***Dear DAAD,***

My name is Sofía Valdebenito Castro, a senior student in the career of “Ingeniería Comercial” at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile. I am currently doing an exchange semester in the ESB faculty of Reutlingen University, Germany.

In 2011 I had the opportunity to travel to Germany for the first time, through an exchange program taught by my high school, Deutsche Schule Valparaíso. During my three months of experience I was able to meet with the German culture and its people, awakening in me a particular interest for this country, which leads me to a postulation later to the exchange program taught by my home university. At the beginning of 2017 the applications for the exchange in the "summer semester" period began, for which I had to gather a series of documents that would prove my quality and skills as a student. In the first instance I had to attach these documents to my home university and wait for the approval of my academic unit, and then start with the application process with my university of interest. I always had an interest in returning to Germany, so I started looking at the options of universities that existed in this country, attending talks and talking with people who had chosen this destination before, with which I could determine that Reutlingen Univesity was the more indicated for me. In October 2017 I received my acceptance card by Hochschule Reutlingen, and then I started with all the preparations for the trip, which includes tickets, medical insurance, passport, visa, winter clothing, among other things. Throughout this process I had the support of my family and friends, academic unit of my university, and of the staff of the exchange office in Reutlingen, they always had a great availability to answer all my questions.

On January 21 of this year, I took my flight from the city of Santiago de Chile to Frankfurt, very excited and nervous about what this new opportunity could bring. Before starting the classes I had the opportunity to visit old friends in the city of Freiburg and also in the Black Forest. These days were a great help to return to the style of the language and German culture. The first day of February began the adventure in Reutlingen, with a long day of induction that was a great help to perform difficult paperwork, such as the registration in the municipality. On this day I could also meet the other exchange students, who came from all over the world, and we went together to a walk through the university. During the week, there were several activities in which we could meet the professors and other students of the university, also see the city and its most famous bars or restaurants such as "Alexander" a French style Bistro or "Mezcalitos" a latin style restaurant. All these activities were important to begin to form some friendships. María Clara, Candela, Florencia and Federico, the team of Argentines, along with Martín from México, were the first people with whom I generated a bond because we shared the Spanish language, musical and culinary tastes. However, later I met people from France, America, Germany, among others, with whom I could share inside the classroom and outside of it.

I was lucky to find a very beautiful residence to live within the campus of the university, which I found in the page of Studierendenwerk Tübingen-Hohenheim, where you can apply for a room before your semester of stay, according to your interests, willingness to pay, location interest and other aspects. This accommodation is shared with five other people from different parts of the world (France, England, Russia, Luxembourg, Morocco). I was able to share my taste for cooking, getting great approval from John, the English boy, for the smell and color of my food.

Traveling has been a very important part of the exchange, I had the opportunity to make a route through the cities of Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest, with two good friends. I also made some trips with my exchange friends to Tübingen, Stuttgart and München. And we also do a lot of activities in the city or on campus, organized by the student center or the students themselves, like parties in "CaRe" or grills on the outskirts of the campus. I recommend participating in all the activities that take place inside and outside the university, and also organizing trips since there are enough free days or vacations in which you can visit other cities in Germany or other European countries. I also recommend organizing trips in advance so you can get the cheapest tickets and accommodations.

The courses I chose were Business Ethics, Interdisciplinary studies, Corporate social responsibility, Advanced international human resources management and German level B1/B2 for exchange students. I chose these courses before arriving at Reutlingen, since these should be accepted first by my home-university. Then when I got to Reutlingen I had to confirm my course decision, which remained the same as in the beginning. The information of the courses could be found in the first instance on the university website, then through some contacts who had already attended this university and then through the foreign office at the university. During the week in Reutlingen, I have time to attend my regular classes, also to study or perform the necessary tasks, and also to attend to sports activities. I like the dynamism that exists in the classes and the freedom and the incentive that the students have to express their opinions or ideas. I value very much that communication skills and also teamwork are of great relevance in the courses, which seems to me a son of great importance to be a great professional in the future. Another aspect that has been different from my home-university in academic terms is the way in which they conduct research or ''papers'', which has a more scientific methodology and is based on literature reviews and hypothesis. I think it has been a very useful tool for me, since it is the basis for writing a thesis in the future.

My expectations when returning to Germany were fulfilled. The city of Reutlingen and the university have been a very good place to live this experience, due to its people and way of life. I was able to adapt without problems to this city and to the university and to feel quickly comfortable in my classes, department, with my friends and in the university environment in general. So, I would rate my experience here as very good and I would highly recommend living the exchange experience in this city. When I return to Chile, it is important for me to share my experience in Germany and be a positive help for those who are interested in knowing this country and its people. Without a doubt I would like to return in the future and be able to show my loved ones what this wonderful place has given to me.

Undoubtedly, this opportunity means a lot to me for my academic and personal progress, firstly because I did not have the opportunity to apply the English and German language in my university studies at the same time, second because it is my longest experience away from my home, which helped strengthen my independence and maturity. Last but not least is the creation of networks of contacts with people from all over the world, which for me means a lot to my professional interests in the future.

To finish I would like to thank in a big way to the DAAD for the scholarship, also to the persons in charge of the exchange department in Reutlingen and in my home-university for attending to my questions and to my family and friends for supporting me and encouraging me in my decisions.

***Sofía Valdebenito Castro***