

**Mobility Program:** ERASMUS

**Partner University:** University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UACEG), Sofia.

**Study programme visited:** MSc Architecture

**Overall impression Description of the stay abroad in 4- 5 sentences:**

An overall impression of my stay in Bulgaria, during my exchange semester, is very positive. The country, similar to many Balkan countries, is really vibrant and exciting. The capital city of Sofia, is fairly large and it seems to provide an endless number of things to do and visit. The University is very large and provides a good infrastructure for improving your academic and professional skills, with the help of the academic and administrative staff. Bulgaria provides a wide variety of things to do, ranging from skiing, mountain climbing and hiking, sightseeing, to relaxing on the beautiful sand of Black Sea beaches. The exchange in Bulgaria could be explained as a bit adventures, exiting and greatly beneficial, as you can explore totally different cultural protocols, the Balkan party life and a relaxing atmosphere whilst being able to learn and advance your skills in a unique teaching manner, that could be of great benefit.

**Immigration / arrival entry formalities, visa:**

For citizens of the EU the process of immigration is extremely easy, following the mobility process, there is nothing else to do but arrive. For people that are not from the EU, there is a process of getting a visa, but I hear that it is fairly simple and fast, if I remember correctly the fees are about 200 euros.

**Room searching/stay Helpful contact information:**

The systems for finding private accommodation is not that great, but existing. But, I would strongly recommend staying at the dorms, as it is extremely cheap. One note on this, the dorm looks terrible, but it provides all the necessary functions. Do not panic when you arrive, like I did and start searching for flats, place a rug, hang some pictures and dim the lights, trust me, it will look better. Everyone from Erasums is at the dorm, so I guess it is more fun than having an 80-year old couple next door, but whatever floats your boat.

I do not have first hand experience about the private flat, but I heard that it adds up to about triple the cost of the dorm. The rent is cheap but the utilities are high.

### **Public transport Train, bus, accessibility of the university:**

The public transport is really good, it does not look the part, but it is efficient. From the Student City (a part of town where all the dorms are located and some Universities) it takes about 20min to reach the uni, so I think that it is quite convenient. There is also a metro network that is fantastic, but the station is 1.5km from the dorms.

### **Preparation for the studies Course registration procedure, language certificate and transcript of records:**

On the first day the team from the international office organizes a gathering and explains everything, they are very friendly and helpful. The process of choosing the courses and getting in touch with the professors is a bit slow, but at the end it is not a problem, be patient and keep sending those emails.

### **Information about the university Location, size, infrastructure:**

The uni is located in the city center, it a fantastic quiet street with an old tram going through it. The building is huge, housing three departments and the administrative offices, it literally take up half the street. As for the organization, in my opinion it is quite good, as everything is clearly explained during the intro events.

### **Language course visited at the university:**

I did not attend a language course. I heard there is a lot of languages that you can study.

### **Course content, benefits, studies at the university Course content, credits, exams:**

There is a wide variety of courses that you can take, but I recommend the more efficiency based ones, like the industrial buildings for your studio, as I think the school of architecture from eastern Europe is quite good in this field and also the professor that teaches it is very knowledgeable and provides you with a great work environment.

Formally there is no studio, everything is considered like a normal course, but there are some that require you to do a project and are worth more credits. There are some interesting courses regarding history of architecture and if you want to learn something about the local architecture, which is quite unique, take the history of Bulgarian architecture class and then visit all of the things you have seen on the slides. I have attended two courses regarding American architecture, taught by a professor that has been an honorary academic guest in the U.S. in the 80s, this is a great experience that I suggest you do not miss. The exams are straightforward and the grading system that is easy to understand.

### **Support at the university Student Counseling, International Office, Buddy, student contacts:**

All of these bodies work quite efficiently and the people working there are very friendly and helpful. Only thing is the processes tend to take longer than Liechtenstein, but this is normal and at the end the stuff gets done.

### **Budgeting Cost of living, study materials, money transfers:**

The prices are quite low, compared to Liechtenstein. For a 110 euros you can cover all the costs of accommodation, at the dorm. The food is also cheap, in the Student City it is cheaper than in the city center. In the center you could get a great meal with drinks for 10 euros in an average restaurant and in the Student City it is about 3 to 5 euros. There is no need to cook!!! The study materials are also affordable. I would suggest cash if you do not open a Bulgarian account. You have to exchange the money as euros are not the currency in Bulgaria, but there are lots of exchange offices and banks.

### **Life / Leisure Places to meet, sports, culture:**

In Sofia there is always a place to go to and have a great time. Every street has numerous cafes and restaurants. There are a lot of clubs, pubs and places to relax and have a good time with friends. The Erasmus team organizes events almost every week. You can go to the gym or engage in any type of sport for quite a low price in any part of the city. As it is the capital of the country, there are multiple cultural hotspots to visit. Museums, galleries, theaters, open air concerts, festivals or just sightseeing. There are a couple of free city tours that are great to get to know the city better.

### **Comparison of universities What is better / worse at the partner university than at the University of Liechtenstein:**

It is not easy to compare the Universities, as they are organized differently. In my opinion the UACG in Sofia provides the students with a wider variety of courses and fields in the studies, this is of course because of the size of the University. I think the bureaucracy is a bit slower in Sofia and there are fewer features for experimenting with the projects, like the model building workshop, the studio space etc. But, I think these differences are due to a different organization of courses and the Universities.