

# EU-Canada Student Mobility Program Personal Experience Report

In the winter of 2010, I was given the opportunity to participate in the EU-Canada Academic Mobility Program as an exchange student from the University of Manitoba. My placement was in the Romanian city of Targu Mures where I worked on the Mobile Robot Hockey System.

## Romania

### Targu Mures (Marosvásárhely)

Targu Mures (Hungarian: Marosvásárhely) as well as the Transylvania region of Romania was once a part of the Hungarian Empire. After the military defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the First World War, territory formerly belonging to the Hungarian Empire was divided among surrounding countries. Part of Transylvania, south of the Mures River and east of the Somes River came under control of Romania. During World War II this region was again returned to Hungarian control, but this lasted only from 1940 to 1944.

There is still a large Hungarian presence in Targu Mures, with the Hungarian community making up almost 50 percent of the population. Of course Romanian is spoken but Hungarian is also heard and seen very often. Hungarian signage and government services are provided in the Hungarian language in settlements where fifty percent or more of the population is ethnic Hungarian. There still exist ethnic tensions in this area and both groups have strongly held beliefs about who first settled the region. It was always interesting to hear the unvarnished views of each camp.



1- City Centre



2- City Administration & Palace of Culture

## Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (SHUT)

SHUT is where I spent the most time working on the Robot Hockey project under the supervision of Dr. Lorinc Marton. The control system laboratory technician, Zoltan Nagy (translates to English as “Big Sultan”), was also supporting us as we worked and was always happy to engage in conversation. SHUT is a private Hungarian university that was formed so that ethnic Hungarians living in Romania can pursue a post-secondary education in their mother tongue. Funded by the Hungarian government, it receives no support from the government of Romania. SHUT receives substantially less than a university in Hungary would. Staff earns approximately two-thirds of an equivalent salary in Hungary. The administration, professorial and support staff are strongly committed to the institution. The Hungarian people of the region who I spoke to about the university were all proud of it. Still a maturing institution, SHUT was recently granted accreditation by the Romanian government.

I was working at the university with three other Canadian exchange students, one from the University of Manitoba and two from Simon Fraser University. Three of us were working on software for game management (time keeping, rule enforcement) and game play while the other was designing new hardware for a shooting mechanism and collision detection firmware.

We spent most days in the lab working on our software but also attended a course on the Hungarian culture once a week. The cultural course instructor, Reka Szalo, taught us the basics of the Hungarian language and regional history.



3 - Sapientia Hungarian University of Technology



4 - Father & Son - Hungarian Mathematicians Bolyai

## Life in Targu Mures

I shared a rented house with four other Canadian exchange students. Luckily we were able to find a fantastic place with a beautiful view. We lived just outside the city and overlooked the scenic countryside.

We met a few people and socialized at the local tavern playing foosball and enjoying Romanian ale. I also spent time with a Romanian family and enjoyed traditional cultural celebrations and cuisine.



1- Home sweet home.



2 - Great view.





3 - Eco friendly driving hazard.



4 - The best Hungarian goulash!

## Final Remarks

Participation in this type of exchange program is something I would recommend to any student. This exchange is something that I will never forget.