ERASMUS-EXPERIENCE REPORT

Name: Anonymous

Field of study: Food Safety

Host University: Wageningen

Year of study: 2023/2024

Duration of stay: from 18.08.2023 to 05.02.2024

Publication of the report

I consent to the publication of this experience report including the above data (field of study, host university, year of study, duration of stay) on the website of BOKU-International Relations for the purpose of sharing information related to the study visit, so that future interested outgoings can inform themselves about your experience at the host institution.
☒ **yes** ☐ **no**

The consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without giving reasons with immediate future effect. Any withdrawal can be declared at any time by e-mail to erasmus@boku.ac.at.

I've spent my erasmus stay at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, from August of 23' until early February of 24' and it has the perk of my master studies so far. The city itself is a small university town, which means that it is full of students from all around the world and dutch citizens who are very well used to it. This made the experience really unique, as this form of life is very different of the big city student life that I have met so far. The people are very open to internationals and everybody speaks english. The dutch way of living can be surprising at first, but all of them are friendly and speak english exceptionally well.
Student life is well organized both academically and socially. Student have the options to join social and study associations as well as sport clubs and others based on interests.
I have lived in a student corridor with another 11 people, sharing the bathroom with 2 others and the kitchen with 6. It has been amazing to get to live with both various internationals and dutch students, but getting an accomodation was really stressful and hard (due to shortage of rooms in the city). I've been lucky but still had to move from one place to another during my stay as it has been the only option to obtain accomodation at all. Both places were student houses and I can really only say amazing things about it. People had their ways and customs of living together, with cleaning schedules and weekly dinners with the roomates. It is a helpful way to socialize when one gets lonely or homesick. Both rooms cost around 475€/month including utilities, but costs can range from 350-600 even depending on type of accommodation. Living costs are high in the netherlands compared to Vienna, especially the public transport. Monthly living costs are estimated around 1000€, for me it was above (~1300/month).
The main way of transport is of course by bike, as the town can be biked through in 20 minutes and there are bike lanes everywhere. You cannot get by without a bike as buses are few and really expensive. Other means of transport for going out of the city and into the big ones are trains, which are also quite expensive, but there are optional subscription options depending on needs (weekend deals and so on), that can help reduce costs. There are no student discounts on any transportation.
For european students there's no need for a visa, but you have to register at the municipality if staying over 4 months.
The host university (WUR) is one of the best of its kind, with the modernest buildings and equipments, where everything is built to help students. The support and study system is expectional, as the organisation of classes and extra programmes provides endless oportunities (e.g. stress managing seminars, thematic weeks, presentations on finance, well-being, study strategies and so on). Here, the students really only need to ask and put in the effort. There are sport facilities offering a lot of opportunities from the basic sports to more extreme ones. There are also a cantine at every building of the university offering a lot of vegan/vegetarian and healthy options.
Instead of semesters, one academic year is organised into 6 periods, with different schedules. This can be unusal and can take some time to get used to, but is well described in the beginning and online. Application and enrollment are really easy and well mediated online, students really only need to decide which subjects they want to take and then register in time.
There is a welcome week before each periods of exchange, that is called **Annual Introduction Days (AID)**. There are social and educational programs throughout, that can help get familiar with the university, the town, the study system and also can help get to know the other students. It is a must when visiting WUR.

The courses can be checked online before applying, reading through the evaluations and descriptions can help decide. For internationals the workload of WUR is usually harder than their original university, most of the students struggle at first, but can get into it pretty soon. Time management is one of the strength of dutch people and they except just the same from everyone, so prepare for a lot of groupworks and small tasks throughout the courses. There are courses where you have to write a paper every week, and ones where you have to work on one big with a group of 3-6 other students. Groupwork is really emphasized at WUR, as well as active participation on the lectures and seminars. In exchange most courses worth 6 credits, and during a period there are max. 2 courses (one in the morning one in the afternoon often).

Grading is pretty strict, ranges from 0 to 10, but needs to be above 5.5 to pass the subject. It is almost impossible to get a 10, and grading is partly based on the perfomance of the others. In case of struggling or problems with papers, scheduling the teachers and counselors are always there to help and usually reply fast to mails. I only had good experiences with teachers and advisory staff in this regard.

Overall, it can be the best time of your studies as the possibilities are exceptional and the university and town are one of the most ideal for student living. Except some more work regarding the university, but it is all worth it and well mediated. (During exam preparation weeks the library can get full, you need to reserve a seat online previously if you want to study there – in exchange it is one of the most motivating environments a student can wish for.