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Study Program: Public Administration / International Relations
Exchange semester: Fall
Academic year: 2016-2017
Host University: Corvinus University of Budapest
Country: Hungary

General information
I would like to start off this experience report by stating that going on an exchange was one of the best choices of my life. I totally fell in love with my exchange destination, the beautiful city of Budapest. Although I’ve never heard anyone making any negative comments after visiting Budapest, I still think it’s one of the most underrated cities in Europe. All of my visitors were enchanted and surprised by the beauty and diversity of this city and I think more and more people are discovering it.

Budapest consists of two parts, separated by the Danube: Buda and Pest. Buda can be seen as the more expensive residential area of the city and can be found on the hillside. Here you can find beautiful sights such as the Castle district and the Gellert Hill. Pest is the flat and most vibrant part of the city. This is where you will be spending most of your time. The Pest side hosts famous buildings such as the Parliament, St. Stephens Basilica and the World Heritage Site Andrássy Avenue and is the place to go for shopping, dining and nightlife. I won’t go into too much detail as you can find all this information very easily on every tourist website about Budapest. You’ll find your housing most probably on the Pest side of the city. I would recommend living in either district 5, 6 or 7. Surprisingly, housing is affordable even in the very centre of the city. In general, the cost of living in Budapest is a lot lower than in The Netherlands. You will most probably pay less rent and restaurants and nightlife will be a lot cheaper. However, the prices of groceries in the supermarket are similar to the Netherlands. Therefore, most students will find themselves eating out most of the time.

Corvinus University
Corvinus University has buildings located in both parts of the city. However, as a student from Tilburg University, you will most probably be located on the Pest side. The campus consists of three buildings, all of them located in the centre of the city. You can find the campus right next to the Danube and Great Market Hall in district 5. As been said, the campus consists of three buildings. The oldest (main building) used to be a Customs house before it got turned into a university in 1948. The first time I walked up to the main building, I was very impressed by its prestigious and authentic appearance. The building has a special atmosphere and walking around the big corridors and hallways of the main building almost made me feel like walking through Hogwarts. Next to the main building, there’s a small building located called the Salt House, which hosts the IT department. The newest building was completed in 2007, and together with the main building, this is where I had most of my classes. The new building is state of the art, with brand new lecture rooms and all the facilities. The building also gives room to the university library and offers tons of work places (including computers).

All of my courses were in English, and unless you already know Hungarian, this will be your only option. I would not recommend taking a Hungarian language course as it is a very hard language to learn and you will definitely need more than one semester to learn something substantial. Classes are structured differently than at Tilburg University. Most of the time, attendance is mandatory and you will find yourself in a more active learning environment. Active involvement and discussion is an important part of your courses. My experience is that the level of difficulty of the classes can differ a lot between faculties. As a public administration student, I took almost all my courses from the International Relations program at Corvinus. The course material and the discussions were of a high standard. However, the one course I took from the economic faculty seemed to be a lot easier and less serious. I thereby have to note that I only took master courses. The difference in the academic level becomes apparent in the grading. Like I said, the courses and discussions were of a high standard and the exams
reflected the course material. The grading however is less strict and if you study for your exams and put some effort in your papers, you will certainly not have to worry. All of my exams were written, and they usually took 1.5 – 2 hours. You can sign up for the exams through the Neptun system. Normally you will get 3 different dates from which you can choose, so there will be no problems with overlapping exams.

My Courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>ECTS</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society and Organizations in Transition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Policies of the EU Member States</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Foreign Policy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of European Political Thought</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td></td>
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**Practical information**

Every semester, ESN Corvinus organizes the so-called ‘Hostel week’. Normally, this event will be organized one or two weeks before the official introduction day of the university. I would highly recommend everyone to attend the Hostel week, as it is the ideal occasion for new students to make new friends, arrange housing (and find flat mates), learn about the city and discover the rich Budapest nightlife. As the name already suggests, the event takes place as most of the students are still staying in hostels spread through the city. Most of the people will search for housing after their arrival. In Budapest, it is fairly easy to find suitable housing in the centre of the city. I would recommend everyone to visit and see the apartments before signing any contract. Although it may sound scary at first to travel to a city without arranging housing beforehand, I can assure you that you can find housing within a few days. Of course you can already make visiting appointments with local landlords before your arrival. Search for the right Facebook groups!

Upon arrival in Budapest, make sure you get yourself a monthly student pass for public transport as fast as you can. You can either get one via one of the many BKK automats (although you can only obtain the student pass via a Hungarian menu, it is very easy) or go to the BKK office at Déak square for some help. It is very easy to get from the Airport to the city centre by public transport. However, if you don’t want to drag your luggage around, you can also take an airport shuttle to your accommodation which will cost you around 8 euros. Public transport in Budapest is one of the best I’ve ever experienced. Metro lines are running every 5 minutes and trams even more often. Even in the middle of the night, trams and busses will get you to your desired location.

When you just arrive in a new and big city such as Budapest, you will most probably have to rely on apps such as Google maps in the first days. Next to that, you also want to be able to keep in touch with your new friends. I would therefore recommend to get a Hungarian SIM as soon as you arrive in Hungary. Vodafone and Telenor are two phone carriers that offer special student (prepaid) contracts. Their deals are very affordable. Telenor for example offers a contract which will cost you around 10 euros a month, for 1GB of internet and unlimited access to social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram etc.
**Personal tips from an insider**

During my time in Budapest, I really tried to explore and experience Budapest to its fullest. Every week, I went on a search for new bars, restaurants, coffee places and clubs. Budapest is a great place for urban exploring, and counts a lot of different neighborhoods; each with their own architecture, vibe and charm. I will provide a short list of my favorite places.

**Restaurants:**
- Trattoria Venezia
- Kiosk Budapest
- Jamie’s Italian
- Mazel Tov
- Bordó Bisztro
- Puder Barszinhaz es Galeria

All of them very affordable and very nice!

**Bars/clubs:**
As you may have heard, Budapest is known for its ruin bars. This is a phenomenon that has taken over Budapest’s nightlife a couple years ago to establish a far-reaching success formula. About a decade ago, one of many abandoned buildings in Hungary’s capital was converted into a low-key club with little more than discarded furniture and artistic creativity, bringing about the first of Budapest’s so-called “ruin pubs”. I fell in love with this venues, known for their rickety furnishing, psychedelic interiors, and hipster crowd. The problem with some of these bars is that they are hard to find, as they are sometimes hidden from the public road. Therefore I would recommend bookmarking all the places you visit.

**Ruin Pubs:**
- Szimpla Kert
- Instant
- Fogas Ház kert
- Kolves Vendeglio
- Kuplung (great on Mondays, every drink half price)
- Ellato Kert
- UdvarRom
- Ankert
- Doboz
- 360 Bar (not a ruin bar, but an awesome rooftop bar with a stunning view)

**Clubs:**
I have to state that I’m not a fan of big fancy clubs. Personally, I’m into techno music and I’m always in search for the more underground venues. If you’re a fan of the more underground and niche electronic styles, make sure you pay a visit to the following clubs:

- Lärm (In my opinion the best underground club in town)
- Corvin Club (check the events on Friday and Saturday, Wednesday is always techno in Corvin)
- Aether (if you enjoy tech house)
- Akvarium (a very big venue, check their events for what’s going on)
- A38 (boat on the Danube, same story, check their events beforehand)
- Müszi
If you like more mainstream music, you can visit Hello Baby bar (beautiful club), Ötkert and Kraft. Szimpla Kert, Instant, Fogas Ház and Kuplung (as mentioned under ruin bars) are also great for going out and mostly offer different musical styles in different rooms.

**Thermal baths:**

When you have a hangover, nothing is better than going to one of the famous thermal spas in Budapest. The most famous are the Széchenyi and Gellert baths, but make sure to also pay a visit to the smaller Rudas, Kiraly or Lukacs baths.

**Coffeehouses:**

I’m one of those people that can thoroughly enjoy a good cup of coffee (together with some nice breakfast or lunch). Budapest counts a lot of great coffeehouses that really pay attention to the quality of their coffee. If you’re also one of those people, pay a visit to the following places:

- The Goat Herder
- Madal café
- Cirkusz Café
- Kontakt
- My Little Melbourne