

**STAP Experience Report for:**

Stockholm University, Sweden

Academic Year 2024/2025, Fall Term (2 September 2024 to 19 January 2025)

[REDACTED]  
M.Sc. Sociology: Social and Economic Psychology  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] completed courses:

1. Stress, Recovery, and Health (PH17A1, SU course)
2. Sociological Perspectives on Organization and Leadership (SO7420, SU course)
3. Design Thinking (FE6615, SSES course)



View from Monteliusvägen over the old city center *Gamla Stan*

## **Preparations**

I took the first organizational steps for my Erasmus semester abroad a year before the start of my mobility by applying for the Study Abroad Programme (STAP) offered by the WiSo Faculty at the University of Cologne. The application process was straightforward, and I didn't need an additional English certificate for my selection of potential partner universities.

In early 2024, I received confirmation for my first choice: Stockholm University. As part of the application process, you could list up to three preferred universities for your desired exchange. I chose Stockholm because I already knew from a previous trip that I really liked it there, and I was curious to experience winter in Sweden. Additionally, Stockholm University has a strong international reputation and offered an appealing selection of courses.

After receiving my acceptance, the collaboration with my university contact person went smoothly.

## **Accommodation**

The housing market in Stockholm is generally as challenging as in major German cities. The host university offers a limited number of spots in its dormitories, which you can apply for a few months before the start of the semester through an online portal. The largest student housing complex is Lappis, a kind of self-contained student village not far from the Frescati campus.

I received an offer for a Small Studio Apartment on the Albano campus, and I was very happy with this option. The dormitory, like the Albano campus itself, was only completed in 2023-2024, so the accommodation was very modern. On average, the rent was around €800 per month.

However, there were two drawbacks to this accommodation: there was no supermarket nearby, and the building lacked a community room (although there was a rooftop terrace, it was too cold to use in winter). What I really liked was living directly on the university campus, although it's worth noting where your courses will actually take place.

The apartment was equipped with everything essential (a fully equipped kitchen, a 90 cm bed with a mattress). However, pillows and blankets needed to be purchased separately. Vacuum cleaners were available to share among residents, though this didn't always work smoothly. Laundry was easy to manage with bookable washing machines.

Overall, I was very satisfied with the accommodation. It was close to my lecture locations and also within easy reach of the city center by bus, train, or even on foot.



Lake close to the campus Albano (l) / Courtyard of Albano student living (r)

## **Studies**

By deciding to complete my semester abroad through the STAP program and the "Study Abroad" module (24 ECTS), the process of selecting courses at Stockholm University was straightforward. In Stockholm, I was assigned to the Sociology Faculty, but I was still able to choose courses from other fields without any issues. My contact person at Stockholm University (SU) proved to be very organized and reliable, ensuring that all my course preferences were accommodated.

Unlike the German academic system, the semester in Sweden is divided into four periods, each lasting about one month. It is important to note that the workload for each course is typically listed as 100% or 50%. SU recommends taking only one 100% course per period, which I found reasonable. For the 24 ECTS "Study Abroad" module at the University of Cologne, I selected three 7.5-credit courses in Stockholm, which were eligible for transfer.

My first course at SU, Stress, Recovery, and Health, took place during Period 2 (around October). The second and third courses were 50% courses, running in parallel during November and December, with final assignments due in January. Overall, the courses were noticeably more practice-oriented compared to those in Cologne. In addition to lectures—many of which had mandatory attendance—there were seminars that allowed for practical application of lecture content. Group work was a significant component as well.

The lectures were generally less content-heavy compared to those in Germany but required a greater amount of pre-class reading. The Design Thinking course stood out, as it involved extensive group work and required considerable time outside of lectures. Nevertheless, Design Thinking was my favorite course and highly relevant for my future work career. The SSES, a part organization of the Stockholm School of Economics, proves as a high-quality institution with a good organization and highly motivated course instructors. Aside from that, I found the workload manageable and well-balanced.





Frescati campus in late November 2024

## Daily Life

Settling into life in Stockholm and adapting to the Swedish daily routine was very easy for me. At the beginning of each semester, Stockholm University organizes various events for new international students, making it easy to get oriented and meet new people. Additionally, the ESN community is very active, offering events throughout the semester.

In theory, Stockholm is home to a wide range of nationalities, but it's worth noting that the German student community is one of the largest. It's almost impossible not to run into other Germans at some point.

Arriving in late August, I was able to enjoy the last days of summer in Stockholm. The city, with its many waterways, offers beautiful spots for relaxation and swimming. The nearby Tyresta National Park is worth visiting in both summer and winter.

Before arriving, I was somewhat concerned about what winter in Sweden would be like. In December, the sun doesn't rise until around 9 AM and sets again before 3 PM. Winters in Sweden tend to be much colder and snowier than in Germany, though Stockholm itself isn't necessarily guaranteed to have snow.

Swedish life is shaped by various traditions and seasonal celebrations. One of the most noticeable customs during the darker months is that nearly every household decorates its windows with glowing star lights. A personal highlight for me was the

Lucia festival in mid-December, featuring beautiful concerts in churches across the city.

Everyday life in Sweden is noticeably more expensive than in Germany. Groceries, for example, typically cost €1–2 more per item than what I was used to. Alcohol, in particular, is very expensive. Generally, there are plenty of nice coffee places as their traditional Fika (coffee + something sweet) is very present and loved by the Swedes. Stockholm has an excellent public transport system with an extensive network of trains and buses. Students can take advantage of discounted tickets, but to do so, they need a student card (such as STUK.CO/Studentkortet or Mecenat) with the SL logo. The logo will show up when you study at least 75% during a semester and upload a respective confirmation of your study plan. Once the logo appears on the card, students are eligible to purchase discounted tickets and save some money.



Typical Fika in Sweden, coffee and kanelbullar ☺

## Travel

Stockholm is an excellent starting point for traveling within Sweden and to other cities in Norway and Finland. For a weekend, I decided to take a long-distance train to

Oslo, which is conveniently reachable in about five hours. Ticket prices are comparable to those of Deutsche Bahn, and students with the SJ logo on their student cards can book discounted tickets.

Another trip took me on an overnight ferry from Stockholm to Helsinki with the provider Tallink. Additionally, you can also reach Tallinn and Riga from Stockholm overnight by ferry.

The highlight of my travels was my final trip to Lapland, where I flew to Kiruna. If you're spending the winter semester in Sweden, I highly recommend this unique journey to explore the culture of the Sami people, witness the northern lights, and see reindeer and moose.

In the summer, the nearby Stockholm archipelago is perfect for an outdoor adventure with overnight camping. Numerous national parks make Sweden a fantastic destination year-round for those who love spending time in nature.

## **Conclusion**

I would highly recommend a semester abroad in Sweden and at Stockholm University to anyone. My initial concerns that the winter semester might be very dark and cold only partially came true and, in hindsight, weren't all that significant. Even in winter, you can have a great time in the city and experience its cozy winter charm. Thanks to the relatively similar lifestyle in Sweden compared to Germany, it was easy for me to settle into daily life. I had a wonderful time there, filled with amazing encounters with people from all over the world.