Internship report

My internship has been done in Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, Netherlands. I was working at ECOM project. ECOM stands for “Effective Communication in Outbreak Management: development of an evidence-based tool for Europe”. It is a research project under the 7th Framework Programme of the EU (FP7-HEALTH-2011) and runs from February 2012 till February 2016. The goal of the Ecom project is to develop an evidence-based behavioural and communication package for health professionals and agencies throughout Europe in case of major outbreaks of infectious diseases (http://ecomeu.info/). Through my professor, who used to teach me in the first semester of MSc Epidemiology at LMU, I was aware of the internship possibilities. He came originally from Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, where he used to chair the epidemiology department, but at same time also worked as disjunction Professor at Harvard Public School of Health. During his teaching period, I assisted him as student assistant. We had good talk at that time since I speak as well dutch language. He told me that if i need anything, i should have written him. And I did as he said. Last year, I have sent my CVs and he has been kindly to forward my profile to NIHES (Netherlands Institutes for Health Sciences) at Erasmus MC, Rotterdam. At the beginning, i was rejected due to lack of internship places availability. Nevertheless, at the end, they did contact me again for the internship posibility about the European Project, since it has matched my background perfectly. Together with HAW Hamburg, I have arranged and submitted proposal for 4 months-internship hosted by Erasmus MC.

I did not have big expectations at the beginning. I just wanted to explore, deepend and broader my knowledge and working ability within epidemiology area. I had background as laboratory scientists and this field is really new to me. An internship in international public health area, which are also explained within the epidemiology area, has been always my interest since I was in high school. Any kind of internships within this area would be a good stepping stone for my future carreeer. Since I did not have any expectations at the beginning, I do not have things to complain. I was able to observe different way of work between the german and dutch people, which I found quite interesting and I just like it the way it was. Within this internship I was encouraged to work indenpently and try to find the ideas of my own internship. The supervisors have explained only the main topic or direction, in what kind of area they would like to deepen within this data. At the beginning it was really hard to adapt, since I have never
done things from scratch in research area. I had to read many literatures, get closer to the data and interview some of people from different work packages. However, at the end, it was indeed really good training for me. I found it really challenging and it has perfectly encouraged me for being more creative.

Since the internship was done in english, i did not have specific preparation. My grandfather was a dutch and i have still relatives live in holland. My english ability has been trained since I enrolled in MSc. Epidemiology program which is using english as study language. Through this internship, my ability to discuss, presentate and write report has been improved rapidly. In additional, I was able to improve my dutch language as well. I tried to talk with my working colleagues and also my relatives using dutch language. Meanwhile I took dutch courses offered from Erasmus University for summer program. It has really helped my ability to speak and write in dutch language. I have been able to integrate in dutch culture through my relatives and working colleagues. It has been a good decision for choosing Erasmus MC for my internship.

During my internship, I was trusted to work independently. I have collected the data from different parties and project groups, which are separated in different European countries, Germany, Netherlands, UK and USA. Reading all the data was done as the next step in other to look for possibilities on how to summarize and deal with the data. I had meetings, both through skype and personal, with my supervisors and different people from project group for discussing the ideas developed. Decision to reduce and summarize the data based on the available data has been made. The proposal has been also changed and shaped according to the data. I did the secondary analysis for the whole analysis done within the project. From all of the discussion process, we have been decided to analyse only two European countries, which have strong opinions towards the vaccination uptake. Using the social marketing approaches, I have been able to detect possible interventions using the risk perception towards the vaccination uptake. The comparison studies have been done in order to validate the findings. All the working progress explained above were accompanied together with the different opinions from different persons who involved within this project. The findings should have been matched with the previous findings before.

What I did gain within my internship has been helped me to enrich my knowledge within public health policy making. Since I have big interest in infectious disease epidemiology, this internship has succeed to combine my background in communicable disease and my current study. In additional, I have also got chance to know broader area within epidemiology
through social science perspective, which I have found pretty interesting. Having the multidisciplinary researches are also key point to be a capable public health practitioners.

I could not ask for the better working environment. The dutch people are really famous with their friendliness and really international cultures. I had really warm hearted reception as I entered this department. The infectious disease epidemiology is the part of public health department and located at 22nd floor. The workplace has stolen my intention since the beginning. The view of rotterdam skyline from above that I saw everyday was really amazing. Everyday I could see the cruises harboring near from the erasmus bridge. It was just breathtaking. I was sitting with colleagues from another project groups within public health department. I have got to know them as well, not only from my own project group. At the beginning, they have been talked to me in english. But as soon as I told them that my grandfather was a dutch, they were so excited and told me that they are really ready to help me if I want to get to know the culture and the language. During my internship, I had an small accident. I twisted my ankle and therefore I needed to use crutches for the whole 1,5 week. One of my working colleague, who barely knew me at that time, has been helped me since the first hours after I fell. I have never seen such warm-hearted, helpful working colleagues like my working colleagues here in Rotterdam. I have definitely no complains to tell about them. I have been also lucky this year that there are so many new and young PhD students enrolled at the same time with my internship. We have got to know each other pretty well and explore together the Rotterdam city. At the same time, I have been able also to build contact with the local people since most of the PhD students are the local people coming from the rotterdam surrounding. We were always going in groups after work hours. I had really good time with them.

Since i was always at work everyday, i did not have many connection outside my office besides my housemates and my relatives in Deventer. At the weekend i was always at my relatives and i have just spent time with them and their friends. And from my working colleagues i have got to know their friends since we went out quite often together. However, I did definitely make good social contact, either inside or outside my working place.

Speaking of the housing, it has not been the problem. I was googling at the student website for housing and i have directly the apartment visit appoinment and i have accepted directly. The only thing to careful about is the price of the house. In Netherlands, the student-housing is quite high with range starting from 500 Euro for dormitory. If we are not enrolled in the university even we are the guest student, we should be able to afford 700-800Euro monthly for the housing within this dormitory. I used housing-anywhere website which offers private
student housing. It is pretty trustworthy. In additional, the groceries prices are also higher than in Germany and also restaurant prices are pretty expensive in compare to Germany. People should be really aware of this.

The thing that i would like to suggest the future interns, who would like to do the internship here, that they should just enjoy the ride. Be nice and open to every people. Dutch people are really open and very helpful. Try to show the interest to their culture, begins with their language. Dutch language is not that hard for the german speaker. If we could give the effort for knowing their culture and language, they will really appreciate us. Try to engage for every meeting or event held by the department. This department has many social-events. They have once in a month a drink-event and also staff meeting. And every tuesday, they have special free lunch together for the whole department. Sometimes from each project group, they will also go outside and enjoy the accompany with others. Just do something with them and you will get more connection within the department. And also, be in the office as possible as you could. If you were there, you will experience everyday what your colleagues do and how are they doing. Be flexible as possible as you can. And you will get more closer to get to know them.

My internship is build based on personal interest. It means that I have designed the proposal myself together with my other supervisor from hamburg and then we proposed it to the project group leader in erasmus mc. This project is also spread through european institutions along with their different packages. So, the supervisions within my proposal came actually also from different working packages. Other people who involved within this internship could also intervent or giving their ideas for discussion. So, if someone would like to have internship here, they should have really commit their time for the work and also need to have good communication skill. Being able to discuss and presentate something with full of self-confident is also advantage for having an internship within the international project. Not forget about the independent and creative actions towards their own project, unless they found some open application for the internship. The facility of this institution has my biggest satisfaction at the end. Every employee has their own chip card or transponder. If you are not the employee of one building within the erasmus mc area, you will not be able to open some gates, e.g. the parking bike or the doors within your department. They are really careful towards the security within the building. In additional, the complex includes also the university medical center. They have so huge open libary for everybody and also many auditoriums for the classes. I have enrolled once in the summer programs offered by NIHES.
They have really good equiments for these auditoriums. I could not ask for better lecture halls after I saw this.

In additional, this institution is really competent at caring their employee. Last time I have been able to experienced the summer picnic programs from the erasmus mc. The erasmus mc has offered free lunch-picnic for the whole employees. Their goal is just to gather us the employee outside the workplace. I found it really nice from the employer that they gave us motivation and chances for being social to each other. There are so many social-events offered through different department. Passively we are also encouraged for being social within the workplace environment, which I find really interesting.

Talking about indepedent working, people should be able active and critic to their work. You should be creative with our work-methods. Be able to communicate and presentate something good are advantages for doing the internship here. Every people is working independently here and if you do not have something that make you really special rather than the other people, it might be not really easy for adapting in the work-environment. The concurrence within the employee is pretty high, but it will not be a big problem if you do not take that as granted. Be able to open and friendly to every working colleagues, who might help you for get the connection. The dutch people are really friendly and helpful. If you have good connections with them, you will have really advantages in the future.

I would like to thanks the Erasmus+ Scholarship program for giving me chance to gain experience and knowledge with this internship. Also to thank career service for helping me throughout the application process. I did not have any problems within the communication process. The career service has been really helpful with their information. I really satisfied with their services.