

Final report

Internship abroad

Personal data and general information on the internship

Subject of studies: Epidemiology

Bachelor/Master/State exam: MSc Epidemiology

Time of internship: 01/08/25 – 29/10/25

Place of internship: Lyon, France

Internship institution: International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

1. Planning & Preparation

I am a student doing my masters in Epidemiology. I have ambitions to work in public health policy in an international context. So, when I heard about the opportunity through my course to work with the International Agency for Research on Cancer on inequalities in healthcare systems, it was perfect. Straight away, I contacted the supervisor, had an interview, and was offered the internship. I was to set off for Lyon in August, to work and live in the beautiful city, and to return after three months with a new appreciation for the cheese and wine of the Rhone valley.

It was very exciting, but first I had to make a plan. There is always the daunting realisation after an exciting offer like this, that it is real. I will be in France, I will be living in a new room, trying to speak a new language, drinking beers with new unmet friends, doing a new job, and spending money that I do not currently have. I was daunted, it was daunting, but as my Mum would say: “you have got to start somewhere”.

So, I started by applying for Erasmus funding. This was very straight forward, the team at the LMU career service are awesome. That was the money sorted. The next job was finding a room to stay in. Now my French at that point was very bad, I was not feeling optimistic about getting a room. I tried finding a room in student accommodation with no luck (August to October is peak student season). However, when moving to a new city and new country, I always prefer to move into a shared apartment (it gives you an immediate community that can take some time to foster in larger student accommodation), so I tried the app “La Carte des Colocs”. Reasonably quickly (within two weeks maybe), I found a place. A furniture

salesman took me in, with a beautiful place just by the river, and a just 15-minute cycle from my internship. A great result, that was the room sorted.

So I set off on the Flixbus from Munich to Lyon, squeezed into the window seat by the toilet by a loudly snoring man. I didn't mind, I was on my way, with one more thing on the checklist to tick off: some friends to have a beer with.

2. Internship – The Typical Day

The internship was at the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and so it is very much a research institution. Its focus was on fostering international collaboration in the field of cancer research, and also being a part of the WHO, it was a very international environment.

It is a large office, about a 15 minute cycle outside of the city centre, so I would cycle along the river (Lyon has great bike paths, and you have to get the Velo'v (like city bikes) as they are super cheap like 2 euros a month and always work perfectly) to arrive in the office around 9:30. I get the impression that people start work slightly later in France compared to Germany, and definitely take longer lunches, but will often work later 5:30-6 maybe.

My internship was largely independently led, with supervision from both a third year PhD student and the branch deputy lead. So, having arrived at work, taken the lift to the third floor, grabbed a coffee at the machine, maybe heard some gossip, I would sit down at my desk and begin the day's work of analysing my dataset.

Often however, maybe two or three times a week, I would also have a meeting, likely with my supervisors, or sometimes with collaborators outside of IARC. Preparing for meetings therefore makes up most of the other time. There were also plenty of opportunities within IARC for learning, and to listen to other people's research, with talks happening throughout the week. These were great opportunities to listen to people doing great work.

Lunch was always a big deal. It would start at 12 sharp when everyone in the branch would get together and make sure to relax, forget about work, and have a laugh in the cafeteria. If you are going to do an internship at IARC, my best advice would be, make friends with the lunch ladies! They are fantastic fun, and also they give you bigger portions if they like you.

Work would usually resume around 13:30, and for me end at 17:30. The people there are very much focussed and passionate about what they do, but there is not a culture of over-work, which I enjoyed.

3. Social Contacts

As luck would have it, my housemate must have been the most popular man in Lyon, seemingly knowing every baker, barber, barista and bartender in the city. This helped me a lot. He would introduce me to his friends and take me to fun events around the city. I was very lucky in this respect, and hence why I would recommend looking for a shared flat.

However, it did take me some time to make my own friends. A couple came from IARC itself, a couple outside, and all French. This is something I liked about Lyon, everyone is very friendly, and open to having friends speaking other languages.

4. The City, Everyday Life and Leisure

I love the city. It is small enough to really get to know it, but big enough that there is always something going on. In the summer, there is nearly always some open air music event if you fancy a dance. It has a good number of Museums (the fine arts museum is very good), it is the birthplace of cinema, with great cinemas (though not as good as Munich) and affordable tickets. I felt a real sense of community in Lyon. You can feel this in the bars, and in the talk outside cafes. My favourite areas were around Croix-Rousse and La Guillotière, full of bars and cafes, and trendy types.

I developed a nice schedule whilst in Lyon. Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays I would go to the pool (the one by the river) for a swim after work (it is not too expensive if you get a card, although it can be busy at peak times). Saturday mornings I would do the weekly vegetable shop at the market, and Sundays I would do the weekly cheese shop at the market. My best discovery was the Algerian street food place at the Sunday market by the river. They do the best chapati!

5. Financing

I got an erasmus grant of €2225 for three months. This works out at about €750 per month. I aimed to not overspend this by too much and so was looking at a budget of around €1000 per month. This was quite tight and so I did have to watch the wallet slightly. I managed to

find a room in the city centre for only €400 per month, although I understand this is on the cheaper side (I hear 500 to 700 is possibly more of a standard rent in Lyon). For transport I only used the city bikes (Velo'v) for €2 per month, and the city is small enough that this will take you anywhere within 30 minutes. In terms of cost of living, it seems similar to that of Munich. To give an example a pint of beer would cost around €4-5 at a bar.

6. Internship and Studies

The internship was a great experience for me in that it was what I thought and has confirmed that it is what I want to do after I graduate. The work I was doing aligned perfectly with my studies in Epidemiology, and in fact, the paper that I am to write off the back of the research I did over three months there will likely form my masters thesis. Because of the internship I am now sure that a PhD in international health policy is what I want to do, and I hope to do this in France (or possibly Berlin).

7. Conclusion

I have no doubt that my three months at IARC in Lyon has been incredibly formative for me. Not only has it been the best academic experience that I could have hoped for, setting me up perfectly for my future academic career, but also one of enormous personal growth. The French friends I met have inspired me a great deal, but I think most importantly, my sense of Europeanness has changed. I always thought of myself as European above anything else, and hence why I decided to study my masters in Europe, to learn new languages and experience "European" cultures. Now I have had the chance both to live in Germany and in France, and work with scientists from all over, I believe I now have a much better idea of what Europeanness means to me. It is something I am incredibly proud of, and although it was always my intention, I can now with greater conviction pursue my ambitions to work on health policy across European contexts.