

## INTERNSHIP REPORT

Duration: June 6 to October 13, 2017

Department: Child and Adolescent Health

Organization: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark

My internship was at the World Health Organization (WHO) regional office for Europe, UN City, Copenhagen, Denmark. The UN City is an ultra-modern, eco-friendly building, built with a large focus on sustainability and environmental friendliness, the building has been designed to use at least 55 per cent less energy than a similar-sized office building. It was opened in July 2013 and houses 11 UN organizations including the global headquarters of United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). There are about 1,500 staff members representing more than 100 nationalities. In the second campus of the UN city is UNICEF's fully automated state-of-the-art warehouse, it is the world's largest humanitarian warehouse. Being an intern at the UN city offers 24 hours access to the building and also full access to all available facilities including a Fitness-Studio, Relaxation room, Meditation room, Prayer room, and the Kitchens in the various divisions.

A circular mail from the office of my master's programme in Epidemiology at LMU was sent out which advertised the availability of a position for an intern at the Child and Adolescent health department in WHO. The required educational background and preferred skill set matched mine with the exception of good knowledge of the Russian language being an asset. I applied regardless of not having any knowledge of Russian. After about two weeks, I attended the annual conference on Humanitarian Aid and Development organized by "Forum für international Gesundheit (Foring)", where I coincidentally met a 4<sup>th</sup> semester Master of Public Health student at the LMU who had done her internship with the same supervisor I had applied to and she had also met him at the same conference the previous year. I explained to her that I had just applied to the same position 2 weeks ago and asked if she could write a

recommendation to support my application for the internship position, she accepted and wrote an email on my behalf directly to the supervisor and that was my entry point to the WHO. The response was immediate, and an interview was subsequently scheduled. The interview was with my supervisor, who is the programme manager of the Child and Adolescent health team, it lasted about 1 hour, we discussed about my background, skills, interests, experience and capabilities and thereafter he introduced me to the on-going projects and also to the out-going intern whom I had several Skype sessions with before I moved to Copenhagen. I was able to get most of the information I needed before leaving for Copenhagen from the out-going intern, she was also an ERASMUS+ intern with her home institution in Berlin. I enquired about how to get an accommodation, general cost of living, possible language barriers etc, she recommended I joined the Facebook group “United Interns of Copenhagen (UIC)”, which I did and that was very helpful as regards searching for a bicycle as well as also getting to interact with other interns. Copenhagen is a very bike friendly city and it is much faster, easier, healthier and cheaper to get around with a bicycle. There is a very large market for used Bicycle at fair prices and the Bicycles can be re-sold at almost the same price at the end of the internship. The United interns of Copenhagen is an association of interns run by the UIC board of interns, it caters for the welfare of interns within the UN City and also coordinates academic and social events for example UIC interns lunch where tables are reserved in the Canteen for interns only. In total, there were about 80 interns during my time at the UN city, all the UN agencies at the UN city recruit interns with World Food Programme (WFP) and UNOPS offering paid internships. The WFP office at the UN city is the Nordic office of WFP therefore knowledge of one of the Scandinavian languages is required. The vibrant intern community provided a very interesting social life. Every Friday evening at the UN city, is a themed staffed bar, where staffs, interns and invited guests enjoyed a good and relaxing time with drinks and snacks after a long week. The UN city is a rich source for an internship opportunity (more information can be found here <http://un.dk/about-un-city/un-city-internships> ).

The start of my internship was on really short notice as I was already in Copenhagen about 3 weeks after I had the interview. I was able to find an accommodation through an

unconventional way, the family I live with here in Munich knew a Priest in Denmark whom I wrote to, I wrote about my background, purpose of coming to Copenhagen and urgent need for a room, he subsequently sent out a bulk mail with my details to his church members and friends, luckily a friend of his had a room available for rent in his apartment and that was it. My landlord was a 54 years old Danish man, we lived together in a shared apartment and got along very well. I really enjoyed my time with him and we have become very good friends and still keep in touch. We spoke English most of the time and very rarely German, so I didn't get to learn Danish from our interactions. Most Danes spoke fluent English, also at work, English was the main language spoken, so there was no form of language barrier as English is my first language.

The day after my arrival to Copenhagen was my first day at work, I was very well welcomed by the team and my supervisor introduced me to all the colleagues in the entire division that morning, I instantly felt being part of the team. The first two days were mainly orientation and administrative bureaucracies, I sorted out my Identification Card, security pass, work station and also my work permit since I am a non-EU citizen and require a work permit because my internship was for more than 3 months. The entire process for the work permit was done by the Human Resources department at WHO.

The Child and Adolescent health department is under the Division of Non-Communicable disease and Promoting Health through the Life-Course. Other departments in the division includes Violence and Injury Prevention, Nutrition, Obesity and Physical Activity, Tobacco control, Sexual and Reproductive health, Cancer Prevention, Prisons health, and Mental Health

The Child and Adolescent Health team consisted of the Programme Manager (my supervisor), the Technical Officer (my second supervisor), the Programme Assistant and the Intern (myself). I was really happy with the mentoring and support I got from the team and being a small team, we usually had lunch together when every member of the team was around where we discussed both work and non-work related issues.

The project I worked on mainly is the baseline survey on the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Health Strategy 2015 – 2000, it is a longitudinal project which several interns before me contributed and worked on different parts such as developing the questionnaire for the survey, vetting the survey responses, doing a qualitative analysis, creating a dataset from the survey responses. My task was to create the metadata for the baseline survey, this is the coded dataset that would be fed to the data warehouse to produce visualizations on the WHO Europe data gateway website. I worked in collaboration with the division of Information, Evidence, Innovation and Research in WHO and an external data manager consultant who trained me on the specifications required for the metadata. We have a large dataset with responses from 48 out of 53 countries in the WHO European region and over 100 indicators with categorical and numerical variables. I had several Skype sessions with former interns who worked on the project when there was need for clarifications regarding the dataset of the baseline survey.

My other task was to write the chapter on infectious diseases and preventing death for the report on the baseline survey. In total, the report has 8 chapters with themes such as Mental health, Strategy and Governance, Health systems, Collecting key data on all children e.t.c. This required doing a lot of literature reviews and descriptive statistics. Also, my supervisor got contacted by the top German Pediatric journal “Monatsschrift Kinderheilkunde” to write a themed edition “Pädiatrische Versorgungskonzepte in Europa” for publication in February 2018, we worked together on the article with other co-authors, I researched on and wrote the part on models of primary pediatric care in Europe and also produced the corresponding map depicting various models in Europe. I met regularly with my supervisors, where we discussed the progress of my work and I received feedbacks, we communicated via emails when they were on duty travels. I am very happy with the tasks and the experience I gained working with the WHO. In addition, I gained experience working in a multi-cultural environment and multi-disciplinary team. I also got to learn more about the function of WHO as the specialized United Nations agency for health. I learnt a lot about the recruitment processes and what is required of a future employee. I was able to network with some of the leading professionals in public health. I also attended several conferences, seminars and webinars in the UN city. In September, I travelled to Köln with my supervisor for the annual congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Kinder- und Jugendmedizin,

where he presented our work on the status of child and adolescent health in Europe. All in all, the experience working with the WHO has significantly boosted my chances of being employed by WHO in the future and added value to my career in general, it has also broadened my perspective in public health. As there are on-going projects in the department, there will always be available position for internships, as interns contribute a whole lot to some of the projects. I strongly recommend an internship with Child and Adolescent health department, the WHO and any other UN agency in general, as it offers a very rich experience. At the end of my internship, the team organized a good-bye dinner for me, we went to a very nice Danish restaurant, and they also bought me souvenirs as an appreciation for my input.