

Personal Report

Budapest Eötvös-Loránd-Universität, WS 2018, 1 Semester Fachbereich 4, Soziales und Gesundheit

Language

Which language did you use? How did you communicate with your fellow students?

The language in the courses for foreign students was English and depending on the teacher it was mostly relatively easy to follow. Sometimes it helped that also the teachers weren't native speakers but depending on the level of English of the teachers that made it sometimes hard to follow as well.

I communicated most of the time in English with my fellow students but also in German when we were just among each other. The University offered Hungarian courses from mid-October for which we had to register before the semester. Mid October was quite a late start because Hungarian is not an easy language in my opinion. I managed to learn a few basic rules and sentences and am able to get along in daily life but the level is not enough to communicate properly with Hungarians who don't speak English or German.

Accommodation

Did the host university arrange for accommodation?

Yes, in a dormitory.

How high were your overall monthly costs for accommodation (in Euro)?

350€

How would you describe the quality of your accommodation?

Good.

How well was the accommodation situated? How long did it take you on average to reach the partner university (in minutes)?

ELTE offers some help with finding a flat or even registering for a dorm before the semester starts. But the dormitories are outside of the city center and most students have a least one roommate. But the accommodation is cheap.

My flat was close to Nyugati train station and by taking tram 4/6 I reached the campus on the Buda side in 20/25 mins, other campuses of ELTE were reachable in about the same time or less.

Which web sites, forums, Facebook pages, contacts, etc. can you recommend for looking for accommodation?

I only used various Facebook groups i.e. like Flats for Erasmus in Budapest but with the combination of Flat and Budapest it was easy to find several groups where a lot of flats and rooms were advertised or people searched for flats.

Where have you been accommodated (name of dormitory, location, part of town, etc.)? And how would you describe the surroundings of your accommodation (shopping facilities, distance to the city center, nightlife, etc.?)

I shared my flat with 4 other students and it was close to Nyugati train station in the 6th district of the Pest side of Budapest. Tram 4/6 (which run 24/7) and Metro 3 as well as several useful Bus lines were a couple of minutes' walk. It was only a 15min walk to Margret Island (or 2 tram stops) or 15-25 mins walk to the inner city (7th district or Deak Ferenc ter; 2-3 tram stops or 2 metro stops). Behind Nyugati is the big West End shopping center but a 3 Spars, Aldi and Lidl as well as Rossmann and DM were also close.

A few Bars and Restaurants are not far from Nougaty and the flat but the nightlife of the 7th district is easily reachable.

At Oktogon which is one tram stop away Metro 1 is accessible as well.

Arrival at the Partner University and Orientation

Which is the best arrival time?

In my opinion the best arrival time is around one week before the semester starts, in case a flat is already organized. That leaves enough time to unpack, get settled, discover the city etc.

How did you organize your arrival? Was the extent of the orientation program sufficient? What activities can you recommend? Were all important questions answered? What did you have to find out yourself? How fast were you able to get in contact with the domestic students? How were the services for exchange students?

I flew to Budapest with Wizz Air but there are also reasonably priced train or bus tickets to Budapest. My flat was already organized and I got the keys as soon as I arrived.

The orientation program of the Social Sciences faculty was only one day and included the most important information regarding registration, the University etc. But after that we could always go to the international office or write and Email because they were very helpful and replied fast. The online system of ELTE named Neptun isn't always user friendly (even according to Hungarians) and the explanation in the beginning didn't help a lot because we weren't properly registered yet.

If we wanted we could request a mentor, which was mostly a Hungarian student, who tried to help us when we had any questions (depending on the mentor but most of them were very dedicated and wanted to meet international students).

Living Abroad

Compared to Frankfurt, how high was the cost of living abroad?

Lower, it cost about 75%.

What additional expenses did you have during your semester abroad? How far were you able to travel with your semester ticket? How was your student life off-campus? How were the mensas/ student cafeterias? What types of meals were served? How much did the meals cost? How were the libraries? Was their use free? Did the university provide computer workplaces/ computer pools? Was Wi-Fi available on-campus? Were you able to use study rooms? Were you able to rent separate rooms for studying? Did the university provide a sports program? Was this free of charge?

The monthly student pass is valid all around Budapest but public transport in Hungary is not expensive and for some towns close to Budapest just an additional ticket is needed.

ELTE has a few small Cafeterias who offer sandwiches, coffee, snacks etc. but also small hot meals but nothing compared to a Mensa in Germany. A sandwich was around 400-600ft. ELTE has computer rooms and several libraries but I personally didn't use them much during the semester because most literature was available via Wifi. For the libraries a registration was needed and the Wifi worked with the eduroam login. The Universities has a wide sports programm, from ball sports, to dancing etc. The courses weren't for free but the fees depended on the courses.

Student life in Budapest can be amazing. I recommend being open and checking out some Erasmus events in the beginning to get to know other students and after that Budapest offers a lot of alternatives outside the Erasmus bubble.

Studying at the Host University

How would you describe the academic standard of classes compared to Frankfurt?

Similar to Frankfurt.

Did you experience any difference in teaching methods/ class structure? Which were the difference regarding your expectations and your experiences at the partner university? What surprised you, what should newly arriving students know? How were the student services? Was the fact, that you were an exchange student taken into account (by professors or other staff)? If so, how? How were difficulties, which you or other exchange students may have met, handled by the partner university?

The biggest difference for me between Frankfurt and Budapest was that class participation counted around 20% for the final grade in seminars (not lectures). Besides in most courses a mid-term exam or presentation was mandatory which counted also into the final grade. So the classes seemed a bit more like in school and we had to work also during the semester.

Final essays and assignments were mostly due for the last class of the semester but also in January. I believe for Erasmus students the University tried to give us the chance to go home for Christmas without having to return but it wasn't the case for all courses.

Some of the courses seemed in the end easier to pass than in Germany but some courses had a similar level as in Frankfurt. But it seemed to depend a little bit more on the teachers and their expectations.

Final Remarks

What should future exchange students know/ do/ avoid? How would you overall rate your exchange experience? In what ways have you benefitted academically, personally, linguistically for your future career?

I can only advise other students to stay open to everything in the beginning (which is not against your ethics and your personality) and even check out some Erasmus events because I believe it was easier that way to get to know my fellow students. The city is amazing, in my opinion, and can be overwhelming because there is so much to do. Other students should really try to get to know different parts of the city and get to know maybe not only Erasmus students and definitely not only Germans, rather try to speak English (or any other language) as much as you can.

I used my time at the University to study topics which interest me a lot but I wouldn't be able to take in Frankfurt. I believe I benefitted in a way that I know more about my future interests and which topics could be interesting for my Bachelor Thesis.