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At the time of writing, I am currently approaching halfway through my Industrial Placement year in Utrecht, the Netherlands. I work as a chemistry intern in the R&D department for Sealed Air, Diversey Care; a global company who produce industrial cleaning solutions.

Before I moved here, I knew very little about the Netherlands and this is my first experience of living abroad. Utrecht is a beautiful city in the centre of the Netherlands. It feels 'typically Dutch' with the canals and medieval buildings, but also hosts a large university, meaning there is a big student population and always things to do. The central location, rail network and proximity to Amsterdam airport has meant it has been the perfect opportunity to visit more cities in Europe. So far, amongst other cities, I have visited Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Cologne and have plans for Belgium, Munich, Spain and more; so roll on summer!



Luckily, my company provided housing so finding accommodation was one less thing to worry about. I moved into a shared house with other English and Chinese interns who are also working at the company. There are Dutch and French students in the office making a total of 11 interns, all from different cultures and backgrounds. This has added more of a social element to work, and being around other people my own age meant I did not completely lose touch with student life! The funding through Erasmus+ was gratefully received, as placements abroad do not seem to pay as well as in the UK, so it has allowed me to use the opportunity of being in Europe to be able to afford to travel a bit more on weekends!

My time at work is spent mainly on my own assigned project, but I also get the opportunity to work with colleagues from other departments in the company. This has been a great way to understand how a big company functions and allows a glimpse into other career opportunities/roles within the company. You are handed a large amount of freedom and responsibility, which helps to develop independent working skills, but also teaches you to not be afraid to ask for help when needed! I have support from both a supervisor within

the company, and an academic supervisor from university, who flies out twice a year to check everything is running smoothly, and I am happy and progressing well in my placement.

The thought of moving to a brand new country, where I did not know a single person/speak the native language and starting a full-time job for the first time was daunting, and it was slightly overwhelming at the start, but I would recommend to anyone thinking about a placement year abroad to just give it a shot! I found joining a local sports team helped me get to know people and settle down very quickly. Another thing which is refreshing about working rather than studying, is that evenings and weekends are study-free and a lot less stressful, giving you more free time to embrace the local culture and make the most out of your time abroad.