Experience Report: Automotive Cyber Security Academy (ACSA) 2024

Preparation (Planning & Organization):

The preparation for the Automotive Cyber Security Academy (ACSA) 2024 required careful attention to detail. I assured that all necessary documents, including course materials, were in order. Communication with the organizers was smooth, which helped me stay informed about the course content and activities. The application process was straightforward, and the ACSA team provided ample guidance on how to prepare for the program. I was particularly excited to join this program because of its relevance to my career aspirations in automotive cybersecurity.

Accommodation & Travel:

I travelled From Frankfurt to Rome, Italy by Plane. Then I took FlixBus from Rome to Salerno to reach my destination at Salerno. During the program, I stayed at the Salerno University student hostel, which was conveniently organized by the ACSA authority. The accommodation was comfortable, offering a conducive environment for both study and relaxation. The hostel was also located close to the university campus, which made it easy to attend classes and participate in activities. After completing the program, I traveled back to Germany by train, which provided an opportunity to enjoy the scenic views of Italy, Zurich and Germany.

Course Content & Learning Experience:

The ACSA course exceeded my expectations in terms of both content and delivery. We delved into various aspects of cybersecurity, particularly focusing on autonomous vehicles and automotive systems. I had the opportunity to work on a team project, where we explored predictive maintenance alerts in vehicles. This hands-on project allowed me to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges including TARA analysis. In addition, several seminars led by industry experts were conducted, providing valuable insights into the latest trends and challenges in the field of automotive cybersecurity. The program not only deepened my understanding of these technologies but also enhanced my practical skills.

Leisure Activities and Excursions:

The ACSA program also included several cultural activities and excursions that allowed us to explore Italy's rich history and beautiful landscapes. We visited historic sites such as Pompeii and enjoyed the coastal charm of Naples and Positano. These excursions offered a refreshing break from the academic rigor, allowing us to bond with fellow participants and immerse ourselves in the Italian way of life. A memorable highlight was the farewell dinner, which was a delightful gathering that celebrated the completion of the program and the friendships we formed along the way.

Contact with Course Participants and Students at the Receiving Institution:

One of the most fulfilling aspects of the ACSA program was the chance to collaborate and interact with participants from diverse backgrounds. I made friends from four different countries, and our teamwork on projects helped build lasting relationships. The Italian students at Salerno University were welcoming and enthusiastic, making it easy to feel at home during my stay. These connections extended beyond the classroom, as we spent time together exploring the local culture and learning from each other's perspectives.

Costs:

The financial aspects of the program were well supported, thanks to the funding provided by ACSA and the Erasmus program. The funds allocated to students were sufficient to cover all the necessary costs for the onsite program, including travel, accommodation, and daily expenses. My accommodation at the student hostel, organized by the ACSA authority, was affordable, and meals, transportation, and excursion costs were manageable within the budget provided. This financial support greatly reduced the burden of expenses and allowed me to focus fully on the learning experience and cultural activities.

Conclusion (Best and Worst Experience):

The ACSA 2024 program was an incredibly rewarding experience. The best part for me was the hands-on team project on automotive predictive maintenance alerts. It provided a practical application of the cybersecurity concepts we learned and gave me a sense of accomplishment. Additionally, the intercultural exchanges with my fellow participants enriched the experience, and the excursions made it even more memorable. As for challenges, the only minor downside was adjusting to the warmer climate in Salerno, which was quite different from the weather I was used to in Germany. However, this was a small inconvenience in an otherwise fantastic experience.

Intercultural Experiences:

1. **Dining Culture in Italy vs. Germany:** A notable difference I experienced was in the dining culture. In Italy, meals, especially dinner, are eaten later in the evening, often around 8 or 9 PM. In contrast, dinner in Germany typically occurs much earlier. Italian meals were long and relaxed, with a strong focus on socializing, while German meals tend to be quicker and more structured. I enjoyed adapting to this slower pace and the opportunity to engage in longer conversations with fellow participants.

2. **Public Transportation:** Another intercultural experience was related to public transportation. In Italy, I noticed a more relaxed approach to schedules, particularly with buses, which often didn't adhere strictly to their timetables. In Germany, transportation is known for being punctual and highly reliable. This difference initially required some adjustment, but it also gave me a chance to appreciate the more laid-back Italian lifestyle.

In conclusion, the ACSA 2024 was an enriching experience, both academically and culturally. I gained invaluable knowledge in automotive cybersecurity, developed strong friendships with fellow participants, and had the opportunity to explore Italy's rich cultural heritage. These experiences have significantly shaped my perspective and further fueled my passion for a career in automotive cybersecurity.