



Bilgi University, Istanbul

2022-2023

Note from the IEO: please be aware that this exchange was shortly after a national disaster.

PREPARATION

exchange application process

PLEASE CONTACT ME THROUGH THE IEO. There's so much I'd like to tell you if you decide to go here and so many things that I can help you with.

My Exchange application process was a bit of a mess. I'm now writing about my second application, because my first exchange at the end of my fourth year of my bachelor was cancelled due to covid. I then wanted to go to Rome or Lisbon. I got in at Lisbon, but before I could go my exchange was cancelled. My thoughts on choosing Rome/Lisabon were the following (a) language: English speaking/ English education (b) within Europe (c) a climate that would be better than the Netherlands, especially in the second semester.

I decided that I wanted to do an exchange at the end of my second year of my LLM. I postponed a bit of my 1-year-LLM Notarial Law to have the last semester the time to go on an Exchange. I did not rethink my application and just applied for Rome and Lisbon again (2 universities in Rome).

I got no place appointed so then I had to choose from the list of places that were left. I was a bit disappointed again, but suddenly I saw the name of Bilgi University in Istanbul. I was quite excited because I had never thought about Istanbul as an option although it fits all my needs/requirements. I read about it and I decided to apply. I also thought I had a tiny chance because I saw that there was only 1 place. Later I found out that before me already 5 years no one had gone to Istanbul.

Either way: I liked my decision and I was curious about this diverse and interesting city, so I decided to do it when I heard that I got the place.

In the end it does not matter how you chose Istanbul: if you did: great! If you're still thinking about it please note that Istanbul and Turkey are two whole different worlds and that you should see Istanbul/Constantionople/Byzantium apart from Turkey as one of the most important cities in the modern world for the last 2000 years and currently as a cultural and interesting metropole..

counselling & support at Utrecht University

I think I went to a meeting which was set up for people who were interested in an exchange at the end of my third year of my bachelors. I quite liked it so I decided to do it. I did not get/use a lot of support from the UU to find my destination but I talked with loads of students about their experiences. That's also how I found out that for me, to keep it simple and straightforward i had these 3 requirements (english, europe, good climate).

After all I was very happy that I chose Istanbul and that I challenged myself by going to a city that is not straightforward and similar in culture but that is different and outside of your comfort zone.

academic preparation

Almost nothing. I knew both in the end of my bachelor's as in the end of my Master's that I would not need the courses or the ECTS to obtain my LLB/LLM so for me the exchange was/is just a way of experiencing living abroad.



language preparation
None. Was not interested in Turkish. While I'm here you learn some words but still not interested. Please note that turkish people (especially if you manage to find a nice home in a local neighborhood) do not speak English! You will need some Turkish and using gestures to get the message across but it's alright you will learn fast enough. Looking back I think taking some DuoLingo Turkish would have been nice just so that I would have known the basic words.
finances
When I prepared for Istanbul I heard that I would get the Erasmus grant and I applied for the reisvoorziening in het buitenland from the Dutch government. With de reisvoorziening you can get your months for your studenten-OV transferred to money. This is some hustle to get it but please do it because those euro's are so nice to spent here. I think it was 100 euro a month that you can get and in Turkey that is an extremely lot of money (please check euro turkish lira exchange rate you will understand). You can use as an example that coffee on a terrace is 25 TL.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	<p>COURSE REGISTRATION</p> <p>This was really strange and exemplary for the ***** Turkish education system and organisation. In the Netherlands I prepared my learning agreement. The Turkish (!) university signed this learning agreement. It's safe to assume that they read it before signing it.*</p> <p>When I came here, they told me during the course registration period that I had to choose 3 law courses ** obligatory because i was a "law faculty exchange student". In my originale learning agreement there were 0 law courses, because i already obtained my LLM and I wanted to broaden my horizon. I had to choose 3 bachelor law courses to fulfill their needs because there were no english-spoken law courses. If I had known that before I would have changed my learning agreement and would have had less irritation. But this is also important to know about turkish education: you never know what to expect. Please do not go here thinking the education is good or if you go here please think twice if you want to get ECTS here that are required for your bachelors because you might end up with whole different courses than you thought at the beginning.</p> <p>In general living in both Turkey and Istanbul is a lesson in letting go, adapting, agility and flexibility not only in the academic world but in the society as a whole.</p> <p>* IEO remark: Please be aware that the Learning Agreement does not (in most cases) equate to course enrollment, but acts as an indication of which courses you would like to follow during your exchange. The courses you end up with can be different from what you have filled out on the Learning Agreement. This is not specific to Bilgi University.</p> <p>**IEO remark: This information can be found on Bilgi's destination page (bestemmingspagina) and was already available at the time.</p>
academic quality of education activities	<p>So first of all: due to the tragic earthquake in whole Turkey all higher education was conducted online. So it was for all of us back to the covid-times again. Online educatin is hard to compare with our Dutch face-to-face education in terms of quality. I found out that the academic quality of Bilgi is quite high, although it also feels a bit more high-schoolish here. While talking to other (Dutch or other) exchange students, I found out that this is</p>



in most universities in Istanbul/Turkey the way to go. A lot of listening and taking notes.

AFTER FINALIZING EVERYTHING

Turkish academic education is different than what we know and in general: lower quality. This lower quality also has as a result that they expect much less from you, so this also has a very positive side. You will have much more time to explore the city explore erasmus and grow as a person rather than grow as a academic student.

I took both master and bachelor courses. Bachelor courses here are (in the law faculty) given to people who use 4 years for their bachelors and after their bachelors immediately start working. Both an LLM and a MBA are things people do in Turkey after working for quite a while. This has as a result that if you take LLM or MBA courses, you will probably see a lot of 30-40 year old people and the most crucial part: the education will be outside of business hours. For a fun time here I would recommend taking bachelor courses if you are a bachelor student and both bachelor and master courses if you are a master student*. bachelor courses are taught during the day (during business hours).

The bachelor education here is really high-schoolish. The teacher tells something in class, if you take notes and be present than you will pass the exam because they will ask the same thing in the exam. There's usually no self-reading, no self studying in anyway and sometimes not even self critical thinking. Critical and academic thinking is something that is not common in turkish universities and not only in Bilgi. I've spoken to a lot fo exchange students who had the same experience. In Turkey education is just: the teacher tells you something, because he told it it is true and if you repeat that you will pass.

*IEO remark: Please check the OER on whether you are allowed to take bachelor courses if you go on exchange during your master.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

IEO remark: Please keep in mind that there had just been a national disaster in Turkey. The following experiences may not be representative for future exchanges.

THIS WAS SO BAD.

I think one of my biggest irritations next to bureaucratic government ***** in Turkey was the contact with the receiving university abroad.

First of all: I arrived just 3 days after one of the biggest earthquakes in the history of Turkey. I know that and we all felt bad for that. About the impact of this on the education the communication was (quite) okay and we all understood that these were difficult times. The communication could have been a lot more consistent but this was not the fault of the universities because the Turkish Government decided everything in this matter and changed their opinion on the way of education every week: online, hybride, face to face, online you name it.

Bilgi University has an "international office", which is sadly run by students. They get paid but there is no professionalism here. You will most of the times if you send emails get either no response or a response that fits a total different question because they did not understand your question.

The best way of communicating with them was going to their physical office but that was 1,5 hours commuting for me so I tried to avoid it. They were also a lot of times closed.

During the first few weeks after the earthquake the International Office always promised us exchange students that they would organise a kick-off day for all international students to meet each other. They never did. They



did not even helped is in any way to get to know each other. It was only for one smart german guy who replied a whatsapp group link to an e-mail that was sent by the International office that we were able to meet each other, otherwise we would have never did. The reason he was able to reply all is also a problem because you should expect people to use BCC in e-mails but let's not get into that.

There was also not a single event for exchange students organised in general and if you needed help with other organisational things this office just referred you to another place.

In general: in Turkey and in Istanbul and in Bilgi you will improve your assertivity and not letting someone go before they helped you because sometimes you will feel like everybody here just wants you to leave so that they can continue not doing their job. I have been pissed a lot of times.

transfer of credits

tbd

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

We did not get a welcome or an orientation programme.* We had to find out everything by ourselves. The "Erasmus Office" at Bilgi is runned by students and they constantly said that "we will hear something later" and then we don't.

If I could give a 1-10 grade to the Erasmus Office this semester I would give them a 2. The only thing they did was helping me with my residence permit application and not because they wanted it, but because I was there face to face telling them that they should help me or other wise I would fail the application.

a 2 out of 10. It was horrible.

*IEO Remark: Please keep in mind that this was shortly after a national disaster.

accommodation

I found a great place to live in Sisli near the metrostation Osmanbey. I can give you the contact details of my landlord who was a great guy and he is suggested by a lot of different universities in University. I did not get any help from Bilgi University to find a place. Other options are SpotAHome or use some other verified website but you will probably be asked to pay a fee of around 100 euro's (I did that to get in touch with my landlord). My landlord owns a building with only erasmus students so that was really nice and I had an amazing time here and made a lot of great friends.

There are 2 important tips before you book something:

- please check before hand with someone who knows the city if this is a good neighborhood or a bad neighborhood and if the commute to your university is okay because not everything is as it seems on Google and the distances are so big here.

please check before hand with someone who knows the city if this is a neighborhood you want to live in as an exchange student. Especially when you are looking on Airbnb everything seems nice but in Istanbul it is really important to be close to the metro (15 mins walking is close) and to be not too far away from the nice places like besiktas, karakoy, Taksim etc because otherwise this will have a big impact on your Exchange

Please contact me for help!



leisure & culture
<p>Set aside the problems I had with my exchange office and the low quality of my education: I had an amazing time in Istanbul. It is such a marvellous city with a whole different culture than what you're used to, so much history and things to discover and so many new cultural things to see that you will be filling your time with just exploring.</p> <p>I would definitely suggest Istanbul if you want to go outside of your comfort zone. If you're focussed on partying and you like techno there's also a lot to do here, but please note that the Turkish community has a different look on alcohol and that you cannot buy that anywhere</p> <p>In general for me as an end-LLM student Istanbul was the perfect place to do more than only drinking and partying on my exchange but also broaden my horizon. You will also be able to meet a lot of people from Asia here because this city is such an important exchange point with Asia.</p>
suggestions/tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - don't go here for educational purposes mostly - go here - live in a good neighborhood which is verified by someone who knows the city before you book anything - challenge yourself - you will live like a king with € seeing the current economic situation. In 5 months I think I cooked 6 times for myself the rest I was just eating in restaurants.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I would recommend Istanbul and going on an exchange in general, but I don't think that I would recommend Bilgi.
do you have any additional advice or comments?



2017-2018

PREPARATION
exchange application process
The application process for Bilgi University was very clear. If you follow the instructions and keep the deadlines in mind, the process would be easy. My only advice is, make a list for yourself with the things you have to do. Because it is a lot.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
International office is very helpful. If you have any problems before or during your study abroad, they contact with you very soon. For instance I had problems with my registration for my master courses. I told this to the International office and thereafter they call the erasmus coordinator at the Bilgi University and they fixed it.
academic preparation
I didn't need to do anything.
language preparation
I didn't prepare myself because I know the Turkish language.
Finances
Before my departure, I worked to save a bit of money. Besides that, my family supported me.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
You can find the study programme of Bilgi University on the website. I had made a list before departure. When I came at the University, they give me another list with courses for erasmus students. This list matched with the courses on the website but not all of it. Furthermore there was a deadline for enrolment, but for erasmus students it was not that strict.
academic quality of education activities
The quality of the courses were very different. Some courses were on level, some courses were very easy. You can say this also about the exams.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The international office abroad was also helpful. They answer very quickly and you can visit them from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m.
transfer of credits
They have the same credit-system as used at the UU (ECTS). The grades are not given in numbers but in letters (A - F).

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
Before departure, my buddy texted me. She give me a lot of information about the student life and how to life in İstanbul. Beside that, the orientation day was very helpful. There was also a student club that orginased a lot of events. For example a breakfast at the Bosporus, a trip to Bordrum and Cappadocia et cetera.
accommodation



I stayed in one of the dormitories of the Bilgi University. A shared my room with another girl from also the UU. The dormitory was in front of the University. There were also a lot of cafes and restaurants.
leisure & culture
İstanbul is a very beautiful city. This city is the connection between Asia and Europe. There is so much to do, you will really enjoy it. I can say you will fall in love with the Borporus.
suggestions/tips
Explore İstanbul! It is very cheap to travel with the bus and metro.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Yes. If your focus is on the pleasure İstanbul is a real student city, you will have the time of your life. But if you want to study on a very high level (higher than UU), maybe another country is better for you.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
Study abroad takes a much effort, but it is really worth it!

2017-2018

PREPARATION
exchange application process
The exchange application process was a lot of work, because there were many deadlines and many forms to be filled in. It takes some time, but, also with the help of the assistants at the International Office, at the end it will all be done and it will be worth it.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
Both before and during the exchange period, the assistants at the International Office where very kind and helpful. I would definitely recommend you to take advance of their support.
academic preparation
Since Bilgi University did not require a higher level of English, it was not necessarily to take any courses for a certificate. I did not do any further preparation.
language preparation
I did not have to do any language preparation, since my parents are Turkish and I grew up talking Turkish at home. However, I tried to improve my Turkish grammar and vocabulary by reading Turkish books before the exchange period started. All that made the exchange period more comfortable for me, because I did not need any talk for doing my daily tasks. Some of my friends in İstanbul took Turkish courses before they came to Turkey, but most of the exchange students did not. My non-Turkish friends told me it was not a big deal to be in İstanbul without knowing Turkish, even though a majority of the population does not speak English. Nevertheless, I would recommend you to learn speaking Turkish before going on exchange to make the most of it.
finances
Since there are differences between the exchange rates of the Turkish Lira and the Euro, it is not expensive to live in İstanbul. Yet, it is helpful to do a lot of research for accommodation, because prices differ when you search online and when you go to the place itself.



STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

Once I arrived in Istanbul, I had to change nearly all of the courses I submitted in the Learning Agreement. But, it was not a big problem, because Bilgi University offers a lot of English courses. I was also able to receive courses of other departments (only if you take min. 3 courses of your own department). By planning all courses between Monday and Wednesday, I saved time to travel in and outside Istanbul.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality of the education at Bilgi University was good. The professors were well-known academicians in Turkey with very much experience in their fields and a high level of English.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The assistants of the Erasmus Coordinator were very helpful, but it was really annoyingly that the Erasmus Coordinator was absent when she had to sign my Learning Agreement and During Mobility.

transfer of credits

In the mid of the exchange period you get to know from the Examencommissie whether your courses are approved or not. Immediately after the publication of the final notes, I was able to request a transcript of records. I did not finish the transfer of credits procedure yet.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The first day of the exchange started with an orientation programme. During that day volunteers from Bilgi University showed us the campus and informed about technical issues and other useful subjects such as public transport and accommodation. That week we also had a breakfast together and we started a group chat at Whatsapp, so we held contact.

accommodation

Before I arrived in Istanbul, I did already got everything done for my accommodation at a dormitory near the campus with the help of another exchange students from the UU. Staying at a dormitory can be suitable for a 4 months exchange period, but if you rather stay at an apartment, it is recommendable to seek for an apartment when you are in Istanbul.

leisure & culture

There are many student clubs at Bilgi that provide tours outside Istanbul. If you plan your leisure time good, you will have a lot of time to do things in and outside Istanbul. Istanbul has a very rich music culture, there are many festivals in several genres. Istanbul has a very young population and many different night clubs, so you will never get bored.

suggestions/tips

Istanbul is a city that is waiting there to be explored by you. It is definitely worth it, it was the best time of my study period.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes, Bilgi University has, despite its short history, very much experience with exchanges and knows exactly how to handle them.

do you have any additional advice or comments?



No.

2015-2016

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The application process is really easy. I recommend you to go before once to the information session about the Erasmus exchange program. Afterwards it is easier to follow the steps and fulfil the application process.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The International Office REBO is always helpful and ready to answer your questions. During your stay abroad you don't have to worry about anything. You can send the International Office REBO an email and they answer your questions within a few days.
academic preparation	It is useful to check the course calendar of the receiving institution before leaving to be sure that they offer enough English courses to have enough credits in the end. For me it was not a problem because I had already the total amount of credits for my graduation. If you want to graduate after your Erasmus exchange but you are not sure about the courses, it might be useful to take an extra course in the Netherlands to.
language preparation	I already speak native Turkish. So I had no language preparation.
finances	I had some savings and lend every month 200 EURO extra from DUO.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	I follow the following courses abroad in the second semester: - History of Turkish Law (LAW 261) - Legal Analysis and Writing in English (LAW 460) - Selected Topics in EU- Turkey Relations (EUR 505) - Intellectual Property, Electronic Commerce and WIPO Arbitration (LAW 670) Some courses you can also follow in the first semester.
academic quality of education activities	The academic quality of the course I followed were really good.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	During the application period you have a contact persons regarding the course registrations at the Law Faculty. They respond any questions or inquiries you may have. For a list of courses offered by the Law Faculty and recommended for international students, please see http://www.bilgi.edu.tr/tr/programlar-ve-okullar/lisans/hukuk-fakultesi/hukuk/sayfa/ingilizce-dersler/
transfer of credits	



--

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
Unfortunately I was not able to join the orientation programme because of my thesis. But don't worry. The International Office send afterwards the sheets to everyone. After the orientation programme they organise a welcome programme to meet new students and explore Istanbul.
accommodation
I rent an appartement in Ortakoy.
leisure & culture
I think that 6 months are not enough to explore whole Istanbul. There are many things that you will not bored.
suggestions/tips
A lot of people in Istanbul don't speak English. Try to learn some basic sentence and verbs before coming.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Yes, definitely! The courses they offer are in really good quality English. Therefore, you can easily pass the exams and in the meantime enjoy the never ending life in Istanbul.
do you have any additional advice or comments?

PREPARATION
exchange application process
There was nothing different about the exchange application process. It was all pretty standard. The coordinators were very helpful. The most important things were the motivation letter and the cv and of course that the basis vakken had been passed. When trying to make a decision about the location, the coordinators at the Erasmus office were very helpful and they were always ready to answer any of the questions that one may have. The appication process was very normal. It is just really important to make sure you have all the deadlines and that you take care of everything on time because otherwise it can be quite stresfull.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
Honestly, at Utrecht they were extremely helpful! I ran into some trouble with my files and such while I was on exchange and I just had to call and they would help me straight away. When the bombing occurred in Istanbul, I straight away received an email asking if I was alright. I was extremely satisfied with the way that the coordinators helped!
academic preparation
I did not do any academic preparation because of the fact that I did not know what to expect when I went there. I did not know how the classes were and what the expectations are of the teachers. Because of the lecture style of education, they did not have many assignments. They mainly had essays, presentations and exams - and depending on the teachers they had assignments that they wanted us to prepare for the class.
language preparation



I did not do any language preparation due to the fact that I speak Turkish and English fluently. I do recommend however that if this is one of the locations that you want to go to, take a language course. This is because of the fact that many people in Turkey do not speak English and even if they do, it may not be on the same level as you may expect. This can lead to a lot of difficulties.

finances

It is relatively cheap there. I did not have high costs, the phone bills and such are quite cheap. Rent depending on where you're looking can be quite affordable, so it is not as expensive as one may expect.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

The study programme at Bilgi was good, the only major problem with it was the fact that the law faculty is mainly Turkish. So for the students that do not speak the Turkish language it can be extremely difficult to take classes from the law department. However there were a few classes given specifically for the exchange students. The good thing was that they give the chance to take classes from different departments so I had the chance to look at the different departments and take classes that I normally would not be able to.

academic quality of education activities

The teachers have a lot of knowledge and they are willing to help the students with their work. The level of English that many of the teachers had was also very good which I personally did not expect. The teaching style that they have there are basically through lectures, which clearly show how knowledgeable the teachers are.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

Personally I did not have any counselling at the university, so i don't think I can really comment on this.

transfer of credits

The university gives the chance to get your transcript on time and send it to the home university as well. So far I have not reached any problems with the transfer of credits since they work with the ECTS system as well. It is just important to make sure that you havent already taken similair classes.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

They organized a lot of trips for the exchange students. The first week they tried to help us out with the transport card, the insurance and such. They were always available to help us and answer our questions. They had made a facebook page for us, so if you had a question, all you had to do was write on the page and many people would try and help you out. They showed us around campus, and told us the most important things we'd need to know when living in Istanbul.

accommodation

Accommodation is quite easy to find. There are really nice places in Mecidiyeköy and such which is also close to the campus. A lot of people found places through the facebook page that the bilgi volunteers opened for the international students, because people would just post on the page if they had a spare room or not. You can also check the internet, there are many people willing to rent out a room to exchange students for a decent price.

leisure & culture

Istanbul is a beautiful city. There is so much to do. What me and my friends really enjoyed doing was going to Beşiktaş and just getting on the ferry and going to the Asian side and coming back. The cultural places such as Sultanahmet, Fatih, Eminonu are places that are amazing because even though there are tourists everywhere,



you can see the culture everywhere. The shopping malls are great, the markets and there is just so much to do. While I was there I also went to other cities in Turkey because the tickets are cheap and there are also buses that go everywhere so if you decide to go to Istanbul, definitely go see the other cities as well!

suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS

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

Personally, I have loved Istanbul ever since I was little. I have been there on vacation on a yearly basis, but it is something completely different about actually living there. The school is fine, but that is not why I would recommend going there. The city is absolutely breathtaking. There is always something different to do, and something new to explore. There are so many different cultures in one location, so many different people that make me be able to say that I would definitely recommend doing an exchange in Istanbul.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

They are a little bit more relaxed over there than you might be used to in the Netherlands so if you have to get signatures or anything, really chase down the teachers. They may not appreciate it, but with me, if I hadn't found the coordinator in one of her classes, I would have only received my learning agreement signed 5 months after I had sent it to her.

2014-2015

PREPARATION

exchange application process

There is an online application process, you have to complete some documents and send it with a motivation letter to the host university. The site and also the meetings of the home university are very useful by this. And it is obviously important that you pay attention to the deadlines. If you are accepted the host university will further inform you about the application.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The international office was always very helpful. I have often been there.

academic preparation

I didn't do any academic preparation. I just use the semester of free choices to go abroad.

language preparation

I didn't do any language preparation, I speak Turkish and English, the courses are taught in both languages. I had no problems with understanding of my Turkish and English lectures.

finances

Before I went to go abroad I received the erasmus grant and I had my student grant of DUO and the financial help of my parents during my stay. Turkey is compared with the Netherlands a cheap place to live only the rents are not so cheap they are around 300 euro per month.



STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

Before you go abroad you also make a study programme. But don't take that seriously, mostly you have to change your study programme. I have totally change my study programme because of the time-schedules of the courses. I think that one of the problems at Bilgi is the not organized system of course registration. Students must on their own effort make a course schedule.

academic quality of education activities

The courses were very interesting. I had one master course and that was difficult. The other 5 courses that I had were not so difficult but they were of a good quality. Attendacy is often mandotary but you don't have to prepare the lessons.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The international office of the host university was also always very helpful. The assistance of the erasmus exchange programme coordinator helped me a lot to complete my course registration. But they don't answer emails very quickly.

transfer of credits

They will send the Transcript of Record to my home institution. And then I need the approval of courses of the exam commission.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The welcome & orientation programme was mandatory and it was very useful. They inform you about important things like how you have to complete the course registration, residence permit etc. There was also a tour given on campus by the bilgi students. so you get also the change to know other erasmus but also Turkish students.

accommodation

Bilgi university offers dorms, but it is quit expensive. Also you have to pay for 1 year and if you are going for one semester is that not an option. My aunt lives in Istanbul and she had found a place for me in Besiktas, which is a really recommended neighbourhood, it was also not too far from the dolapdere campus. It is important that you look at appartments that are close to the university because of the traffic in Istanbul. Also the neighbourhood is important, not everywhere is safe enough. From other erasmus students I heard that the website craigslist.com.tr was very useful and you can always follow the facebook page for bilgi erasmus students.

leisure & culture

Istanbul is an extraordinary city, I was already in love with this city. I am Turkish but also for me was it in the beginning different but after a time you get used to the culture and you are going even like the most things of the Turkish culture. I have also seen and heard that from other erasmus students. Bilgi organized a lot of activities for erasmus student. But I prefer to do things with my own friends. We weren't just going to tourist places but also to other not so popular but different, nice and beautiful places. In Istanbul there is always things to do especially for people with different tastes.

suggestions/tips

Learn the basics of Turkish, only a small part of the people speak English.



CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes, I would sure recommend this university and the most important reason for that is the city self where the university is located. I think that Istanbul is one of the best place to have an exchange, you can so much things see and it is so different from the Netherlands and Europe. I liked to see different cultures.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

no

2014-2015

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The exchange application process went pretty smooth. The university of Utrecht organized an evening about the possibilities of going on exchange and their office at Drift was always open for questions as well. Therefore the only thing that made me hesitate was if I really wanted to go or not. By talking to friends and family about going away for a couple of months I decided I wanted to at least apply for the place I wanted to go and see if I got accepted. When I got the e-mail from the university of Utrecht that I was selected to go to Bilgi university in Istanbul I was thrilled. The exchange application process from there on went smooth, the university of Utrecht really helps you by reminding you of deadlines. Just make sure you keep a list of the things you need to arrange and hand in, so it's easier for yourself. Although there is a lot of paperwork to be handled (in the Netherlands, but also in Turkey), it's pretty logical (well.. at least in Holland), so it shouldn't be too much of a hassle.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The international office at Utrecht University is great; they are really helpful and that makes the entire procedure so much easier. They are always willing to give you advice and help you out with a great deal of things. The response time is really quick as well, but best is just to go by the opening hours on Tuesday and Thursday when you need anything.

academic preparation

I didn't really do any academic preparation before arriving at Istanbul, except maybe learning more about Turkey and the city of Istanbul online.

language preparation

I have been speaking English for quite a while, so I didn't need to do any language preparation, although I must say that the level of English of the professors at Bilgi was extremely good. My only reference is the law department of course, but the English of my teachers was impeccable. It's also nice to speak good English in the contact with your fellow students.

finances

I made a financial plan before going to Istanbul, but I must admit that it was more expensive than I thought. Although Istanbul is a pretty cheap city; doing a lot of cheap things, still gets expensive. Going out for dinner or having a few drinks isn't that expensive, but especially at the beginning of your erasmus you will probably see and do a lot of things that cost money. I also made some trips in Turkey and to Israel, which is a good thing to include in your study plan. There are many trips organized by different organizations and it's definitely nice and worth joining them, so make sure you save up in advance.



STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

Before going to your destination you fill in a study programma that complies with the course guide on the Bilgi website. You probably heard this before, but be flexible with your courses, because there is a high chance that you will actually follow different courses. The first week at Bilgi is an orientation and course selection week, in which you subscribe to courses. The system at Bilgi is rather unlogical, but eventually will work, so after 1 week you probably have subscribed to the courses you are going to follow. There is an add and drop period for courses after a month or so, but this will be explained while you are there. In law there were not many courses I could choose from, since law is the only faculty that also has courses in Turkish, but there was still enough choice. To get all my 30 ECTS I chose 5 courses concerning law and 1 language course. It's really nice that the university has a free turkish language course for students and I recommend taking it, since not many turkish people speak english.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality was way higher than I expected. This might have something to do with the fact that Bilgi is a private university; but the level of education was really high. The teachers spoke good english and knew what they were talking about, which made it interesting to follow the courses.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

Unfortunately the counselling and support at Bilgi wasn't as nice as in Utrecht, but that is probably also a bit of a cultural thing. It's hard to get in touch with them when you're still in the Netherlands (always call, never e-mail) and while I was there they didn't really do any effort in helping with solving problems. They mostly stated it wasn't their problem so they didn't need to help you, although you would think that was what they were for. It turned out fine however and I didn't have huge problems with them, but it's kind of a shame that a lot of people at the university had such trouble with replying to e-mails.

transfer of credits

This process isn't completely over, but so far I've had some problems with it. This due to the fact that I got reminded of telling the exam commission at Utrecht University about the courses I took in December, which I did, and them replying (after finishing 6 courses) that 2 might be too similar to courses I've followed in Utrecht. My advice is to notify them earlier than I did, so as soon as you know your definite program, e-mail the exam commission with an overview of your courses. Don't do it before you go, because your schedule is pretty likely to change while you are there. Some courses overlap or are not given in that semester,.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The university has one orientation day in which you will meet other students, but especially learn more about the university, the subscribing for courses and the residence permit. There is however a group of volunteers (BIV) that organize an introduction week for all the erasmus students to meet each other, which is really nice. There were around 300 erasmus students at my semester, so you will definitely make friends. The first evening we went for a boat party, but we did a lot of things that week, like a typical turkish breakfast, a lasertag game, turkish shisha night etc. I met most of my friends during this week, so make sure you can attend to some of the activities, which are mostly announced at their facebookpage.

accommodation

I decided to look for a room after arrival, which definitely is a wise choice since many of the rooms look prettier on the pictures than they actually are. My advice would be to book a hostel or airbnb for the first couple of nights and then go searching for rooms. It could also be nice to post a message on the Bilgi facebook group to



see if people want to search for housing together. There are a couple of nice neighborhoods to live in, like beyoglu, cihangir, besiktas, galata. There are also many students living in osmanbey or sisli, but that didn't have my preference. Tarlabasi isn't the safest place to live, although I do know some people that found it to be OK. Housing in Istanbul isn't that expensive, so make sure you don't pay too much.

leisure & culture

There are many things to do in Istanbul and it has such a rich culture. Besides from the many things organized for erasmus students there are many musea, exhibitions, palaces, etc. Istanbul is really beautiful city, which amazed me everyday. Since it's seperated by water, you have an amazing view of the old city from many points. Try going to the Sapphire tower in the first couple of days and explore how big the city really is. Furthermore there are many things to do; shopping, pub crawls (Istanbul has some really pleasant bars), sightseeing, boat tours. In my opinion it's a city that every one should visit once in it's life, so getting the chance to actually live there was really nice.

suggestions/tips

I would make sure you buy a Lonely planet or other travel guide before travelling to Istanbul, because it has so many places to see that it's quite useful to have one. Going to places like Dolmabahce palace, topkapi palace, the Aya Sofia, Blue mosque, Galata tower etcetera are a must, but you will figure these things out as you go. Most important is to just go with it! Like I've mentioned before the volunteer group from Bilgi organizes some introduction activites which I would join if I were you. Furthermore it's nice to go on some travelling while you are there, so make sure you safe enough money before departure.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes definitely; the university was of high quality which was good, but the city itself is amazing. I never had such a good time as in Istanbul; it was a really good choice to go. I would recommend this city to everyone since it has such a huge culture and history, the people are nice and helpful (even with their little amount of english), there are many things to do and see and it's a good city for students as well. Don't get your hopes up about the Turkish Kebab though, it's better in the Netherlands. ;-)

do you have any additional advice or comments?

First of all, the legislation around the student visa is constantly changing in Turkey. When I was there, there was just a new law in place that had to do with the residence permit. No one really knew how it worked, so if this is still the case, please feel free to contact me, because I became an expert in my time there so I might be able to help you and otherwise I surely know people who do.

2013-2014

preparation

exchange/placement application process

To get an insight in the procedure of application, it is very recommendable to attend the information sessions given by the home university, because this will help you to know what forms you have to fill in and to gain information about former students going abroad.

counselling/support at home university



At the information sessions of Bilgi, there was also a counsellor talking about if incoming students are going through hard times, whatever the reason may be, they are free to come to make an appointment and to be helped with whatever the issue is. I never really experienced any difficulty, and if I had questions I would ask peer students or the International Office to help me out with something. However, such provisions are good to have.

transfer of credits. After the definite choice of courses I emailed all course descriptions to the exam commission and the only thing they want to have now, is the transcript of records which would be send to my home university as soon as possible. I did not find any difficulty during the application of transfer of credits at all. It is very clear on how it works. But I think the home university could give more information about the transfer of credits during the information session before you go abroad. Because I do not remember that they talked much about it, and then it could be confusing to some, because it is very important to get approval of the courses of the exam commission.

academic preparation

Before I went abroad I already looked up at the course catalogue of the host university and I did some research on the courses I wanted to take. I also took master classes, even if I am an undergraduate student, to prepare myself on any academic field given by a different university.

language preparation

All of my classes were given in English, and because my English is good enough, I did not made any language preparation before I went abroad. At Bilgi university it was possible to take English and Turkish classes. If I would have taken Turkish classes, I had to have a Turkish learning course, but because I choose my courses in English, this was not needed.

finances

Before I went abroad, I received my Erasmus grant of €704,-, with this money I could make some preparations. During my stay I also applied for a student loan at the bank and at DUO. With this money I could pay my rent (€300,-), my groceries and everything else I needed.

study/placement abroad period

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

After I attended the information sessions given by the host institution, it was very easy to understand the structure at the school and what you had to do and could expect the whole semester. They supplied us with an academic calendar, steps you had to take choosing you're definite courses and many other things. The powerpoint they made was also placed on the Student Information page and everything was easy to access. Also, the international office was there at our service, every day between 09:00 and 17:00, which I found very relieving to know.



academic quality of education/placement activities

The teachers that thought the classes gave a very academic view and look to the courses. They were very high educated and almost all of them experienced the working field of law. That's why they gave an academic fill in to courses and thought it very well. The courses themselves and the education contained a lot of useful information and were very professional. The courses started with general principles, but afterwards the information became more detailed and gave a better insight of how it works on the working field and in reality.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

At the information sessions of Bilgi, there was also a counselor talking about if incoming students are going through hard times, whatever the reason may be, they are free to come to make an appointment and to be helped with whatever the issue is. I never really experienced any difficulty, and if I had questions I would ask peer students or the International Office to help me out with something. However, such provisions are good to have.

transfer of credits

After the definite choice of courses I emailed all course descriptions to the exam commission and the only thing they want to have now, is the transcript of records which would be sent to my home university as soon as possible. I did not find any difficulty during the application of transfer of credits at all. It is very clear on how it works. But I think the home university could give more information about the transfer of credits during the information session before you go abroad. Because I do not remember that they talked much about it, and then it could be confusing to some, because it is very important to get approval of the courses of the exam commission.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

The orientation programme of Bilgi was fun to do. We gathered with all the Erasmus students and the international office staff and went through an introduction of the school and the semester. We had a tour through the campus with local students and enjoyed it. This was also an opportunity to meet new people, from Holland, but also from different countries. The orientation day was not too long and not too short. It was great and clear.

accommodation

The most popular internet website to find housing was through craigslist.com.tr. At this website I found my apartment together with a friend of mine. Even though I first had some difficulties finding a place on this website, because of the advertisements that looked better on photos than in reality, I managed to find a place within a week. The location, the people,



everything was perfect. I really enjoyed my stay at my place in Istanbul. It is important to have somebody you can trust to live with and to rent from, because there are a lot of people that can abuse the fact that you are a student and in need of a place to stay as soon as possible. I really recommend students to stay in a house because you have your own things, own space, and you can be as flexible as you want to be, coming late at home for example, which could be more difficult if you stay in a dorm.

leisure/culture

Bilgi University provided for a lot of activities with other Erasmus students in order to see more from Turkey and to have a good time. But I preferred to plan my own activities with my own new friends, because I like to have a good time with a small group, rather than a group of 20 people. Because I hanged out with a lot of locals, I realized that I started to learn more from the culture of Turkey, and that I saw more beautiful places than only the tourist people do. This was a really great experience!

suggestions/tips

Meet local people. They are the best! They know the language, know the culture, know place to go to, etc. Because of the locals you can adapt more to the culture of the specific country and enjoy the time you stay more and more.

conclusions

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

I definitely would do so. I had the most amazing time on school and after school. Even if I did not like the law faculty because of the location, I appreciated that the school busses picked the students up on different places and brought them to the faculties. Besides this, Istanbul has a lot to offer. You can go to the most beautiful places and the public transportation is so enhanced that you can do this within a short period of time. The money, compared to euros, is also an advantage. You can do a lot of nice things for a really cheap price, because Turkish Lira's compared to euros is less in value. Because I am Turkish I did not experience any difficulties during my stay. But my other Erasmus friends who were not Turkish, did not experience any difficulties too, because the people in Istanbul are used to have foreigners in their countries and know English well and are very helpful to everyone.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

It is better that, before you go abroad, you already have arranged a place to stay, and contacted people from your own country going to the same city, because this will help you to adapt easier to the country together. Another advice would be, in case you do not have a place to stay, to look up to hostels in the centre and near the faculty you are going to, so that you can explore the places around you and where you would like to stay. And always attend to



information and welcome sessions of the host university. Also, meeting local people is a great advantage!

2012-2013

preparation

exchange/placement application process

Honestly during this phase I didn't encounter any problems. I was well informed by the UU and completed the necessary documents for the application. Sometimes it took some time, before I got any information about the progress of my application (but again the UU provided quit well information). Once I completed the necessary documents, my application had to be approved by the host university. Meanwhile I did have a little problem with the selection of the courses (to take at the host university) and their ECTS. I got help from my erasmus advisor at the UU and solved this problem. I got a confirmation e-mail by the UU as well as my host university, that I was accepted. The host university regularly sent emails concerning relevant matters like accommodation, erasmus buddies/activities, recommendations and more. This phase was also done quit well by the host university.

counselling/support at home university

The support of my home university was quit good actually. The needed information and documents were clearly put online. So this provided sufficient information and support during my preparation for the erasmus period. Questions were also always answered, though the international office might be very busy. I got reminders via mail and also recommendations for accommodation, language courses and other preparational stuff. This was really nice, because during the preparation you have to complete many documents and other stuff.

academic preparation

I had completed a great part of my master before my departure, so honestly I didn't do very much on an academic level to prepare myself for the erasmusperiod. I was actually a little anxious about the education at the host university and if I would be able to complete it with good results. Looking back it was very manageable.

language preparation

I speak Turkish, so I didn't have to prepare for a language course. What concerns the courses and the host university staff, everyone speaks English (so it isn't likely to encounter any problems on that area). For the students who don't speak Turkish, I would recommend to take the language courses, because outside the campus many people don't speak English. So it would be recommendable to learn the basics of the Turkish language. Many erasmus students take the language course, so it is also nice to interact with the other international students.

finances



I tried to save as much money as I could before my departure, so I would recommend other students to do the same. Besides my own savings, I had my family's financial help and also the erasmus grant of course. Also, I have to admit that most of my spendings concerned the accommodation. Food and transport is cheap in comparison with our home country.

study/placement abroad period

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

Once started with the semester, I totally changed my study programme. I replaced courses and changed my original plan. I have to say that I had problems with the host university at the stage, because they provided almost none information and were not available during the course registration period. I changed my courses and my original study plan on my own efforts. Also the semester would start in the first week of February, but the courses started in the week of February 11th (while nobody informed us about it!). Once the semester began, I went to the courses, there were introductions of the co-students/professor and content of the courses. This was actually nice to begin with. The only problem I encountered on this area is the lack of a good organizational structure of the host university.

academic quality of education/placement activities

When it comes to the academic quality of the courses and the host university in general, I can probably say that it differs with each professor. Especially one professor (of the course Climate change law) was very knowledgeable and the course was amazingly good. The contents, the organization and the whole course was very good. This course had a high academic quality and 'touched' each possible area of climate change law. The other courses were also ok, but the academic quality was lower then at the UU. I earlier stated my anxiousness about the academic level, but if you have good results at Dutch academic level you will be more then fine.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

The international office was located at the central campus of the host university. The information and support before arrival was quit good actually. At the begin of your departure you could choose to have a 'buddy', who could help you with every possible problem in this country. The staff was also nice and very friendly, they were always open for help. I unfortunately can't say the same about the rest of the host organisation; the information provided was poor in my opinion, I had to guess and ask almost everything on my own. Especially, the study programme was changed many times; like college dates/times, exam dates/times. In June the civil riots in Istanbul (and the rest of Turkey) began, but we got especially very poor information about this matter. This is the most negative point I experienced during my erasmus period. I didn't know the situation, the university wasn't reachable, they answered mails not very quickly.

transfer of credits

The host university announces also the ECTS for each course, so I didn't encounter any problem with this yet. I don't expect to encounter any problems on this area.



student life
welcome/orientation programme
The welcome/orientation programme at Bilgi university was mandatory. They actually showed the way in many important issues; like the resident permit, course registration, activities and more. You could also interact with the other erasmus students. Afterwards we had dinner with the whole group at the campus (provided by the host university), so that was quit well organized. We also got introduced to the Bilgi volunteers, who organized many activities and cultural trips (also outside Istanbul).
accommodation
Bilgi university offers dorms, but because it was quit expensive I choose to find my own accommodation. It was quit a intensive search, but I found a very nice apartment in Besiktas (which is one of the better neighbourhoods in Istanbul). For the students who don't want to stay at the university dorms, I would say look for good and reliable appartments (and make use of the services provided by the international office of the host university). You 'buddy' can also help you with finding a room. My recommendation on this area; find a apartment close to the university, because the traffic is really terrible (overfull busses, traffic jams). I would also say, don't look for a place near Taksim (because most of the neighbourhood there can be dangerous).
leisure/culture
Istanbul is a great city with a very high cultural heritage. I would recommend that once you got your student-id of the host university, you buy the museum-card (for just 15 t!!). This card will provide for a free entrance for most museums. There are many beautiful places to see, with many different cultures actually. If you like cultural places and museums, you will find enough places to go to in Istanbul.
suggestions/tips
Find a good appartment, near the university or at least check for busses or other transport possibilities. Kabatas is a central point with very good transport opportunities for example. When you go to bars/clubs, check out the standard of the people present (I would advise you to go to the 'better-known' clubs). Alcohol is more expensive then in the Netherlands, so keep that in mind. Learn the basics of the Turkish language, it will make your life a lot easier!
conclusions
would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain
Yes, Bilgi university is a private institution and the staff tries to life up to a certain standard because of that. Besides some organizational problems on the side of Bilgi University, I had a great time. The professors, staff and co-students are in general friendly and ready to help you. Like I said, especially one course I had was very good. On top of that, Istanbul is a beautiful city with many cultural places. Also there is a variety of good bars/clubs, so everything is present for a amazing time in this city!



do you have any additional advice or comments?

no

2012-2013

preparation

exchange/placement application process

The application process starts via the home institution. You have to hand in several documents to the International Office. If you're accepted the host university sends you an email with further information. You have to register at the Bilgi University and they will give you an account for the course registration.

counselling/support at home university

The home university has a few meetings by which they provide you all useful information. But besides that it is important to search the relevant information yourself, especially uu.nl is useful. If you have any question, you can always ask International Office and they are very willing to help you. It useful to ask the email addresses of students who have studied in Istanbul before.

academic preparation

I finished two years of the normal bachelor program and used the semester abroad for courses of free choice.

language preparation

Language preparation is not needed. In general the level of English of Dutch students is good enough to follow the courses. And the level of English of the teachers is generally very good. It is possible to take a Turkish language course at Bilgi University. I would recommend that, but don't expect too much from it. In one semester you'll just learn the basics and it is not really necessary. But it is very nice to know some Turkish for communicating in daily life.

finances

Turkey is cheap for us to live. The main expense is the rent, which is quite high for erasmus students (around €300). But the food is cheap and there are free shuttles to the university. For studying in Turkey you can receive the Erasmus grant. Besides that I got compensation for my Public Transport card and I had some personal savings.

study/placement abroad period

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

I had to choose courses via the internet already a few months in before hand. Don't take this too seriously, because it will be totally different when you do the enrollment at the host university. In my case some courses didn't exist anymore or were not allowed for erasmus students. So don't focus too much on a certain course. The



enrollment is like a puzzle (especially because of time- clashes) and takes some time. You have a few days time to do this via the internet and you need that time.

Although my study program totally changed, I had in the end very interesting courses. In general the course includes one class of three hours a week. In this class the teacher mostly gives lecture. It depends on the course whether there are books, readers or nothing.

academic quality of education/placement activities

The courses are very interesting, but not so difficult. The level of english of the teachers I had was very good. Attendance is often mandatory, but it is not always that clear what kind of preparation you have to do and the courses often just consist of lectures, so preparation is not really necessary. Also the level of the exams is not that high. For me the courses were mostly a way to learn a lot about the Turkish culture, society and politics which is very interesting.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

The host institution mostly gives you the information you need via email. If there's any problem you can always go to the erasmus office. You can also ask your coordinator, but for me it wasn't easy to reach mine and often she didn't help me that much. Mostly you just have to go to the erasmus office, especially for all the documents.

transfer of credits

Bilgi university gives an indication of the number of ECTS for each course and the Utrecht University follows this indication.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

There is an introduction day before the official start of the semester. During that day they explain all you need to know. They also give an overview of all activities during the year. The introduction is useful, but not so special. But in the week before the semester starts the Bilgi Volunteers organize several events to meet all erasmus students.

Besides that Bilgi University can link you to a buddy if you want. This buddy can help you a lot, especially in the beginning. In my case the contact with my buddy didn't work out, but for many other erasmus students it was a big help.

accommodation

The university offers the students a place in the dorms. The dorms are however quite expensive and you'll share the room with other students. I would recommend you to find a place on your own via sites like craigslist. Or you can just stay first in a hostel and then find a place while you're there. It is quite easy to find a place. In Istanbul there's a great difference between the different neighbourhoods and it is important not to live too far



from the campus, because of the traffic. It is good to inform about the neighbourhood or to check it before living there.

leisure/culture

Istanbul is an enormous city and there's always something to do. There is a lot to visit and the nightlife is amazing. Very useful is the museum card, available for students. It costs just 15TL and gives you free entrance to several museums (even in e.g. Cappadocia). You can buy one very easily at the Aya Sophia and Topkapi Palace. Transport in the city is cheap. With your studentcard you can get also a student transportcard, it's cheaper to travel with that card.

suggestions/tips

Enjoy your stay in Istanbul, it's an amazing city! Try also to see more of the country. Turkey is very beautiful and has very different places which are certainly worth visiting. I would recommend Cappadocia, Pamukkale, Mardin. I also used couchsurfing for travelling and that was amazing. The Turkish people are so hospitable and you learn a lot more about the culture by sleeping at their places. Bilgi University also provides several trips to some of those places. Those trips are in the weekends and very cheap.

conclusions

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

Definitely! The level of the courses was not as high as in Utrecht, but they were very interesting. So you still learn a lot from it. But you learn and experience the most just by living in Istanbul. The culture is very different, it's great to discover that. Besides that there a lot to do in Istanbul and time to also see more from the rest of the country.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Apply in time for your residence permit, it will save you a lot trouble.