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Studying Abroad Experience Report

- 1) **Are we allowed to publish your report anonymously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?**
 Yes No
- 2) **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**
 Yes No
- 3) **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)**
 Yes No – in this case your report won't be published
- 4) **Please be aware that all the published photos in this report have to be taken by you and are not the property of a third party. By sending this report you are giving us the legal right of use for your pictures (if we publish the report). The copyrights still belong to you after all.**
 Yes, I confirm that all photos are mine.

We would appreciate it if you could include the following topics (the report should be at least two pages long, there is no maximum):

- **Preparation:** Recommendations about preparing to leave, for example (if applicable) Visa, insurance, travel? How was the application process at the university abroad? Were there any introduction events? Were they obligatory and when did they take place? Was there a Buddy program or tutors?
- **Accommodation:** How did you find your accommodation? Any tips about mistakes that should be avoided? Were there any special student accommodations? The cost of rent? Which area of living would you recommend?
- **Studying at the university abroad:** How was the day to day life on campus? Was the attendance mandatory? Which courses did you take? Were you allowed to take courses from different faculties? Please attach links to the course list if possible. How did the exams take place? Were there any language courses? What is your overall opinion of the university in general? How well did the university take care of international/exchange students?
- **Day to day life and free time:** How high are the costs of living in total? How much money should be accessible monthly? How much does the public transportation cost? What can an exchange student do in their free time? What did you do?
- **Conclusion:** worst and best experience
- **Suggestions/Feedback:** In your opinion, how can we improve our exchange program especially considering consulting, information, application process at the Viadrina? – This section is just for the department of international affairs of the Viadrina and will not be published.

Please write and send us the report as word.doc!

Preparation:

As a German-residence-permit holder, I did not need a Belgian Visa to study in Belgium for 6 months. I also did not apply for any extra insurance, because I already had the AOK in Germany and it is applicable for and covers all EU countries. The application of the university abroad was easy and uncomplicated. First day at the university abroad, there was an introductory event where the coordinator and ESN members welcomed the new exchange students. They were not obligatory, but everyone was welcome to join to integrate with the new students and make friends during the first days. Regarding a Buddy program, there was one, but not every student met their buddy during first couple days.

Accommodation:

I rented a room in a big house that had other workers and students, we were around 11 persons in the house. I searched for my apartment online through a website called HousingAnywhere.com. Main thing is, make sure to look through trusted and verified websites. There were cases where students would look on Facebook groups and get scammed. These groups were mostly spreading false information and deceiving profiles. In Brussels there are couple main student housings that welcome students, but these are generally expensive. I lived near Schuman, and paid 600euros including other expenses. If you're a person that does not go out that much and would like to focus on attending your classes, I would live near the Anjou campus (where you'll have most of the classes). However, for me I was out every other night doing something in the city, therefore living close to center was very suitable. While those students who lived near the Anjou campus, they needed to travel a greater distance, especially at night when the transportation busses are limited.

Studying at the university abroad:

Day to day life on campus was generally comfortable, welcoming and friendly. You'll see a lot of local students just hanging out in the cafeteria, around the parking lot or inside the campus. It was always lively and generally busy. I had courses that had a mandatory attendance, but some courses were more flexible and non-mandatory. There was a French language course throughout the semester, but I didn't have the chance to take it, because I had no previous knowledge/hours in French language of a minimum of 30 hours in French. This was a disadvantage in my opinion, because as an exchange student I would like to learn the basics of the country im visiting. International and exchange students were well welcomed by the staff. Coordinators and teachers were open and solved problems at ease.

Day to day life and free time:

Personally, I spent 600€ for my rent, around 250€ for groceries and 200€ for other expenses. On average you'll need a 1000 € per month. For transportation in Brussels, there is a semester ticket that costs around 17€ for one whole year. It covers public buses, trams and metros. You can get this ticket from some underground stations. Going to and from the airport you'll take a bus that you'll need to buy an extra ticket for around 8euros. As an exchange student you can do anything in your free time, an example of that is just going on day trips in neighbouring countries or cities. That area of Europe has a lot of nice areas to offer, like the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg and France. If not interested in travelling around the region, then exploring the city of Brussels would be an option. What I did was hangout with friends around the city, visit new places, try new restaurants and as many sorts of beers as possible. Visit museums, music events, meet old acquaintances and friends that are based in Brussels, meet friends and talk about anything, cook with your new Erasmus friends, share stories, try new things together.

Conclusion: worst and best experience

During my stay in Brussels, I had a lot of great experiences, and almost zero bad experiences. Only thing about Brussels is it could be dangerous and sketchy at night around city center. There are lots of people who would attempt to sell you drugs and steal you. Its better to always be aware of such people.

Final Advices:

1. On the very first day of Erasmus, get to know as many people as possible, they will probably be your closest friends by the end of this journey and last for a lifetime. If you are shy or not confident, try to find people who speak your mother tongue, and hangout with them to get to know other people. This is very crucial, because if you don't have a suitable friend group, you'll probably not enjoy your Erasmus stay like others. I got very lucky to have found a lot of like-minded friends and we spent good times together.

Country: Belgium

University abroad: ICHEC Brussels Management School

Beginning of lectures and end of exams abroad: 14 / 09 /2023 until 30 / 01 /2024

Study path at Viadrina: International Betriebswirtschaftslehre [X] BA [] MA



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2. Don't get sick. Always make sure that you're dressed well enough and appropriately according to whatever you're going to be doing, especially at late hours of the night when its most cold.
3. Take pictures of everything and anything you see unique, sad, different. These pictures will always be a memory and souvenir for you.
4. Be always prepared to change plans. Since its Erasmus in a new country, there are always a lot of stuff coming up.
5. Learn basic phrases in the language of the country. Try new food.
6. Enjoy it while it lasts, because 6 months are not as long as you can imagine.