

Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME)

Preparations

The initial phase looked a bit complicated, since there is a lot of paperwork to arrange in a strict deadline. Nevertheless, after I got in contact with the Erasmus office in Budapest I understood that it would be much easier. Yes, there is a lot of paperwork, but they are very helpful and flexible, will guide you, assist you and try to find solutions in case of problems. After admission, an information email has been sent, which I found very helpful. It included some initial information regarding life in Budapest, studying in the university, procedures and bureaucracies such as address registration and residence permit application, and with some websites that assist in the efforts of finding an apartment.

It is important to say that in the BME, exchange students are not allowed to apply for a room in the dormitories but have to find their own place in the city. A week or two before the arrival I have received an email from the local ESN (Erasmus student network) organization, with some further information and a schedule for the introduction week. The most important part was an invitation to a Facebook group made for all of the students about to arrive and the ESN mentors. There we could get to know each other, exchange experiences and arrange meetings even before school actually began.

Arrival

Landing in Budapest was very smooth. Well, besides the weather, that was around 37 degrees. Through the Facebook group I got to know another student that is arriving in the same train from Germany, and the company I have rented an apartment from sent a car to pick me up from the station. On the first evening, I already joined a party and got to know some of the other Erasmus people. On the first day there was a registration day arranged by the Erasmus office and ESN. After filling in the forms and receiving the student cards, we have a package with a Hungarian sim card, map and other useful things. Later we went in groups of 20 to a nearby park and made introduction games. The week continued with further activities arranged by ESN, that I have to say – were awesome. This organization works magnificently and made the reception much much easier. The activities included a huge welcome party with group interaction games, drinking games and a DJ that played until the morning; an excursion through the city; an introduction workshop with the computer system of the university; bar hopping around the campus and a freshmen camp where those who joined (around 130 out of the 300) got to know each other and celebrated on the bank of a lake throughout an entire

weekend. For those who did not have an apartment, they also offered assistance and an arranged day in which they assisted in contacting landlords in Hungarian.

During the semester

The university is situated in a magnificent ancient building on the western bank of the Danube, very close to the center of the city. Only in the last weekend, before classes began I had my timetable, which was a bit annoying, and I discovered some difficulties that forced me to completely change my course selection because of overlapping. In addition, one course I chose was not offered in English. As for this course, the situation could have been prevented, but the list of relevant offerings was not yet published when the deadline for application in my home university was set. Therefore, I had to make my initial choices according to last year's list. The studies themselves were very good. I took classes from three different faculties: economics and business management, social science and pedagogics, and one master course from the faculty of cognitive sciences. All the classes were offered in English. The university offered us a Hungarian course throughout the semester, which I did not take. I tried to take a German class, but it was instructed in Hungarian so I gave it up. Most of the classes were very interesting. The master course was challenging and helped us to develop out critical thoughts in many fields. The Hungarian culture class gave us an insight about life in the country.

Moreover, the economics and environmentalism classes were relevant to my study course. The comparative country studies class was futile and easy, and I do not recommend on taking it even though these are easy credits. As for the credits: you have higher workload per class that consists of more exams, homework, presentations and so on. However, the amount of material needed to be learned for each exam is lower, which makes everything easier. Most of the classes were in small groups, usually around 20 students, but one class consisted of only six of us. Therefore, the professors could treat us personally and give some attention to our work. Generally, it seems like professors seemed to remember their students and allowed more direct contact, which I found very positive.

Everyday Life

Budapest is an awesome city for a young party-seeking student. Clubs from all kinds, from mega luxury ones to edgy alternative ones – they are all there, and in reasonable prices. Alcohol is also quite affordable, even when comparing to Germany. Street food is also cheaper, but supermarkets are a little bit more expensive. The Hungarian currency is a bit funny and it takes time to get used to the annoying exchange rate (~275 HUF for 1 EUR). For meat eaters, food is very tasty – somehow European cuisine but with many spices. For vegetarians or vegans, such as me, life is a bit harder there.

Public transportation is very easy, people are very nice (even though many of them speak only Hungarian). At least once a week there was an activity by ESN – a weekly bar evening, a visit to a museum or an amusement park and two trips – to Slovenia and to Romania. Since we were many Erasmus students with a tight hangout schedule, we did not have the chance to get to know many local people, which is a bit of a shame. Nevertheless, it was an experience that I will never forget.