

ERASMUS+ STUDIES

UU Report

2016-2017

PREPARATION
exchange application process
The exchange application process is well guided by the UU, however be sure to check which documents are required and when you should have them ready. If you need to contact people to get signatures and such it's good to do so a.s.a.p. It also helped me to speak to my student counselor before starting the process of applying so she was aware I was going to and I knew I had her support.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
The UU career office, both university wide and REBO, are very helpful and you can always email them with questions. Be sure to attend the information sessions before applying and the preparations meeting once you're accepted, they're very helpful.
academic preparation
When going to Denmark be aware that the education is very much focused on interaction, small groups and cooperating in groups. The education is not conventional, different methods will be used to teach and to assign projects. If this is not something your studies normally does be aware of this, I feel like students from the Netherlands were generally used to this and adjusted well but students from countries where education is more conventional (France, Germany) needed some time to adjust. Also be aware when applying to study political science at the Aarhus University (AU) it's assumed you know something about quantitative methods, although my own lack of knowledge on the subject could be overcome.
language preparation
Everybody in Denmark speaks perfect English and so no more proficiency than English is needed. The levels of English are however quite high and academic use of the language is expected. Free opportunities to learn Danish are optionally provided to you and if you feel like it that's a fun thing to partake in and you can give yourself a headstart in Danish by using apps like DuoLingo.
finances
Denmark is a very expensive country. Be sure to take into account that renting prices are higher than in the Netherlands (starting at €400 but could be much higher), even outside of Copenhagen like in Aarhus. Food and drinks are also more expensive. Also try to get a feeling for how the conversion rate from Danish Kroner (DKK) into euro's works.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
I studied mastercourses Political Science (Statskundskab in Danish) at the AU. Multiple courses in English are offered. The Danish are very organised and will inform you way ahead of time which courses can be taken and

how the processes for application work. The subject courses might be a bit specific and might not directly relate to your own education or interest (i.e. 'Evolution theory and Conflict', 'Trust in Political Psychology', 'Economy of Terrorism').
academic quality of education activities
The academic quality of the program is good, teachers are generally very knowledgeable and come from all over the world (I had only 1 out of 4 teachers from Denmark, lots of Germans and other European nationalities are represented as well in staff). Teaching proficiency may vary, I found that the younger PHD-students were more capable of generating interest than some of the older professors. The methods of exams may differ, in Denmark oral exams are often used. Classes are generally small and with lots of interaction, seminars where only the teacher speaks are rare. Classes last three hours instead of two like in the Netherlands, and you can expect one class a week per course.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The relationship with the teachers and staff is very informal (no surnames), so they are very approachable if you need help. You can just email them or drop by at their office. The international office is also very helpful and reachable, they may take more time to respond depending on the period of time and business at the moment you send an email though.
transfer of credits
Personally my credits were extra and won't show up on my Dutch degree anyway so I don't know about this. Keep in mind that the Danish maintain a very odd grading system that ranges from -3 to 12, so you may have to look up how your grades actually translate to the Dutch system or GPA to get a sense of your performance.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
The introduction week organised by my faculty, BSS (Business and Social Sciences), was very good. Information is provided way up front, there's an opportunity to apply for CPR (Danish social security number that provides free healthcare) and mentors are introduced at the end guiding you through both the formal and informal parts of Danish student life. Next to helpful and well organised the intro week was also very fun with lots of parties and socializing.
accommodation
Student housing is provided by the AU, however there's not enough student housing to provide everyone. It's hard to find housing in Aarhus (comparable to Utrecht or Amsterdam) so be sure to seek for alternatives in advance in case you might not get offered housing by the AU. Rent is somewhat higher than the Netherlands but often still doable for housing provided by the AU and you get to indicate whether you prioritize affordable prices above location and such. The deposits in Denmark are very high and can be around €1000, so take this into account when budgeting! For housing by the AU you don't get this money back before approx. two months after you leave the housing.
leisure & culture
Aarhus is a great and lively city with lots of activities and cultural events (in 2017 cultural capital of Europe). There's lovely museums (especially Moesgaard and Aros) and music venues and the library Dokk1 is a beautiful awesome building that was named best new library of the world. Going out might be expensive but there's options enough (the bars around the canal, club Double Rainbow, other clubs). The most affordable thing to do for going out is joining the 'Studentarhus' which you automatically do for free as an exchange student. This is a kind of student association for all students with a big building near campus that hosts a lot of parties and events. Their studentbar offers discount for members so you can get beers for 20 DKK (around €3, for half a litre) and they organize an international night every Tuesday night where all exchange students especially in the

beginning will be hanging out. Additionally, every Friday volunteers from different studies and departments get to organize numerous Friday bars on campus. Comparable to the Dutch 'vrijmibo' but much crazier, this entails building bars in the classrooms and educational buildings and hosting a party there from the afternoon till 2am or later. All the Danes but also international students go there and it's a lot of fun.

suggestions/tips

The student mentors from political science are very engaged and well organized, make sure to ask them about events to organize so you can experience typical Danish things and bond with them and your fellow political science exchange students. Some of the events that our mentors organized for us:

- Friday bar crawl (seeing all the different Friday bars and doing crazy tasks during)
- International dinner (everybody brought typical food from their own country)
- Danish Julefrokost (Christmas lunch, with all the traditional Danish foods and schnapps, which is a dangerous Danish drink called Akvavit. We also did traditional stuff like dancing around the Christmas tree and singing songs, and 'pakkeleg', a game where you exchange little gifts).

Also I found learning Danish at the 'sprogcenter' very fun and it's free, so be sure to try it and if it's not for you or too much you can always quit later.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would definitely recommend this destination. The education is good and the student life is amazing. The culture is easy to adjust to as a Dutch person (not that different) but still interesting and the language is fun and not that hard to learn (except for the pronunciation).

do you have any additional advice or comments?

You'll need a bike! The Danes are as avid bikers as the Dutch, but take into account that there's hills in Aarhus so you need one with gears. You can buy one for cheap (not as cheap as the Netherlands though, budget for at least €100) at ReBike and sell it back to them at the end of the semester or bring your own on a car if you can (Aarhus is only ±7 hours driving).

Aarhus Universitet

2015-2016

PREPARATION
exchange application process
The application process for AU was not that difficult. They were really clear in their communication and the information on the website is (mostly) up to date. At the UU, I had a whole other experience. My form was misinterpreted and my application was incorrectly rejected. At the end the International Officer solved it really well by giving me an other spot (Master and faculty, instead of Bachelor and university wide). The communication was after this incident really close and helpful.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
I used my study advisor for counselling and the last months before my stay in Denmark, the International Office at UU was really helpful. Contact face-to-face, a presentation and via e-mail worked pretty good.
academic preparation
The level from the UU is comparable with that from AU. At AU's department for Political Science, they use a bit more quantitative methods in their selection of articles and writing papers. I got used to that in a few weeks and if you are assertive and you can solve your own problems/questions a little, you will be okay. Obviously, they will not give you a lot of extra statistical schooling.
language preparation
All my courses were in English and the level of English in Scandinavia is high. I didn't need a language test for application. After couple of days in Denmark, I was totally in to my English and didn't have huge problems with it in academic or social context.
finances
Denmark is obviously way more expensive than living in The Netherlands. Doing groceries, going to the cinema, drink a beer, everything is a little more expensive. The Erasmus+ scholarship is not enough to stay in life in Denmark. Most of the rooms from the AU Housing Service are around 450 euro's, unless you live some kilometres out of the centre/UniPark in for instance Brabrand or Viby. Groceries are in some supermarkets 1,5 as expensive compared to The Netherlands.
STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
My study programme at the department of Political Science consisted out of master courses. You may only choose courses from one department and one course at PolSci (Statskundskab) is mandatory for international students: Danish Politics and Welfare. It's a great way of being together with all the internationals from the department, every week. The organisation of the courses is great, content from high level. I liked the way of teaching in class, which is comparable with the small scale classes at the Utrecht School of Governance (USG/USBO). They use Blackboard in a comparable way as at the UU, instead of some blended learning exercises. If you can choose the course Globalisation and Security, I would definitely recommend that one, great course.
academic quality of education activities
The academic quality of the education activities quite high, courses are really interactive. Initiative in class is for the Danes at AU really important and being silent is not a possibility. International teachers, out of a lot of different countries, make the comparative perspective from the courses much more interesting.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The coordinator of the Faculty Business and Social Sciences is great and she's supported by good team consisting out of students and professionals. Communication level (also in English) is high. They are reachable by phone, mail and face-to-face.
transfer of credits
My credits are already transferred, after one month back in the Netherlands.

Aarhus Universitet

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The intro-days from the AU and BSS were amazing. No expenses are spared. They give you a massive programme, together with other internationals. In the UniPark, but also in the rest of the city are social activities and in the mornings some informative meetings about the study culture, Danish and Danes. Especially some administrative meetings for the citizen service and the administration for you own GP in Aarhus were really useful. It gives you a good start and the possibility to go with the flow. You can make a lot of friends in the first week if you're prepared to be open minded and open to meet a lot of new people.

accommodation

The organisation from the AU Housing Service was splendid. They'll give you one opportunity to choose a house, after you gave them your preferences. My preference was to stay in a share facility house and that was absolutely 'hygge'/cosy. The landlord was close when we needed help with Wifi or some other things in the house. Cooking diner together with a lot of internationals out of Brazil, Portugal, Russia, Austria, Germany, India, Spain and Italy made my experience. Some houses are close of the UniPark or the city centre and I would recommend that. You'll pay a little bit more than others, but sometimes the difference with the payment for a student living far away is not that big. It's really difficult to find a room yourself, almost nobody did that. The only disadvantage of the Housing Service is that you only can reserve a room for the 1st or the 15th from the month. Your intro will start somewhere in between this two dates. I had a great room near the UniPark (2 minutes walking) and 5 minutes by bike to the city centre and the canal. The rent was 450 euro's for the 18 m² room.

leisure & culture

On your first day in Aarhus you'll not think this probably, but there's a lot to do in the second city from DK. If you're interested in culture you must go to AROs (with panorama view) and the Moesgaard Museum. For leisure there are some sport facilities; great gyms and cross fit, besides some 'normal' sportclubs. Aarhus and some really nice bars such as the Sherlock Holmes Bar and bars at the canal (Shen Mao) or at Vestergade (Vesterlauget, also a great sushi place is there). Make friends with real Danes and they will bring you to the greatest places. The Fridaybars (especially the one from the medicines faculty) in the UniPark are really cool. It's a kind of the Dutch 'Vrijmibo', but than earlier and until late night. Students of a lot of studies, Danes and internationals, meet over here. Also the international nights at Tuesdays in the studentshouse are (in the beginning) great to meet new internationals.

suggestions/tips

Some tips: Fridaybars obviously, the Deer Park (with really cute deers), the beach at Permanente. And buy a bike, you'll need it in and around Aarhus.

CONCLUSIONS

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

The AU is maybe not a good place for everybody. In my opinion you must love the Danish culture, humbleness, a decent university and the behavior from the Danes. I loved the UniPark (a kind of Windows-background, paradise and Teletubbie-landscape) and felt in love with Aarhus and the people I've met (internationals and Danes). I loved the brick stones from the Uni-buildings, the simple and decent study places, the way the Danes behaved and interact with each other and with me. I loved the harbour, the crossfit facilities and the small and cosy bars in Aarhus centre. Next to my study, my social life was the most important. For me and for the other internationals. Your friends, the parties, being together, was everything.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Travelling in Scandinavia was pretty easy with Aarhus as a base. In the Northern part from Denmark you can go by boat to Bergen or Oslo. The airport from Billund is reachable by bus in 1,5 hours and gives you the opportunity to fly to Norway, Reykjavik, Stockholm. Copenhagen is doable by bus in 3 hours and from there it's also pretty easy to go to Stockholm. In the beginning it's possibly that you're afraid and not everything will be easy before, during or after your stay. But don't be scared, you will get a lot for your braveness.