

# Student Experience Report



University of Zaragoza | RE Grid Integration | EUREC -2020/21

Submitted by – TRIBIKRAM MISHRA

I am Tribikram Mishra, a fellow citizen of the Republic of India. Since my graduation in 2016, I have always wanted to have some study abroad exposure. Although it took 4 years to realize that dream, I managed to get the opportunity in 2020 amid the pandemic. I was always an avid travel enthusiast. I always believed that travel is the integral path of making Yourself aware of your skills that you never knew existed. In Life, travel is important just cause to discover who you are. Travelling gives an experience and stories to be shared among. You learn self-management and your imagination along with creativity excels in. Life is not about being caged in the same city or place you were born. It makes you flexible and adaptable to new ideas and challenges. It helps with discovering other cultures, food, and languages.

### **Preparation**

The year 2020 and 2021 had been a timeline full of roller coaster events and due to pandemics going on and travel ban across borders the situation was very much critical and unpredictable. Despite the pandemic, the semester started online in the first week of February. Due to the overlapping of the core semester and the specialization semester, the study circumstances changed a lot with more than the usual study load. However, I got the opportunity to fly to Spain in the early month of April to join my batchmates at the University of Zaragoza. The support of the core university (University of Oldenburg) was immense in this transition. The process of specialization semester course started in early January of 2021. All the documents and regulations were communicated by the hosting university before the start of the course. The coordinator of the program guided me well with the registration and all official documentation work.

### **Travel and Living**

I traveled to Spain in the early days of April, although my course had already started in February. I had to stay in Oldenburg to complete my core semester lab works. Although it was a bit of a headache to juggle between two semesters at the same time, I managed somehow. The host University in Zaragoza had given us one letter to present at the border in case of restrictions on travel. I traveled from Hamburg to Madrid and then to Zaragoza. RT-PCR tests were mandatory to cross the border in flight and SPTH forms were mandatory to be filled and present upon arrival. Unfortunately, unlike Oldenburg University, there was no such concept of “Buddy Program” or affordable studentwohnheim facilities. The covid pandemic was making it difficult to finalize a place to stay while being in Germany but due to the help of the Indian community in Zaragoza, I got a pleasant, shared apartment to stay in with other nationals. As a non-Spanish speaker, the initial days were a bit troublesome as I did not have a buddy to support me in the transition. With the help of my batchmates who were already there from February, I did settle down well. Some of my Spanish friends who were studying with us in the first semester as exchange student in Oldenburg, did help out a lot throughout the stay.



## Academics

The structure of the RE Grid integration specialization in the University of Zaragoza is module-wise. The course started in the early weeks of February and within the next few days, I had my first exam and assignments along with presentations. The structure is quite good in my opinion as it keeps the pressure less on the student but due to my overlapping semesters, the study load just multi-folded. The course consists of a total of 6 modules designed to be taught in 5 months. However, due to the covid restriction, the timeline extended a further 2 weeks towards the end. On another point, the timeline somehow felt unrealistic to understand and get hands-on with new industry-level software in such a small period. The professors were nice and very much flexible with ideas, but some teachers were having poor communication skills. The program is an English taught program so I believe that the communication skills of the teacher should be good, as we all were from different nationalities and the common link between us was the English language. The most irritating fact about the assignments and activities where no feedback was provided which could have helped to improve the performance. The marking structure was also a bit odd but quite lenient at times. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I couldn't enjoy much of the campus study life but somehow, we were given few in-campus classes and laboratories. This specialization is recommendable to students who want to know the electrical aspects of Renewable Energy. The course is quite loaded so choose well.



## Lifestyle & Leisure

The lifestyle and leisure activity of Zaragoza is something, which I will cherish forever. For a brief moment, I envied what I was missing in Oldenburg, due to lockdown. Zaragoza is a student city but full of life and amazing places to hang out with friends and places where you can find solitude to read a book or listen to your favorite song. The “Ebro River” and “El pilar” are the most attractive sights of Zaragoza. Numerous Roman civilization ruins and artifacts are scattered throughout the city. This city is full of museums hence, giving a brief dive into the human civilization and further course of life. The main campus of the University of Zaragoza lies inside the city near “Plaza San Francisco” and the school of engineering is in the outer skirt of the city at “Rio Ebro Campus”. The city is well connected by bus, tram and taxi services at a cheaper price. There are many parks in and outer skirt of the city to visit and The Parque Grande is the biggest park inside the city having a humongous statue of King Alphonso who saved the city Zaragoza from the Romans. Although the weekdays were very hectic and full of a tense atmosphere due to the lectures and other activities, the weekends and nightlife used to make up for the tiring days. “Plaza Espana” is the city center and many streets performance and bands playing songs

were soothing to watch and enjoy with a chilled beverage in the summer afternoon with your favorite Spanish drink.



The Spanish food and delicacies were something to crave for. The traditional Spanish food and beverages are something which I will remember forever. Having a Spanish batchmate with us we could try all the typical Spanish dishes and beverages. Along with my friends, we went on small trips within the prescribed timelines of the specialization to the nearby city and mountain ranges for a trek. The Barcelona trip will be one of the most memorable trips of this Covid era. We had a lot of fun in Barcelona and saw many Catalans architecture and sculptures. “Sagrada de Familia” by Catalan master architect Antoni Gaudi just took my breath away with its beauty and detailed textures of Christianity. Due to a stringent timeline, it was quite difficult to travel around in Spain but, I explored Zaragoza and possible nearby places as much as possible. There was a city center and El pillar tour organized by the course coordinator and the city tourist office, thanks to Prof Paz for this amazing opportunity to learn more about the Aragon region and the Zaragoza city history.



The leisure time activities for me were taking a walk at Ebro riverbank in the evening, jogging in the “Parque Grande” or reading a book, or listening to music in the “Parque Delagua”. The afternoon life was very soothing and full of peace in such places. As we all were from different nationalities, so we used to organize dinner and movie nights almost every weekend. The Indian community in Zaragoza used to organize weekend-friendly cricket matches and I participated in a few of them. The Erasmus semester in Spain was splendid and full of enjoyment. I had a close peek into Spanish culture, tradition, and food. I made new friends, and all was possible due to the ERASMUS Exchange semester program. If I could do it again, I will not think twice.