



## Masaryk University, Brno

2018-2019

<b>PREPARATION</b>
exchange application process
It is usually said that the exchange application process is not too difficult to arrange (especially when the destination is in Europe). Yet, I found that during this period of time, I had to fill out quite a lot of forms that were oftentimes not signed in time or with a delay. Therefore, my advice would be to complete the exchange application process as early as possible, because if you leave it until the beginning of the summer, the chances that there will be delay will be greater.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
Overall, the counselling & support at Utrecht University was good. I especially appreciated the information with regards to obtaining and fulfilling the steps of the Erasmus+ STUDIES grant. Moreover, whenever I had questions concerning studying abroad, the international office quickly responded in a very comprehensible way.
academic preparation
As far as I know, I have not undertaken any academic preparation before arriving in Brno. Therefore, I cannot answer this question.
language preparation
When it comes to language preparation, I only had to do an English test. It was not too difficult and if you are able to write your academic paper in English already, the chances that you complete your test successfully and get accepted by the receiving institution are great.
finances
In my case, finances were not really a problem. I had saved some money to pay for flights and the first two months of accomodation. Yet, as Czech Republic is so cheap in comparison with the Netherlands, after I settled, money was never a problem.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>
study programme (content and organisational issues)
The contents of my study programme were very interesting and instructive. Besides following courses that were connected to my regular bachelor programme, I also attended classes that dealt with whole different subjects. The variety of courses at Masaryk University is extensive, and thus the search for these courses was relatively easy. When applying for a course of another departement, you were usually still allowed to attend the course after personally asking the coordinator or teacher for permission. Masaryk University therefore also provides you with the opportunity to extend your interest in different fields of study.
academic quality of education activities
The subjects that I followed were very interesting. Yet, the academic quality is usually beneath that of the courses I followed at the UU in the Netherlands. I therefore decided to also attend some Master degree classes. This occasionally challenged me, but afterwards I can only be happy that I did this as they taught me a lot.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
I never really asked for counselling or support from my receiving university abroad. Yet, I had several nice teachers that were always eager to help me even when the question concerned another topic or course. Overall, Masaryk University is very open and supportive towards exchange students.



#### transfer of credits

The transfer of credits seemed initially difficult as Masaryk University worked with a whole different grading system. Yet, only recently transferring grades and credits from a host university to a home university have changed. Nowadays, you either get a pass or a non-pass, and thus the evaluation of your grades and credits became a lot easier.

## STUDENT LIFE

#### welcome & orientation programme

The orientation week was very insightful. Besides the occasional party, we got to know the city and received information about how to settle in Czech Republic. The week was full of activities and we got plenty of time to meet new friends.

#### accommodation

The accommodation, Vinarska A1/A2, is not for everyone. Before applying for this residence you should ask yourself whether you want to live with a complete stranger for 5 months. There is no privacy, and the furniture is mostly outdated. Yet, I honestly liked it. My roommate became a good friend of mine and we enjoyed having a drink at night in our room.

#### leisure & culture

There is definitely a lot to do. Even though Brno is not a vibrant city culturally, the prices are very low, and thus one can engage in many activities. There are several football fields, gyms, and swimming baths for the athletic type. I mainly liked the fact that the Czech culture is so laid back, and therefore visited many restaurants and pubs.

#### suggestions/tips

If you would go to Brno, realise that you are almost in the heart of Europe. Great cities like Prague, Budapest, Vienna and Krakow are only a few hours away. Even though Brno mainly shines when it comes to their "beer culture", students that wish not to party as much as I did, can always visit the mainly beautiful places surrounding the city.

## CONCLUSIONS

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

Definitely. As a Dutch student you will most likely not have to worry about money in the Czech Republic. This opens up a lot of opportunities and enables you to engage into many different adventures. Moreover, Brno is a very international city. Even though there are few to no tourists, due to Masaryk University, many of the young people in Brno are from different countries.

#### do you have any additional advice or comments?

As a Dutch person, it was quite the cultural shock to see that people are very introvert in Brno. In public transport, for example, it was normal not to talk too much or too loud. Moreover, it was also not common to have a chat with someone who served you your drinks or helped you pay at the counter.



2017-2018

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	
	The application process is very good guided by the University. The steps you have to take are clear. Only tip: don not forget to stop your travel compensation on the beginning of the month, I said the 10 and then I did not get it for the whole month.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
	It was very nice that the international office had a walk-in-time for questions, because the paperwork was sometimes a little bit overwhelming.
academic preparation	
	All the English courses of Masaryk university (MU) were easy accessible on their website and they had clear videos explaining how it worked.
language preparation	
	I did not undertake any language preparation, because according to the test my English was sufficient.
finances	
	Brno is very cheap. MU provides students with cheap housing and there was even a grant available.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
	ESN organised many activities for the students to get to know each other, that was really nice! And there was also a buddy system, so you could always ask questions to the Czech student. The courses had a clear programme and were (most of the time) very interesting.
academic quality of education activities	
	The academic quality of the courses was very different between the courses, but overall not too difficult.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	
	The point of contact of MU was very helpful and she answered very fast on email contact.
transfer of credits	
	My grades still have to be implemented.

<b>STUDENT LIFE</b>	
welcome & orientation programme	
	The orientation programme was a whole week and you learned the city and new people in a fun way!
accommodation	
	The accommodation that was provided by the university was cheap and really nice, because you lived together all the other internationals!
leisure & culture	
	You have enough free time to do trips. Because the location of Brno and cheap transportation I really



recommend to go on many trips!

suggestions/tips

Become a member of ESN, it saves a lot of money!

## CONCLUSIONS

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

I would really recommend MU! The city is not too big, but also not too small with a lot of students! Also, everything is very cheap and the location is central, nearby the big cities like Prague and Vienna. The housing is easy and the university is well organized to receive internationals.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

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## 2013 - 2014

### preparation

exchange/placement application process

The process of application was pretty easy going. A long time before I decided I wanted to go to Brno I knew that I wanted to study abroad. I looked at the website of Utrecht University and made a selection of interesting universities. In november and december I prepared all the relevant documents for application. To be able to apply for an Erasmus program I first had to fill in a study plan and language proficiency form at the study advisor of my own study, which had to be approved by my university. After that I had to fill in a learning and a study agreement to really apply for the Erasmus program and grant, through Osiris. In januari I handed them in. At the end of februari I received a letter from Utrecht University that I was selected for Brno. The process was smooth and easy. I didn't experience any problems.

counselling/support at home university

The support of my home university was fine. At first the process and contact was pretty good. But later it was all a bit vague. I didn't receive a lot of information. And the information I did receive was 'mosterd na de maaltijd' (as we say in Dutch). Sometimes I tried to get in touch with my coordinator because I had questions. But unfortunately I would receive the response 3 weeks later and not even by my own coordinator. In may there was a fire in my hall of residence. After that event many people were involved; as well the people from the international office. I really appreciate their input and readiness to tackle the situation.

My study advisor of my department helped me out a lot during the process. She responded quick on my emails. And she even suggested to have a skype meeting about my master etc.

academic preparation



Before I went to Brno I didn't need to improve any academic skills. The only thing I had to do was to select some interesting courses and to hand in the Learning Agreement. In Brno the university has the rule that every student should at least take 20 ECTS courses in total. For me that was no problem. I wrote my bachelor thesis and did 30 ECTS courses. In total it was pretty demanding. But it highly depends on what kind of courses you are taking and in what faculty. There are pretty big differences in the amount of credits and the difficulty of the courses.

#### language preparation

At the university they teach in Czech and English. The international students mostly only do English taught courses. Therefore it was not necessary to do any language preparation. At least if you have some experiences in writing and speaking academic English. In the first week all students were offered a quick Czech language course. I participated in this course. I think it was really usefull and nice to learn some about the Czech language. The university also offered an Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) before the start of the semester and language courses during the semester. For those you had to pay an extra fee. I decided not to do any of them, given the demanding courses I already selected. Looking back I think it might have been better if I had done the language course. The language barrier between the international students and Czechs (outside of university) was a recurring issue.

#### finances

Before I went to the Czech Republic I made a financial plan. My revenues were DUO state grant, Erasmus grant and my own savings. The Czech Republic is a cheap country in comparison to the Netherlands. I had a big budget and I was able to spend money on travelling etc. On the other hand, I underestimated the fact that you have to pay everything by yourself. You can not go home to your parents for dinner when you are running out ;) But I was able to do a lot of fun things; going out, have dinner in restaurants, have cocktails, travel etc.

### study/placement abroad period

#### study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)

Before I went to Brno I made a selection of interesting courses. Unfortunately I was not able to do all of them. Some were not taught that semester and some were already full. The other negative part was that for the majority of the courses I had to ask for an exception. This was only a procedural thing. But a lot of students struggled with that. So, before I went to the Brno I had no idea which courses I would be taking. Luckily most of my exceptions for enrollment were accepted.

In the end I took the following courses:

- Conflict Management (7 credits, only 4 meetings in the semester)
- Transformation of Central and Eastern Europe (8 credits, fulltime)
- Czech Politics (7 credits, fulltime)



- Changing Political and Social Identities in Post-Cold War Central Europe (10 credits, only 6 meetings)

- Physical Education - Cognitive Hiking (2 credits, only 4 meetings in semester)

The university offered a lot of interesting courses in different kinds of fields. You could even enroll for courses like hiking, cycling, yoga, bouldering etc. That was really nice. Obviously, my home university did not accept these courses. But it gives you the opportunity to see and do a lot in the surroundings of Brno. Be aware that it is not possible for you to improve your language skills through language courses at the university. Those courses are only for full bachelor students.

academic quality of education/placement activities

The quality of the courses were very different. Most of my courses were Master courses. The level was quite high, especially for Erasmus students. But if you compare the Master level in the Netherlands and in the Czech Republic there is a big difference. I had to write a lot of essays; some short, some long. But in total I wrote 10 essays and I only had two exams.

The way of teaching is pretty different from what I am used at the School of Governance. Most of the courses had a traditional format; the professor speaks, you listen. There was no room for discussions between students. It think that is a shame. I missed the debating and analytic skills.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

The international office of Masaryk university is very good. The advisors do a really good job. Obviously they have a pretty busy tasks. But they always made time for you if that was necessary. For example, the international office of Utrecht University sented them an email about my application in march. And within a day I already received information of the international office of Masaryk about the application procedure. They also respond really fast on emails. The website of the international office in Brno is very good. It contains almost all information you need. This makes the preparation of the documents and your stay in Brno very easy.

transfer of credits

In Brno they work with a different grade system, namely a letter grade system. Untill now I am not sure how this will be transferred to the Dutch system with numbers. I am pretty sure that all credits will be transferred. Given the fact that my learning agreement and changes has been approved during my stay in Brno.

**student life**

welcome/orientation programme

During the first week the international office and ISC hosted a lot of fun events for students to get to know each other. Like;

- Welcome breakfast
- Workshop by EXPAT Centre - Discover Czech Culture



- Tour of Brno
- Survival Czech (crash course) - BEGINNER COURSE for all students
- Brno City Game
- Language Café - get to know each other!
- Movie Night
- Welcoming Party
- International Dinner - Share Your Plate
- Weekend excursions (Starobrno brewery or Špilberk castle)

For all events the costs were 30 euro's. The ISC also organized a lot of fun events during the semester; parties, board games, visiting schools and trips to other cities in Czech Republic and Vienna.

#### accommodation

During my stay I lived in a student domotory. Almost all foreign students live in Vinarska. It takes 10 min to get in the city centre. It is pretty close to the city centre. Vinarska contains of two big flats, a hotel and the economy department. The neighbourhood is pretty nice. There are a lot of big detached houses. In Vinarska you share your room with one other person. The advantage is that the two of you have their own kitchen, bathroom and toilet. Most of the rooms are very old (the communist feeling is still very much a live). For this room you pay 130 euro's a month. I would recommend other students to select a refurbished room. They even contains proper walls, kitchen, toilet and bathroom. They are a bit more expensive, around 160 euro's. But it is really worth it. Vinarska A1 is a nice community. The international people like to party a lot. You might not always get enough rest. But the advantage is that you are able to have a lot of contact with others. It is the perfect opportunity to get to know a lot of foreign students. If you're looking for a bit more peace, you can also also select other domotories. But I know that people don't really talk to each other in these domotories.

In may we had a fire in our dormitory. There were no fire alarms or fire detectors. Unfortunately, students didn't wake up because there was no warning. During the fire there was a lot of chaos. After the incident it took a long time (1 month) for the university to take responsibility and make sure that the accomodation organisation was held responsible for changes in the building. At this point; I believe that the building is unsafe. But I advise you to talk to Wieger Bakker and Marlise Mensink and ask them about the improvements in the building.

#### leisure/culture

Brno is very nice city. Most of the arctitecture is comparable to Vienna and Prague. The only difference is that there are a lot of old and ugly buildings in between these beautiful buildings, this due to the Communist era and the amount of money Czech people pay for renovating. But the city is improving. Brno offers many different things; Czechs like their beers, so there are a lot of pubs and clubs. There are a lot of good restaurants. The



Czech food is not my favourite, but they also have good Italian, French, Indian and Japanese restaurants. There are few good wine and cocktail bars. Culturally; you can visit the Spilberg castle, Tugenhat and the opera or ballet. There is a big reservoir near by the city. You can have walks there or enjoy the nice weather near the water. Czechs are crazy about shopping malls. There is one in the city centre and a very big one outside of the city. These are open every day (except on Sunday). The shops in the city centre are not opened during the weekend.

Brno is the perfect place to start your travelling. The Students Agency busses are very cheap and good. You can also decide to go by train, which will take a bit longer and is a bit more expensive. In Czech Republic there are a lot of small UNESCO cities; Olomouc, Cesky Krumlov, Kutna Hora, Kromeriz, Telc, Tribic etc. If you want to travel to big/capital cities, you can travel to Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, Krakow or Bratislava.

suggestions/tips

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### conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

I would recommend all of you to study in Brno. Brno is a very nice city with a good university. I had a really good time. It's also very nice to learn more about the Czech language and culture. It might be useful to try to improve your Czech language skills given the fact that a lot of older people don't speak English (rather Russian). Be aware that it doesn't have the allure Vienna and Prague. It is still very traditional given food, people, architecture, etc. But if you are looking for that you can easily travel to these places. It is very close!