



KU Leuven

2018-2019

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	
	The exchange process was pretty straightforward. Information was easy to find and most of it went automatically. I was told step by step what to do and if I missed anything, I was notified of it in due time so I could correct things.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
	Support at the UU was very good. At one point I lost an e-mail that was quite important, and the exchange office was able to find it back for me. They were always very open to all of the questions and usually replied within a couple of days. When something was wrong with my Erasmus file (I couldn't seem to upload something), they took their time to fix it. All of this made my stay much more comfortable.
academic preparation	
	I personally did not prepare academically. I only followed courses like I normally would, so no academic preparation was required.
language preparation	
	No language preparation was required; education was mostly in English, and I was even allowed to follow a course in Dutch.
finances	
	I used my Erasmus grant and my DUO grant to finance my stay. This was only just enough. Keep in mind that almost everything you will need in Belgium is more expensive than in the Netherlands (up to 15%). This can quickly eat away your funds, if you don't plan for this accordingly. Prices when going out are pretty comparable to Utrecht. There are many stores in different price ranging. You will also be told about this during the welcoming sessions. Housing can also be pretty expensive. Be sure to start looking early and if you are able, go and look at the place on site. After you sign you will not be able to get out of the contract anymore.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
	There were not many courses to choose from, but enough to have a broad orientation. The courses are very easy to find. It is left up to the student to plan the courses and the test moments. The courses run through the entire semester, and not necessarily for the whole period. Some courses could be only 2 weeks long, with more meeting hours in those weeks. That means there can be spikes in how busy you are with the courses. It also means that you will have relatively much time most of the time. At the end of the semester all the tests are in one month. I had 7, which was a little too much. I would recommend opting for fewer bigger courses, rather than smaller courses. Some of the courses (3ECTS) were bigger than some of the 6ECTS courses, so it's hard to tell in advance how much time you will spend studying for them. Having a lot of courses makes this much harder. Keep this in mind and start studying early on to get an idea of what you need to do for each course. Other than this everything was pretty straightforward, and I did not encounter further issues with the system. You will join the normal KU Leuven students in the courses that they can choose.
academic quality of education activities	



<p>KU Leuven is a global top 100 university (80th as I write this); with the law faculty ranked even higher. The education was of the highest level, but not much more complicated than in Utrecht. The tests differed greatly in level, some were very easy, some were quite challenging. The courses were different in the amount of attention the teacher can give you. There were courses with 16 students, and courses with a few hundred.</p>
<p>counselling & support at receiving university abroad</p>
<p>Support at the receiving university was very good. Emails are usually responded to very quickly. You will receive a lot of emails explaining how things work. Everything is explained quite well during the welcoming lectures. There are fixed hours to go to the exchange office, to ask all your questions and/or to have all the documents signed. All other necessary facilities, such as psychologists are available and provided by the university.</p>
<p>transfer of credits</p>
<p>The courses are in ECTS, just like in Utrecht. No problem transferring credits.</p>

<p>STUDENT LIFE</p>	
<p>welcome & orientation programme</p>	<p>Right away you will receive a lot of emails from different institutions inviting you to partake in some of the welcoming activities. I highly recommend going there, because you will meet some of the people you will see most of the semester there and you will be able to start making friends right away. The way things go will be explained to you quite well during some of the orientation programme. As soon as you arrive, everything will be very clear from the beginning. You will not only be given information about university life, but also tips and tricks of living in Leuven.</p>
<p>accommodation</p>	<p>Accommodation can be good. There are a lot of students in Leuven, so there is a lot of housing available. I haven't heard of anyone having trouble finding housing. Housing is easy to find through the university site kotwijs.be. Some of the buildings are owned by the university, but they are not necessarily better. The earlier you start looking, the better the price/quality will be. Prices are usually between 350 and 650 per month, which is comparable to Utrecht. If you are able, go and look at places in Leuven before you sign anything. I was in the Waterview residence. That was not a pleasant experience. My window was broken, when I arrived, but it was never fixed. The road outside was always very loud. It was very hot, even at night, in every room (other students complained about it too). Stay away from the Waterview residence.</p>
<p>leisure & culture</p>	<p>Leuven is a beautiful city that has old and modern parts everywhere. Just outside the city there are lots of abbeys that you can visit. Or the Stella brewery. There are many opportunities to take nice walks. There are museums in the city. You will be able to go out at the <i>Oude markt</i>, the centre of the city. There are 34 bars in Leuven, the longest bar crawl in Europe. There will be lots of opportunities to meet other internationals in the city, once you have gotten to know them.</p>
<p>suggestions/tips</p>	<p>Makes sure you visit the Van Park Abbey. You can take a beautiful walk there. Brussels is only 20 minutes by train. Visit Brussels, the European quarter, Bruges and Gent. They can all be reached by public transport.</p>

<p>CONCLUSIONS</p>	
<p>would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain</p>	<p>I would recommend this university to others. The university is very qualitative. The facilities are top-notch, the teachers are nice and know what they are talking about. You are taken very seriously as an</p>



international student. There are lots of courses to choose from. They offer a wide array of orientations. There are lots of opportunities to meet and make friends among the international students. The city is truly beautiful and not big, so everything can be reached by foot. However, you will have the opportunity to rent a bike for only 60 euros per semester.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

My advice would be to stay in Leuven, apart from your trips to other Belgian cities. If possible, do not go back home in the weekend. The weekend is where you will be able to meet other international students. You will make almost no friends amongst the Belgians, there are not a lot of opportunities to meet them. This way you can make the best of your stay in Leuven.

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application was very smooth. However, the people in Leuven were hard to get a hold off.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The people at the International Office were always very quick and helpful in their answers.

academic preparation

I did not make any additional academic preparations on top of the general home course load.

language preparation

Language was English, which I already spoke obviously, so that was of no concern.

finances

Leuven was more expensive than expected so finances were tight.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

academic quality of education activities

The quality was disappointing. The only course load were lectures, reading materials and end of term tests. There were no papers, presentations or other more academic challenges during the rest of the semester.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

No specific comments.

transfer of credits

I'll have to wait and see.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

Was very nice. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Accommodation



Was fine, though expensive.
leisure & culture
Normal student life.
suggestions/tips
If you want an academic challenge, do not visit Leuven.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Leuven is a rather traditional university, especially the Law faculty. As such the programme is not really adapted to the modern age.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
No.

2012-2013

Preparation

The exchange application process for an Erasmus Exchange in Leuven was quite easy. I had to send in a motivation and list of grades. It is very important not only to motivate why you want to study abroad, but also why you want to study especially in leuven. I would highly recommend to start early with all the paperwork for the application, because before you know the deadline is there and it takes some time to get all the signatures etc.

I had a lot of support from the University in Utrecht. Although sometimes it could take a while before I got a reply on questions, in the end I was always helped. If you go by the international Office with questions they really take time to answer your questions and will help with all the problems you face in applying and arranging your Erasmus exchange.

I did not have to do any special academic preparation for studying in Leuven. Since Leuven is a city in the Dutch speaking part of the Netherlands (Vlaanderen), I did not need any language preparation. Before I went to Belgium I thought that



Belgium as a whole was bilingual. I was a bit worried that I had to bring up my French again. But it turned out that all the Belgians in Leuven only speak Dutch. The French influence is definitely noticeable though in little words like "alle", "amai", "ca va" and "salutkes". The courses I followed were in Dutch and English. It was possible to attend some language courses during my stay in Leuven(English, Dutch and French), but I was busy enough with my normal courses, so I chose not to do this.

Life in Leuven has been far more expensive than my life in Utrecht was. Of course this is partly because I was on my Erasmus and did a lot of dinners, parties, trips and other stuff that makes money disappear. I definitely spend more money on these kind of things than I normally do in Utrecht. But this is also because the daily life in Leuven is a bit more expensive than it is in The Netherlands. Bars and restaurants have quite the same prices as we have in Utrecht, but grocery shopping is a lot more expensive. These extra cost could be compensated with the extra money I got during my Erasmus. Of course I received the Erasmus grant(200 euros) and the OV reimbursement (98 euros). Together with my normal study finance grant and some help from my parents I did not have to worry about my spendings in Leuven!

Study abroad

I did not choose courses before I went to Leuven. That's a special thing in Leuven. When the semester starts students get more or less one week to go to all the courses they want and see if they like it. After this week you choose your definite courses for the rest of the semester.

I chose six courses, three English and three Dutch. As an exchange student you can choose two courses from other faculties than the law faculty. I chose to do some philosophy courses in this space. The other four courses were master courses that were especially for exchange students. These courses were: European Company law, European Legal Theory, Chinese Law from a European Perspective and Psychology of Law.

The educational system in Leuven is different than it is in Utrecht. I only had lectures and no seminars. This results in a more passive position of students. The professor



talks and the students listen. Of course there is space for questions, but this is nothing like the 'activism' that is required from students in Utrecht in seminars.

The system in Leuven asks more self-independency from students. You get one lecture a week for a course. Everything else you have to do yourself. The exams are mostly open book and quite difficult, so you have to read much for yourself. The Belgium students are very disciplined to do this. They always go to class and prepare their lectures.

You can see a big change in Leuven when the exam period arrives. In the evenings the streets are empty and the libraries are completely full. But this is only the last month of the semester. The first weeks of the semester are the complete opposite. Libraries are empty and there are parties everywhere!

The International Office in Leuven was a very good support. They answer fast on emails and help if you have a problem.

Since Leuven has a semester system(half year) and Utrecht a block system(4 periods a year), There is a change in the number of credits you get for a course. In Utrecht I was used to gain 7,5 ECTS for every course. In Leuven the courses are smaller, but last longer(half a year). Most courses were 4 or 5 ECTS. For me the courses in Leuven were harder than they were in Utrecht. That's why it's a bit strange that you get less credits for these courses than in Utrecht. This system has the consequence that you have to choose a lot of courses to gain the 'normal' 30 ECTS for a semester. In Utrecht you need 4 courses for this, In Leuven you need 6 or 7 courses.

Students Life

Leuven has a good and welcoming orientation programme at the beginning of each semester for all exchange students. The day I arrived in Leuven the Orientation Days started. During the day we explored the city, the important places for students, the Sports center etc. In the evening we had dinners and parties. The last two days we went on trips to Brugge and Maastricht. At these days you meet so many people and after I already had my group of friends which I spend the rest of my Erasmus with. For me the Orientation Days were very useful. I would never have met so many



people so quickly without it. Therefore I would really recommend you to participate in these days and go to every activity they have available.

Before I went to Leuven I searched on internet for a 'kot'(the name for a room in Belgium). After a while I found one I liked and one month before I left to Leuven, I visited and signed a contract with my landlord. I lived very near the city center (5 min. walk) and near the Ladeuze plein(this is where the law faculty is situated). In my kot there were 7 rooms and each had its own kitchen. It's not very difficult to get a kot in Leuven. Especially for Dutch students it is easy, since you can just go and look at kots. But also for international students that come from a bit further, the Housing Service in Leuven is always able to arrange a kot in a residence (big students houses with at least 20 people per floor).

The prices of kots can differ. If you live in a residence you usually pay less than in a private kot. I think the normal price for a kot in Leuven is around 300/ 350 Euros.

Leuven is really a student city. During the week the city is full of life, but in the weekends only the international students are there. The Belgium's always go home to their parents for the weekends. Therefore Leuven is a bit empty in the weekends. But the bars and restaurants at the Oude Markt are always open and there a quite a few festivals and special activities in Leuven in weekends.

Leuven has some nice culture to visit (Begijnhof, Arenberg Castle) but since it is so small I mostly went to other Belgium cities like Antwerpen, Brugge, Gent in the weekends for some sightseeing.

Conclusions

I would definitely recommend The KU Leuven to others! It were 6 months I will never forget. Although Belgium is not a very far and exotic place, most of the time I felt like I was far away from home since I had friends from all over the world here! Leuven is such a small and friendly city that makes everyone feel welcome in no time.



If you decide to do your Erasmus in Leuven it is really worth to become a member of Pangea and ESN Leuven. These international organizations organize many activities for international and Belgium students. I went to a lot of parties and trips organized by ESN. Pangea is the central meeting point for international students in Leuven. With ESN and Pangea there is always a place you can go to to meet new people or to meet your friends!