

Internship Report

Author: Jonathan Landolt

Field of study: Electrical Engineering

Date and place: 05.07.2021-27.08.2021, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In my internship I was working in Banja Luka at Elektrokrajina, the leading electricity distributor in the Republika Srpske, which is a Canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I worked in the SCADA Team that mainly covers the development of the surveillance and remote controlling of transformer stations. I worked mainly in an office, but every now and then we did a trip to the field to search for errors, gather data or do some fixes. Below our office was the calibration of power counters, so I spent a few days working there too.

Experience of being abroad

The differences to Switzerland were not immense, as Bosnia and Herzegovina is still in Europe and has an Austria-Hungarian influence. But also the Ottoman Empire left its traces. This is mainly visible in architecture, food and religion. For me, the biggest difference I noticed immediately was the heat: 38°C was not unusual. But as the air is dry, I got used to it quickly.

After a while living in Banja Luka, I started to notice more differences. One of the most noticeable ones is the country's divide between the ethnical groups. In their regions there are only their own flags and religious symbols. On the borders, both groups often built big symbols of their ethnicity well visible for the other side. Also the war traces are still visible, Houses with bullet holes widespread.

There are also some differences in infrastructure. Here it is important to know that the war never reached Banja Luka and it is generally a rich and modern city. In other parts of the country you can still see the traces of war on buildings and the infrastructure is partly less developed. The roads and houses are generally good, the electricity stable, the water is drinkable and many bars offer Wifi. But trash and waste management are not as far developed. Trash gets picked up and is later dumped unsorted in landfills and waste water goes directly into the river. These differences are not visible and I only found out about it in conversations. The planning for more sustainable solutions is currently ongoing.

Other differences are in time management and the way of living. Much less is planned through and things are more taken as they come. But most people were on time and in my opinion good solutions were available for everything. As an example, the bus time is unpredictable, so the time table just says when the bus leaves the terminal stop. Like this you are able estimate the bus arrival, but you don't get false promises.

What differences did you notice in the way work is conducted in the foreign country compared to Switzerland?

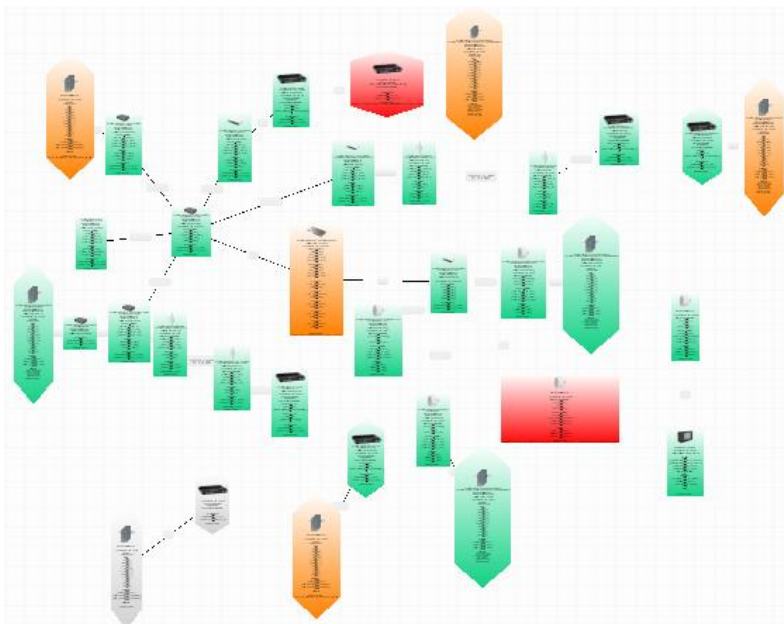
I think the biggest difference in the job I noticed, was that resources are less available here. It starts by ordering a part. For that it is required to buy it in the country, but most big electronical part provider don't have an office here and as the company has no import permission, it is not possible to order anything from a foreign country. Then the money also plays a big role. Devices are often very expensive and they search for the best value for money. That sometimes led to problems where the hardware is good, but the software is still containing bugs. After a few weeks I knew most them and could work around them. This issue is minor, as it was always possible to find working solutions.

Food

The food was not very exotic compared to Switzerland. A lot of food contains meat, puff pastry and is greasier than I was used to. Most common food is Cevapi, that's minced meat rolls, with bread and onions. The bread is pita bread and fried in the oil from the cevapi. In Burek, also very common here, minced meat or cheese is rolled in puff pastry and this puff pastry roll is then rolled up to a round quiche.

What were the advantages of going an internship through our exchange organization?

For me the biggest advantage of IAESTE was that I had a contact to locals. I don't speak Serbian and as many people in Banja Luka don't speak English, nor have they websites in English, it would've already been a big challenge getting to the city from the airport. The local members showed us the most important things for living in the city too and helped me to get a bike to cycle to work. Also most weekends had planned program like visiting other cities. In these other cities we met other IAESTE people and made city tours. If we had the wish to do something specific, it was taken into account too. After work it was also nice to spend time with the other IAESTE Interns and with locals, which we met through IAESTE. Overall I think IAESTE really helped me to get started in Banja Luka, as without being able to speak Serbian I would've been lost.



Networkmap to surveil devices in the SCADA Network



Banja Luka Church



Cevapi



Waterfalls at Martin Brod

Trip to Mostar

