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Preparation:

The university (BME) was one of the exchange offers that caught my interest right from the start. Partially because of my personal interest in Hungary, but also because the official website of BME's administration and the website of the local Erasmus Student Network (<https://www.esn.bme.hu/>) offered plenty of useful information right from the start, concerning necessary administrative matters related with applying for the semester as well as useful tips helpful about life in Hungary. The ESN website presented a very extensive plan of social events, too. This amount of easily available information is, in my experience, not common – some other universities I considered required much more work to find the required details. The list of subjects offered in English was easily available too, and clearly provided all required information.

The only issue I had during the application process was that the contact persons of BME were sometimes very slow with their replies to emails. Applying for Erasmus is complicated and some questions inevitably arise, certain documents must be signed and the student is for the larger part responsible for most of the communication between his home and host university, so it's quite stressful to only get an important signed document a few days before departure. However, this is my only major complaint.

Accommodation:

Unlike some universities, BME does not offer accommodation in student dorms to exchange students. Each faculty of the university has a separate dormitory building and as I understand they are just not interested in hosting exchange students. Because of this, it is very strongly suggested to start searching for accommodation as fast as possible. The ESN website provides a lot of useful information in this regard. It explains which locations are convenient for students in terms of entertainment and reaching the university. Some links to flat searching websites in Budapest are provided, as well as some offers.

The amount of available flats before each semester is very high, but the number of arriving students is high as well, so once again it is very important to begin flat searching very fast. The closer it is to the start of the semester, the more expensive and less attractive the remaining flats are. By the time I and my future flatmate (from the BTU as well) started to search for flats, they were already in very high demand, and one very interesting flat was rented to someone else "right before our eyes". In the end, we still managed to find a cheap flat in a good, central location through one of the searching websites mentioned. While the official BME website mentions that a monthly payment of 200-300€ plus utilities should be expected, in my experience the prices are always closer to 300€ and sometimes exceed that. Some older buildings in Budapest are very large and because of this the flats can be expensive to heat, so in the winter semester the cost of utilities should be expected to be high. Most flats offered to students come with internet access.

Students who don't manage to find a flat before they arrive must stay in hostels for longer periods of time. For those people, the Erasmus Student Network offers a flat searching event during the first week of the semester, but it was not very successful. The number of students without flats was very high and they did not offer many flats at all (and they were very expensive) so many people had to

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keep searching long after that. I met at least one person who could not find a flat at all and spent the entire semester in a hostel. So once again, it is really important to find a flat fast. Personally, I don't think I could enjoy the integration events properly with the issue of accommodation still over my head, so I'm very glad I could find a place. It was a very average flat in a large building on one of the main streets of Budapest, and the price reached about 280€ per month for one person, excluding heating.

Transportation in Europe is very easy and Budapest can be reached by cheap, convenient night trains or by plane from any major city. In my case, I traveled by train from Berlin. I planned my travel so that I didn't have to spend a single night in a hostel, but from what I know they are very easily available all over the city.

Studying at the BME:

All universities in Hungary are managed with a portal called Neptun. It is quite similar to the BTU Online Portal in most functions, such as course/exam registration and getting important documents. It seems there are much more options available in the system, but they are not necessary for an exchange student so I haven't explored them.

In many ways, my experience while studying at BME was very similar to studying back at BTU. The classes are similarly structured. Most lecturers at the faculty of Economic and Social Sciences were quite motivated to teach their subjects. The course material was shared by email or on an internal website of the university. They have a Moodle platform as well, but only one of my classes used it. The courses were finalized similarly to those at BTU, with exams, essays and presentations. The lecturers from the Economic and Social Sciences faculty are quite forgiving and grade the exams of exchange students very favorably, but from what I heard this is not the case with other faculties, where the examination can be very demanding.

The campus is quite large and most of the classes take place in very old, historic buildings. However, most of my courses took place in a modern building standing separately from the main campus. It was very well equipped and maintained. The university provides a fast WiFi network with great reception, except for some larger rooms in the older buildings.

Printing and scanning of documents is available in many locations on the campus and all around the city, which is required often for paperwork. During the semester, the Erasmus Office is much more responsive than before it, it was always easy to reach them when necessary. Because of different grading systems used between the universities, a student from BTU will have to ask all the lecturers for a signed grade certificate detailing the grades with percentage points.

I recommend to avoid taking a Hungarian language class if someone is not very motivated to learn it. The language is extremely hard and requires time consuming study. Many students complained about its difficulty, and for me it is the only grade from the semester that I'm not satisfied with. However, for people actually interested in Hungarian and not afraid of the work, the classes were well prepared and the teacher was motivated.

Daily life and free time:

The supermarket prices of food in Budapest are very close to those in Germany, and a similar selection of products is available. Many products are exactly the same because of international supermarket chains. Restaurants of any kind can be found around the city and are usually cheaper than expected. Street food (pizza slices, döners, Hungarian food like langos) are available everywhere, also at night.

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The ESN Mentors offered a cheap "starting package" on the first day of the semester, which included a SIM card (including mobile internet with a lot of data and unlimited calls to other students using the offer). It costs about 15€ per month to maintain the offer and keep the internet access + unlimited calls.

There was also an arranged meeting with a representative of OTP, a major bank, which gave an option to open a bank account. I used the offer and had no problems with it, ATMs of OTP are very common around the city.

Most people who are likely to deal with foreigners speak enough English to allow communication.

The Erasmus Student Network offers a great selection of events. The semester begins with an integration week filled with events, but they also continue through the entire semester. Trips to countries neighboring Hungary are organized, as well as regular pub visits (different pub each week) and bigger parties from time to time. There are occasions to go sightseeing around the city and try local food, too. The local ESN mentors put a lot of effort into their program, definitely much more than other universities I was interested in.

Outside of the organized events, Budapest offers an incredible nightlife. Prices in usual pubs are quite cheap, much more expensive in clubs. There is a huge selection of places to go, many places are especially popular with Erasmus students. Some places have special offers on certain days of the week, cheaper entry with drinks included in the price or open bar (great value). The ESN Mentors know these places well and visit them, and share the information about them with students.