

Experience report exchange semester Rotterdam

Benjamin Belser autumn semester 2017



Basic information:

Exchange semester: autumn semester

Length of exchange semester: 1. September – 15. December 2017

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degree programme at HSG: Business Administration

Information host university:

The Erasmus University Rotterdam or more importantly for HSG students the Erasmus School of Management is located in the suburban area of Kralingen. It is easily accessible by any means of transportation from the downtown area. You can either go by tram or by metro, which takes approximately 15 min, by bike, which is around 10 minutes and is highly recommended by the author of this report and really the only acceptable mean of transportation in the entire Netherlands, or by foot, which takes up roughly half an hour. The Erasmus School of Management is quite a big faculty of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam which in its entirety combines a total of 28000 students. Since this is relatively a lot more students than what we're used to at the HSG, the university has adequate space for their students to study, eat and get to know each other. Noteworthy is the on-campus food court which inhabits besides a Starbucks various places to get food. Besides the food court one can

find a SPAR on-campus if you may feel like having a beer among other things. Education-wise the campus offers multiple libraries, study- and computer rooms and printers belonging to them. All the aforementioned infrastructure is accessible to every student. As one can expect from such a large educational institution they have as well an advanced sports center, where unfortunately you have to pay in case you want to use it, which I never did, but apparently, they make up for it in professionalism.

When it comes to support services, the university barely leaves anything to chance. As soon as you are registered you will be guided through all the relevant tasks such as course registration, to find yourself suitable accommodation etc. by the lovely Programme Managers at the International office. Furthermore, the university organizes an introduction day where you meet some of your new fellow students and the on-campus facilities at the same time.

Academics:

Most generally and importantly, in the Netherlands they don't have semesters like we know it but trimesters. Three trimesters in Rotterdam make up for one academic year or in our terms two semester. The average amount of credits done by the students is 20, which is already quite enough in terms of the workload. But if you are dependent on doing more credits during your exchange, you will be fairly busy and since you want to have time exploring people and country in my opinion not advisable. Mid-April you will get a welcome e-mail in which further instructions for your application process and course registration will be handed out in minute detail. There is no bidding-like application system, you simply write some e-mails which courses you want to attend and you will get the respective courses without any doubt. The registration process is split into two, whereas you first have to register for a minor if you wish to do so and then in a second step register for all the other courses which are significantly smaller. The minors you can choose from sound all very interesting and are probably linked the closest to your business administration studies. But, the downside of such a minor is you do work for 15 credits, and according to HSG policy the most amount of credits you can do in one course is 9. Besides, the workload at the Erasmus is already high enough. For a three-credit course I had to do four assignments and two finals, since you will have midterms in most of the courses you will attend. So, it's safe to see they keep you constantly busy and there is not that much free time during the trimester as one might hope.

Information prior to going abroad:

As mentioned above the university will write a welcome e-mail mid-April where all the relevant information to complete your application process and course registration successfully is contained. I can't stress enough that there is absolutely no need to worry since the people responsible at the Erasmus University take great care of the incoming exchange students. The only particular thing you have to hand in besides the most obvious like the grade transcript is the TOEFL certificate.

It is the most convenient to travel by plane. Prices range between 100 and 150 CHF. There is no Visa, or any form of immigration formalities needed. All will be arranged for you.

Living Arrangements:

Together with the welcome e-mail sent to you there will be some further guidance provided how you will best find suitable accommodation, you just have to be quick enough. For some lucky few, there are rooms reserved especially for the incoming exchange students on-campus. I luckily found an apartment in the Hatta Building which as well is located on-

campus. The standard room is 17 square meters big and is part of a smaller apartment where you share a bath, toilette and a kitchen that comes with a tiny living area with two other inhabitants. It's nothing out of the ordinary and a price of 530 euros seems quite high, but it is so convenient to live on campus provided the campus is near the city center. Just rent a bike via Swapfiets (bike rental start-up from students for students). Another thing which might come in handy is the bar on the ground floor of the Hatta building. If you are not quick enough they provide further student housing off-campus and a student hotel, which is insanely expensive and therefore not recommendable.

Money:

The cost of living would be nearly the same or a bit cheaper than in Switzerland, but since it is your exchange you, according to my experience, definitely will spend more for various reasons. The most obvious are that you probably will go out more often than back home and that you will travel more than usual. For example, Belgium is by car just a one- or two-hour drive away from Rotterdam so it more than qualifies for a little excursion. If you don't want to go that 'far' you just can hop in the train and half an hour later you are in Amsterdam, one of the busiest cities in Europe. So as a general recommendation just slightly adjust your monthly budget to have adequate funding for such activities.

Overall Evaluation of my exchange experience:

Overall, I loved my time abroad. I definitely had to study more than what I am used to compared to the HSG, but it was worth it anyways. The amazing people you meet and the stunning city you will live in will make up for it. And since it is a partner university I had the appropriate expectations about the amount of work and famously if you have the right expectations they don't get shattered and you don't face huge disappointments.

I recommend to everyone doing a term abroad, even if it's not going to be Rotterdam because it adds huge value not just to your CV.