

My First CIVIS BIP in Mozart's Birthplace Salzburg!

“Novel Research and Ethics: from Neuroscience to AI”

– Wintersemester 2025/2026

My name is [REDACTED], and I am a Bachelor's student in Medical Informatics at Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Germany. I had the great privilege of being selected as one of 40 students from more than 200 applicants to participate in the CIVIS Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) “Novel Research and Ethics: From Neuroscience to AI,” hosted by Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Austria, from 23–27 February 2026.

The five days in Salzburg were both intellectually demanding and deeply enriching. The programme brought together students from ten international universities to explore pressing ethical questions at the intersection of neuroscience and artificial intelligence. With my background in computer science, combined with medical training and a particular interest in neuroscience, this BIP felt like a natural and highly relevant extension of my academic journey.

Working in interdisciplinary teams, we reflected on responsible innovation and discussed the societal implications of disruptive technologies. The exchange between students and faculty members from diverse disciplines (including medicine, law, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and technology) created a stimulating academic environment that encouraged critical thinking beyond one's own field of expertise.

Application and Preparation Phase

I first discovered the programme through my university's newsletter. The title immediately caught my attention, as neuroscience and artificial intelligence represent two core interests of mine. After researching the details on the CIVIS website, I began the application process without hesitation.

The formal procedure was transparent and well-structured. Early on, I contacted the Examination Office and the responsible professor at my home university to clarify questions regarding ECTS recognition. Once accepted, I received clear guidance regarding the Online Learning Agreement and enrolment at the host university.

During the semester prior to the mobility week, we met online every Saturday for preparatory lectures. Although dedicating weekends required commitment, these sessions allowed us to build a shared academic foundation. At the same time, we collaborated digitally within our research teams. Working together virtually before meeting in person created a sense of familiarity and made the transition to the on-site phase much smoother.

If I may offer one piece of advice to future participants: regularly checking university newsletters is worthwhile. Opportunities like this often appear quietly, yet they can have a significant impact 😊

Academic Experience in Salzburg

Arriving in Salzburg felt special from the very beginning. After a six-hour train journey from Tübingen, the view of the fortress rising above the old town already created a unique atmosphere. The historic streets, framed by the surrounding mountains, offered a striking contrast to the abstract ethical debates that awaited us.

As this was my first BIP, I initially felt uncertain about accommodation. The organisers recommended a hotel within walking distance of the lecture building, which proved to be a very convenient and reliable option. For future participants, however, I would recommend connecting with fellow students in advance and considering shared accommodation, such as an Airbnb. Given that Salzburg is a relatively expensive city, this can be a more economical choice while also fostering early social interaction even before the programme officially begins.

The academic schedule throughout the week was intensive and well structured. Each day combined lectures with a cultural highlight, such as visiting the juristic library, participating in a quill pen workshop, or exploring the backstage area of the Festspielhaus. Standing behind the scenes of such a renowned opera house reminded me that academic mobility is not solely about attending lectures, but also about immersing oneself in the cultural context of the host city.

The lectures themselves covered diverse perspectives on neuroscience and artificial intelligence. They were consistently informative and intellectually stimulating. Nevertheless, maintaining concentration during extended afternoon sessions occasionally proved challenging. From my perspective, incorporating additional interactive formats, such as structured debates or workshop-based activities, could further enhance engagement and deepen learning outcomes.

One aspect I particularly appreciated was the intensity of the discussions during coffee breaks. Some of the most meaningful exchanges did not take place during formal presentations, but in small, spontaneous groups where we continued debating fairness in AI systems or responsibility in neurotechnological innovation.

In the evenings, we followed informal recommendations from professors and PhD students or organised our own gatherings. A farewell karaoke evening created a relaxed and joyful conclusion to a demanding week. These shared experiences fostered friendships that extended well beyond academic exchange.

Organisation and Academic Support

The organisational support throughout the programme was reliable and responsive. Administrative questions were addressed efficiently, and the coordination team ensured that logistical aspects ran smoothly.

Our research group experienced some uncertainty when we had difficulty reaching our assigned supervisor and received limited guidance during the writing phase. Initially, this situation was frustrating. However, it also required us to take greater initiative and structure our collaboration independently. When we contacted the organisers, they reacted promptly and demonstrated understanding, ensuring that we were not placed at a disadvantage.

Intercultural Exchange and Personal Reflection

Beyond the academic content, the most meaningful aspect of this week was the intercultural exchange. Engaging with students from across Europe broadened my perspective, not only academically but also personally. Learning about their diverse educational systems, research interests, and motivations highlighted the richness of European academic collaboration.

For me, this BIP was more than a short-term mobility experience. It deepened my understanding of ethical responsibility in technological innovation and reinforced my aspiration to work at the intersection of medicine, artificial intelligence, and societal impact. It also reminded me of the privileges and opportunities that come with being part of a European university alliance like CIVIS.

I am sincerely grateful for this experience and would highly recommend participation in a CIVIS programme.

Photo impressions of my stay in Salzburg (23–27 February 2026):