Personal Erasmus Report
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MA Euroculture, 2nd semester year 1

Home university: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
Host university: Université de Strasbourg
My name is Frederieke and I study Euroculture. This master’s degree consists of two academic years. In the first year, each of the two semesters is spent in a different country. I did my first semester in Groningen (the Netherlands) and the second in Strasbourg (France). Hence, this report will be about the exchange at the ‘host’ university, which is Strasbourg in my case.

Courses and credits

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eurocompetence II</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Seminars</td>
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<td>- The Legal Culture of the European Court of Human Rights</td>
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<td>- External Relations of the European Union</td>
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<td>- Display and Cultural Identity</td>
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<td>- Old and New Minorities in Contemporary Europe*</td>
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<td>Methodology</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Intensive Programme**</td>
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* There were three electives courses we could choose from. There were also people who took 2 electives. The options were: Old and New Minorities / European Union Law / Economics of Public Issues
** This was the preparation for the IP, the Summer programme.

Quality of education and the level of information and help provided by the host institution

There were two coordinators which lead the programme in Strasbourg. While one of them was very very busy, the other was very helpful and ways replied very quickly to emails. The quality of education was very high, because we had experts from the particular academic fields who lectured us. We also went on excursions to see the European institutions. The course on the Court of Human Rights was centred around court cases, which was very interesting and close to the practical reality. We used the Convention with the articles to argue for certain cases, which was very interesting.

In general, the information provided was very clear, although some info was not communicated on paper but rather orally explained. This meant that many people forgot those instructions and information. Luckily they have classmates to ask for help ;) When I wanted to change electives, this was arranged fairly easily, as well as receiving my grade for the French lessons. Also, we knew we would get all of our final grades after the summer IP programme in Poland, because we would receive our last grade there. It was all perfectly arranged: indeed soon after, we received the Transcript of Records. Also, my During Mobility sheet was signed without problems.

Reception and accommodation at the host institution

Initially I chose an elective course that started on the Friday before the actual start of the MA programme in Strasbourg. I felt kind of lost trying to find the right building and even finding my way through Strasbourg. The first official week that started the next Monday was set up quite well.

The accommodation was arranged beforehand. We received an email with a list of options out of which we could choose a top 4. We then soon received the selection. Three girls that spent their first semester in Göttingen all got rooms in the same building, and so did three of us Dutch girls. Upon moving there, we encountered some issues as well as later on, but I will talk about them under the heading ‘problems encountered’ below.

Contacts with teachers and students

All of the teachers were very approachable, you could ask them anything and they were very friendly. They were happy to provide extra information and help out. Most of our classes were just with our group, not with other people. One course, on culture, was joined by CES students, who were also international. The elective courses and French classes were also shared with them.
The very busy coordinator also taught one subject, but that turned out to be a bit of a chaos due to his loss of memory about teaching a certain class, his confusing style of lecturing (hard to see the ‘red thread’ or most important points to memorise) and the fact that he did not schedule a date for the exam to take place. His exam questions were also a bit muddled. However, he is very passionate about the subject he teaches, and he took us on an excursion related to this. The good thing is that we had two coordinators, so the other was there to help out.

Support from home institution
My home university is Groningen. The people there are very quick to respond to any email you send them at any time of day. Sometimes they even take time to email you back when they have a day off. For any question about the Erasmus papers or the internship applications for instance, we could email them or call them if we felt we needed it.

Estimation of expenses during your exchange
The rooms differ in price, according to size and whether you want to share a kitchen or bathroom or have it all to yourself. I had the latter, and thus payed €409s per month for it. The bike rental was about €24 for three months, so definitely worth it! Don’t listen to people who tell you that you can apply for the CAF to get government discount on your rent! It doesn’t work. The French government sends you from paperwork to websites to offices and you receive no money. Just leave it. Cheap ways of live in Strasbourg include going for groceries in Germany (take the tram to Kehl, basically a suburb of Strasbourg). Fruit and vegetables at Aldi and Lidl in Germany are way cheaper than supermarkets in France. The tram is a great way to move about if you hate cycling. The most flexible way would still be the bike. The accommodation we lived in had a bike shed in the cellar.

Problems encountered (eg language, information, guidance, etc.)
The main issues we encountered had to do with the housing and our schedule at university. The accommodation was completely empty upon arrival, which we did not expect. There were no pans, no shower curtain, no pillows or a duvet on the bed… the first of us three Dutch girls to arrive from Groningen had to go to Ikea to buy it all and then warned us. We came by car and loaded it to the roof with stuff. I told the Groningen and Strasbourg staff people need to be warned about that. If things in the room would be broken, the secretariat wouldn’t do anything to have it fixed either. On top of that, they are withholding part of the initial deposit because I forgot to clean one ventilation thing near the roof. Nothing was broken but they still did that. They promised us the rest of the deposit back in July, it’s now the 25th and we still haven’t received anything. I’m not convinced we will get it but let’s keep our hopes up.

As for the university schedule: the team in Strasbourg work with Google Calendar, which is very practical, and you can open it on your phone and see the changed instantly. However, there was no way we could plan ahead (field trips, having friends over …) because they kept changing the schedule last minute and adding classes in almost empty weeks. This was not helpful. Also, the confusing teacher did not plan his exam until some two weeks before, so we didn’t know what to expect.

Personal observations and recommendations
I got to know more people by joining the Strasbourg Hockey club, which was very nice but far by bike. It might be a nice way of meeting new people. The university also offers sports courses. The city is full of bars and restaurants, the ones near the campus are aimed at students and offer cheap meals and drinks. Happy hour is always a good idea too. When you want to explore the area, go for the wine route! It leads past vineyards, old villages, castles and more. Breathtaking. You can buy cheap wines directly from the wineries and you can hike the three-castle tour or take the car up to the medieval Château du Haut-Kœnigsbourg. They charge you to enter, but the view and the castle are
worth it! On the way you can stop at the monkey mountain to have fun with monkeys climbing on your shoulder. A famous and touristic city nearby is Colmar, you can take a train or car there. For the wine route I would recommend going by car. The train is the ideal option if you want to go to Basel in Switzerland for instance, I think it only takes 2 hours.

Have a good time!