

ERASMUS+ STUDIES

UU Report 2014-2015

e-mail address	<i>optional; only if you don't mind students preparing for study abroad contacting you directly</i> istvankleijn@gmail.com
faculty/college	Science
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Theoretical Physics

destination city & country	Stockholm, Sweden
name university abroad	Stockholm University
start date	25 / 08 / 2014 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	18 / 01 / 2015 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application for the exchange program itself went rather smoothly. I think it helped that I had a good idea what I was looking for – master's courses in biophysics. This made it easy for me to narrow down my options.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The professors, exchange coordinators and administrative staff were all very supportive of me. I found it often helpful to talk to people face-to-face to explain my plans and get feedback. Talking to people was also the best way to solve problems in the process of applying for the Erasmus grant. I would say that everybody was willing to help, but they were of course not aware of my problems unless and until I told them.

academic preparation

I figured that I did not need to prepare specifically for my exchange, because I would be following entry level master's courses of a master where my bachelor's degree passed the entry requirements. I was right.

language preparation

The Swedes (at least the Stockholmers) speak English very, very well. I did learn some Swedish while I was in Stockholm, but it was not at all necessary.

finances

I have learned that it is wise to start an exchange semester with some spare money in your bank account, even when you are able to stick to your overall financial planning. I had to pay the rent for the entire semester in September already, and due to some problems with my grant application I only received the Erasmus money in October. The grant did cover all my necessary extra expenses.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

The course load was well distributed, although I did not like that I had only one course at a time – I followed four courses of about one month each. The courses followed each other logically, especially the last one really built

on the first two. Most teachers were good and they all took real interest in the students. It probably helped that the classes were very small, no more than 10 students. As I was a physics student doing biophysics courses, I found the biology part rather hard, but the physics part very easy. That is mostly a feature of such an interdisciplinary topic. A fellow student with a background in biochemistry had the opposite experience.

academic quality of education activities

I felt that the courses that I took were good preparation for doing research on the studied topics.

Counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I wanted to do courses in biophysics, which is part of the chemistry department at SU... The exchange agreement was formally between our and their physics departments, but the coordinators were very accommodating. So I had a very positive experience with the foreign office. Also, the university had all kinds of help desks and people caring about the students' well-being. When I had a small illness, I went to a university nurse, who could point me to a doctor's practice with experience with exchange students.

transfer of credits

Stockholm University has implemented the Bologna (ECTS) system, so this is not so hard. Not all Swedish universities have done so.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The orientation for foreign students was organised by the university and the student union together. It lasted a week, but there was usually only one activity per day. Therefore there was a lot of time to get to know the city and the other exchange students.

accommodation

Most exchange students at Stockholm University can get housing via the university, but definitely not all. I was very lucky, because I got a room at campus, within walking distance of my lectures. Private accommodation is very hard to find though.

leisure & culture

Stockholm is a city with lots of variation. You can spend your weekends in posh night clubs, picturesque skating rinks or one of the many musea. I think that anyone should be able to enjoy themselves for years in Stockholm without getting bored...

I found Sweden to be quite similar to the Netherlands. The most notable difference is that Sweden is even more organised, in both good ways – no alleys with dead ends – and bad – even renting a tailcoat requires your personal ID number.

suggestions/tips

Speaking of tailcoats: the main event in Stockholm is of course the Nobel Week, when the Nobel Prizes are awarded. It ends with the Lucia Ball, an evening of awesome student fun, Swedish traditions and honouring people who deserve it. Attending Laureates are knighted in the Order of the Ever-Smiling and Jumping Green Frog.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

As is probably clear from my musings, I had a great time in Stockholm. I really felt at ease, and after a few weeks I felt right at home too. So yes, I definitely would recommend Stockholm (Universities chemistry department).

do you have any additional advice or comments?

The experience of staying abroad has taught me quite a lot about myself. I found it an ideal time to observe my habits and change them where appropriate. So I would encourage you to resist the temptation to do most things just like you would do them at home, and try something new.



Universiteit Utrecht

Your introduction (name, where you went to)

Eef van Dongen (for further questions: eefvandongen@gmail.com), I went to Stockholm University for an exchange of 5 months.

Your study (what did you study, why this study and why this university, what did your stay contribute to your goals, study culture at the receiving University)

I studied meteorology, general relativity and a course in Swedish. I especially enjoyed to learn Swedish, and it wasn't that hard since a lot of words are almost the same as in Dutch experience. It was easy to get in contact with study advisors/teachers at the university which made it a nice atmosphere to study in. Besides that, SU is a very international university, with many exchange studies such that you get to know a lot about different cultures. Important remark: if you want to take English courses, apply early! I was too late, those courses were popular.

How did you experience living abroad (culture and people, housing, university culture)

I stayed in Lappis, perfect student accommodation at the campus and only 20 min by bike from the center. There is a student union that organizes many activities such as an international dinner. Becoming a member at the Stockholm long distance ice skating club (SSSK) really made my stay to a wonderful experience. Don't hesitate to contact me if you'd like to know more.



Skating on lake Mälaren, near Stockholm