

# Agroforum

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## Opinion article on the Erasmus experience in ESA/IPCB



My name is Jelena Antolković and I have come from Croatia, College of Agriculture at Križevci. My choice for Erasmus was ESA/IPCB because a lot of friends have proposed it and after looking in to the Institute and the city Castelo Branco on the Internet I made my decision. I wanted to learn a new language and Portuguese is not so known in Croatia. One of the reasons was also the climate. Everybody told me it will be hot and not so much rain but unfortunately I have come in the one of the rainiest years. But no matter for that I loved the city. The pictures could never capture everything the city has to offer from the gardens, city park, city center, the castle, and so much more. Language seems to be more difficult than I have thought it will be, some words are similar but most of them are mystery to me. But no matter the good and bad things happening the professors and buddies have done everything to help so the adjustment went perfect.

On my first month in the Institute I have worked in different work spaces. From the greenhouse for horticulture to the greenhouse for the botanic park.

The first one is the greenhouse of botanical garden which is closer. Also there are ventilations for if it's needed to cool down the air. When the temperature rises to a certain point the ventilator starts to work. The second interesting thing is irrigation system. Every couple of minutes the irrigation system turns on and sprays all the plants as equally as possible. In this greenhouse the climate control

is perfect for working on experiments with plants.

The second greenhouse is a little further away. If you go walking it can be a bit of a problem. But by car we were there in just couple of minutes. That greenhouse hasn't got ventilation so to be inside during the middle of afternoon when the sun is the strongest not even an open door could help. In this greenhouse there were tomatoes, pumpkins, peas, and strawberries.

Some of the plants got my attention like strawberries because of the delicious flavor. And the second one is pretty similar to a plant that we have in Croatia nettle but this plant is called *Melissa officinalis* (Erva - cidreira in Portuguese) and the difference is that if you touch nettle it can burn your hand and even left redness, but this one has a special smell which reminds me of sweets.

In the garden near the greenhouse of the horticulture there are more plants in one part there are additional vegetables like: salad, onions and carrots. And some medicinal and aromatic plants like: *Lavandula pedunculata*, *Lonicera periclymenum* called in Portuguese *madressilva*, *Lavandula luisieri*, *Asphodelus bento-rainhae*, *Thymus vulgaris*, *Ipomoea batatas* called in Portuguese *batata-doce*.

I had seen the propagation studies in *Escallonia macrantha*. We had made cuttings and one of them were from plants adapted in the farm of ESA/IPCB school and the other from a garden center. And bought were propagating by cuttings just first put in water and in the growth hormone.

I had done cuttings of the plant of tomato in the second green house. The plant was very big so I had to be very careful which part of the plant is going to be cut. But the growing of the plants was going very well.

In the middle of the May I had started to work in the firm GrowtoGreen, a plant factory enterprise which is placed in the industrial zone. From the first look on outside it's like any other firm but inside is totally different. The technology is so different than anything I had ever seen and the program on the computer controls all the 8 chambers.

The climate can be controlled as well as the light, fertilization, pH, CO<sub>2</sub> and circulation throe the tubes. The program on the computer is very complicated and a lot of practice is necessary to understand only some steps.

Weekly changing of the filters, checking of devices, counting and measurement of the plants is part of the job. Every day monitoring of the plant growth in different conditions, everything is noted and put in computer. If any problem occurs it's directly reported and if it's not possible to fix by our self's the mechanic come. Every detail has been watched and double checked. There are small possi-

bility for any mistakes, but not impossible. I need to say that I admire the worker's they are constantly learning something new, trying to do everything necessary for any tip of research. This kind of work requires being resourceful, hardworking, having a lot of patience and always ready to learn something new.

This experience is something better than I had ever hope it would be. To see all parts in the institute and in the firm is been my privilege. I want to say thank you to workers who were trying to explain me everything even sometimes it was hard and trying to teach me Portuguese language, to my mentor professor Fernanda Delgado, to Paula Oliveira for helping as with all necessary paper's and information, and our professor Renata Husinec for helping us with the paper's and arranged for our coming with the other professors, our dean Marijana Ivanek- Martin i , and of course our baddy's that help a lot with the adjusting. As you can see a lot of people had to put in a lot of work for all of this to happened but thanks to them this incredible experience had been possible and am more that grateful to them all.

