

Betina Ayelén Cupo

Buenos Aires, Argentina

PhD Student at the CEFIEC Research Institute, Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, University of Buenos Aires

ESERA ECR Travel Grants 2025 report

September 8, 2025

Overview of the application context

Considering that one of the most relevant aspects of academic and professional development in science is the communication and exchange of knowledge among members of the scientific community, and given that, with approximately 60% progress in my doctoral studies, I had never had the opportunity to travel abroad to participate in such in-person exchanges, I applied for the ESERA scholarship. This application represented one of the few opportunities to establish direct contact with colleagues and experts in the same research field, within a context in which the economic situation for sustaining and developing scientific work in Argentina is undergoing one of its most severe historical crises. Thanks to the extensive expertise of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Leonardo González Galli, we were able to easily establish contact with the research group at the Department of Biology Education of the University of Kassel, led by Prof. Dr. Helge Martens, who strongly supported the idea of carrying out the academic stay at their institution. This support was also grounded in our shared interest in research on the teaching of evolution by natural selection, particularly in the development and analysis of teaching proposals and perspectives related to this shared field of interest.

Activities during the academic stay

1. Discussion of my doctoral thesis, focusing on data collection methodology, with Prof. Dr. Helge Martens and Dr. Tim Hartelt.
2. Analysis of my thesis data, approached from a complementary quantitative perspective to my qualitative research focus, in collaboration with Dr. Tim Hartelt.

3. Participation in research meetings of the host research group, which provided insights into various research projects.
4. Meeting with a German secondary school teacher to share my thesis data collection instrument and select possible activities for application in the German educational context.
5. Visiting a German public school with classroom observations of biology lessons.
6. Tour through the facilities of the University of Kassel and introduction to the activities and educational projects carried out at the Department of Biology Education, accompanied by a member of the department.
7. Visit to the Natural History Museum of the city of Kassel, guided by a student teacher from the Department of Biology Education.
8. Exploration of the city of Kassel, its culture, heritage, and main attractions.
9. Social meetings with students and professors from German institutions, which enriched my academic experience and intercultural knowledge.

Final comments

In addition to enriching my ongoing doctoral studies and my professional development, the connections built during this period provided an excellent opportunity to envision future academic collaborations between the host research group and the *Group of Didactics of Evolutionary Biology, Genetics, and Ecology*, to which I belong. It was an unimaginable and unforgettable experience on academic, professional, and personal levels.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the ESERA association, which made this opportunity possible; to Prof. Dr. Helge Martens and Dr. Tim Hartelt for offering me such a productive and rewarding time in Kassel, both academically and personally; to my thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr. Leonardo González Galli, for his constant support; and to the University of Buenos Aires, public, free, and of high quality, which, despite all challenges, continues to stand firm and educate us as highly qualified professionals. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to my family, who contributed both financially and emotionally to make this experience possible.

