

**Journey with ASEM DUO to Discover my Dream**

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I still remember the very moment writing a motivation letter to apply for ASEM-DUO. I was a sophomore student with many dreams and expectations of the future. I was filled with excitement and enthusiasm, preparing for the upcoming exchange program to Germany. What I wanted to earn from the exchange was obvious from the start: exploration of myself, and the world. I had heard that dream is not defined as a noun, but a verb. I had wanted to be a prosecutor for a long time, but I could not picture clearly of myself actually ‘living’ as a prosecutor and figure out what it means to ‘carry my weight’ as an advocate for the public interest. It was due to a lack of understanding of myself, and the world that surrounded me. My aspirations to discover what I wanted to do, what kind of person I wanted to be, what virtues I wanted to pursue, and what kind of world or society I wanted to be a part of were all expressed in that motivation letter. Thankfully and also very luckily, ASEM-DUO chose to be with me the whole path of my exploration.

The time I spent in Germany with the aids from ASEM-DUO was indeed fruitful. I can confidently say that it was one of the most memorable periods of my life. Many parts of the ideas of what kind of society I had wanted to be a part of, were taken from my experience in Germany. Because I stayed in Germany during the time of the pandemic, I could observe governmental actions that were evidently tilted towards the vulnerable and the less-represented. When the vaccination progress was started, the first people to get it were the homeless and the elderly. Not only the government, but also the German people themselves, seemed to deem that it was natural to help who those who needed more help. After drinking soda, people did not put the beverage can ‘into’ the trash bin but next to it so that the homeless could take the can and change it with cash (it is called ‘Pfand’ in German). It was from this small habit that I learned the mindsets of German people, that considering those who need more help on a daily basis is not something to be called a ‘good deed’, but a natural thing to do, because they too were the members of the society. These are just a few things that struck me and affected my idea on what kind of person I want to be as a prosecutor. The time in Germany inspired me to shape my dream in a verb form – contributing to a society where even the weakest man can fully exercise his basic right to pursue happiness in real life. What I wanted to do as a prosecutor in South Korea where crimes are mostly

targeted towards the weak, was seeking an adequate penalty to protect them and sending message that the society where the weakest man is happy, is the society where everyone is happy.



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Now, after 3 years since exchange, I have become a law school student. I have not achieved my dream as a prosecutor yet, but I have come close to it than ever before. The road to get accepted to law school and the afterward life full of competition, have never been smooth. Whenever I get discouraged, what sustains me is ironically the rocky path that I had walked so far and my memories of exchange program in Germany. When I remind myself how much effort I put to get a fine GPA and a decent score of Legal Education Eligibility Test (entrance test for law school), I get reassured that I am eligible to be where I am, and able to overcome other big challenges. The memories of exchange are another thing that lifts me up because it recalls what I am enduring for. With the support from ASEM-DUO, I could travel many regions of Germany and explore the places of my interest, which was law. As South Korea follows the continental law system, living in Germany where continental law stems from, was always a great opportunity to deepen my insights. To me, the most meaningful place was Platz der Grundrechte in Karlsruhe. Karlsruhe itself is one of my favorite cities as it is the first city to establish constitutional law in Germany, and where the Federal Constitutional Court is located. Platz der Grundrechte, translated literally, is a Square of Fundamental Rights. There are 24 double-sided street signs, each describing an import aspect of right and wrong. They are all written in German so I could not grasp the whole meaning by heart, but even the translated version was enough to impress me; the one that moved me the most was the 7<sup>th</sup> sign, located in front of the Federal Constitutional Court, and it goes as follows:

“There are universal laws in physics. They apply to everyone. Is there an appropriateness? Is it possible to achieve a desirable state for everyone? Giving something means taking something. I wish

that when I go to bed at night, someone would tell a story and pat my head. But if you don't tell anyone, I'll lose my good reputation here. You can only be equal in terms of your rights, in terms of your opportunities to participate. We are always unequal in terms of our abilities. We are not equal when it comes to our talents. We are also unequal in our destiny. So you have to limit equality to the legal relationships of everyone to one another.”



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As the sign says, people are born unequal. They are different in their looks, abilities, talents, intelligence, wealth, environment, and many other things. However, in terms of rights they can be equal, and it is the law that grants everyone with the same opportunities and entitlements. I believe that the essence of law – the equal protection of all people – lies in the 7<sup>th</sup> sign. No matter how advantaged or disadvantaged anyone is, law exists to protect them as they are all equal members of society. Recalling this belief always gets me back on track, and strengthens my will to be a prosecutor who embraces the values of law. Sometimes I imagine myself never experiencing any of this by the help of ASEM-DUO and going to law school without any concrete dreams; for sure I would not be the same person, and I would not have strived for the dream as hard as I do it now. The support from the ASEM-DUO was essential in fulfilling my goal to explore myself and the world, and it guided me the right way to pursue my dream. I am proud that I have gone through every stage to actualize my wish written in the motivation letter, and ASEM-DUO had been my accompany.