually stranded from it a bit because it is situated just at the airport. The nearest bigger city Limerick is about 45 minutes with a bus or 25 with a car. The buses go every other hour from the airport (a two minute walk from the hotel), less regularly on holidays or weekends. Unfortunately, the bus drivers go on strikes from time to time, which means the only way out of the hotel to the city is by renting a car (if you have a driving license) or going there with a taxi. The latter might be expensive in the evening or during bank holidays. The airport itself is a small local one; there are not many flights landing or taking off, which means there is no much noise pollution.

However, the time I was staying in the hotel there was renovation in process right on the same floor where my room was situated, as a result it was noisy because of the builders working. It was even more stressful when I had night shifts and went to sleep at 7 or 8 in the morning – the exact time when they started drilling, hammering or hoovering. As a consequence, I got into a habit of sleeping with the ear plugs in (even during the night, when there was minimal level of noise, mostly coming from the late check-in guests).

The location just at the airport presupposes as well that people from cancelled flights (which happens often in high season) will be directed to our airport, which means more work under pressure of time and amount of work to be done. It can be stressful from time to time. Fortunately, I was doing my internship during a quite winter season, so that I was able to learn everything in a more or less relaxed atmosphere. The summer time would be much different. It is very busy and crowded in the hotel during the holiday time, with mostly just families with children staying for only one night or big groups of foreign tourists.

I generally enjoyed my internship at the Park Inn Hotel. I learnt many new things, practised the English language and had been to many nice places. I believe I will be able to put to use the skills and knowledge I got from the time I worked in the hotel. I had great experience and it was worth making the effort and going there. I hope it will be beneficial for my future academic and career life.

The one important thing I would bare in mind for future interns going anywhere is to state the conditions of work, days off and accommodation before actually going there. Both the intern and the employer need to be as discrete as possible while choosing each other. The intern needs to make it clear what he/she expects from the internship. The employer on
their side needs to present the terms and conditions of the intern's stay at the company as detailed as possible; if it means the working hours or days off, responsibilities and rights, or even to specify the place of work (a particular department). If the intern stays with a host family they need to discuss the house rules and general conditions of living with each other before moving in. Being mentally prepared and aware of the tiniest details is very important. It will make the stay much more comfortable and cause less miscommunication issues.