

Final report for the Erasmus Exchange Programme: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen Netherlands

I decided to apply to the university of Groningen as I had heard good things about its Master's programme in economics and there were numerous courses on their website that seemed interesting. Applying through Erasmus was relatively easy and the exchange office in Groningen was always very helpful before, during and after the semester.

Housing

It was not easy finding a place to live in Groningen. The demand for housing is quite high and the quality of housing is not the same as one would find in Germany. I decided against student housing, as they were quite expensive, and tried my luck with private housing. To find an apartment I relied primarily on Facebook. There are many groups on Facebook, such as "Groningen Rooms" or "free housing announcements Groningen". I did have to contact a lot of people but in the end I managed to find a room and in the end my roommates were one of the best things about Groningen.

University

Overall, the help that I got from the university throughout the exchange was very good. I did not have the feeling that if I had needed help that I would not have received any. The quality of the teaching is high but on the other hand they also expect a lot from you. The semester is divided into two parts and thus, there are two exam periods. It is usual to aim for 3 modules per half semester. Before leaving for Groningen I had read the reports by others and they all mentioned the high workload. I have to say that before going there I thought that it could not be that bad but it really was a lot. That should not be underestimated.

I noticed that it is harder to get very good grades. The best grade is a 10, which is almost never given, and average is a 7. It is unfortunate that due to the system that the University of Göttingen uses when converting the grades, you end up with less than average grades. A 7 is acceptable in Groningen but when converted, it is a much lower grade in Göttingen. I found it frustrating to put in a lot more effort per module only to get a worse grade afterwards.

In general

- There is no mensa in Groningen as there is in Göttingen. There is a canteen but they mainly sell sandwiches and only one hot meal option that costs around 5-6€. The Dutch usually eat a sandwich for lunch and a warm meal for dinner.
- The university has good sport facilities called Aclo, which is near the Zernike campus. It is relatively cheap to use the facilities, around 40-50€ per semester but you have to pay more to

use the gym.

- If you enjoy going to the cinema it is possible to buy a monthly card from the pathé cinema, which is not that expensive and with that card you could visit the cinema as often as you want.
- The nightlife in Groningen is great. It really is a city with mainly young people and at night the city feels 'alive'. The clubs are full and in the warmer months the Grote markt is also full. Many clubs/bars do not require entry fees.
- I would definitely recommend taking part in the ESN introduction week. It is the best way to get to know new people and to first experience Groningen's nightlife. It was a lot of fun and the ESN group continued to organise events for students throughout the semester. For example, there was the hitchhiking battle to Brussels, where we hitchhiked in pairs to Brussels dressed up in costumes.
- If the majority of your classes are in the Zernike campus, I would suggest not living in the student accommodations that are located in the south. The distance is rather large and since it rains nearly 80% of the time in Groningen it gets annoying having to ride the bike all the way there.
- If you can, be there during Kingsday. It is the birthday of the King of the Netherlands and the whole city is decorated in Orange and there is a public party for two days.

Conclusion

I really enjoyed the time that I spent in Groningen. Yes, the workload was high but other parts of Groningen made up for it. I am glad that I chose Groningen and I got to meet many people, some of whom I am planning on visiting in their respective countries. As a city Groningen is lively and in the warmer months it feels as if there is a celebration/festival happening every weekend.

I am glad that I took part in the Erasmus programme and would do it again if I could.