

# University of Ljubljana

Report Erasmus 2017/2018 winter semester

This is a report for my Erasmus 20167/2018 winter exchange at the University of Ljubljana.

My overall impression of the exchange is positive; there were certain issues that could have been better, but some others were outstanding.

Personally, I was looking for a quiet Erasmus time with interesting courses. Therefore, please keep in mind that this report does not account for possibly great Erasmus parties or trips.

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## 2 ACADEMIC LIFE

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### 2.1 GENERAL

Expect a different faculty than the one in Groningen. Its much smaller, and most Slovene students and professors know each other.

There is a movement amongst the students that believes the Law Faculty should improve its quality; they argue for more transparency in the evaluation of the courses and courses that are less focussed on learning by heart but instead develop skills. All in all, I found most of their critiques well-founded.

### 2.2 COURSES

#### 2.2.1 Roman law

Taught by one of the authorities in Slovenia, Roman law was an interesting course. Professor Kranj has a wealth of interesting knowledge, and in classes he tries to convey as much of it as possible- both Roman legal as well as societal issues.

The course materials were unfortunately not of very high quality. While the content was interesting and well-selected, the materials consisted of some text on slides. The text had no consistent formatting, which made it difficult to find a structure.

The exam, a 1-hour written test with six cases, wasn't hard.

To pass this course well, go to class, ask questions when it isn't clear (this happened to me a lot) and study the materials.

#### 2.2.2 European Human Rights

European Human Rights had a younger, very active, professor. It will be better to skip this course if you already had Criminal Law, for example, as the level aims at accommodating all Erasmus students (also ones from outside ECHR jurisdiction without any prior knowledge).

#### 2.2.3 Civil Medical Law

This course did not capture me. It was taught in a very formal manner- the professor would read off the slides at times. There were small mistakes in the materials, which would not be noticed, even when discussed in class. The topics -some very interesting, such as abortion or artificial insemination- were discussed in a very superficial manner.

The exam consisted of three extremely factual questions and one straightforward essay question.

Overall, the course did not stimulate me in any way to be more interested in the subject.

#### 2.2.4 Diplomatic and Consular law

This course is interesting not so much for the legal material, but rather for the practical experience available. It offered free enrolment in MUNLaw, which was a tremendous experience. Also, the U.S. and Dutch ambassadors appeared as guest lecturers. Another highlight was a study trip to Vienna.

The exam was a 15-minute oral test, which was easy to pass.

#### 2.2.5 Mergers, Acquisitions and Corporate Restructurings

A very recommendable course, even for students that are not interested in business. Professor Marko Simonetti, who privatized hundreds of Slovenian state business when Communism was

abandoned at the beginning of the 90's, understands he is talking to lawyers. He does not use technical terms, but remains on a conceptual level. This made the course not just understandable but fun.

The course had two guest lecturers; both lawyers working in M&A. While they both made a great effort, it was hard to live up to professor Simonetti's lectures.

The exam was very factual and easy to pass.

### 2.2.6 Comparative Human Rights

The best course I ever had. Professor Fikfak uses the Socratic way of teaching, meaning she is generally asking questions which the students, through debate, answer. This worked remarkably well.

Important with this class is that you do the reading; with it you'll get the full benefits. To me, the class noticeably improved both my critical thinking skills and ability to write a proper essay.

The exam was quite intense, two complicated essay questions in three hours. Without practice and preparation you will definitely fail this. On the other hand, you should do the preparation and put in the hours, as this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be taught by a Cambridge lecturer (professor Fikfak teaches the same course at Cambridge master's level) and improve tremendously.

Ultimately it was professor Fikfak's dedication, knowledge and skills that brought everything together: great class mates, great discussions and a lot of fun. Thus, I recommend this course fully, together with the rather substantial reading that comes with it. Several of my fondest memories are from this class.

## 2.3 ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The faculty office, led by Darja, gives very great support. They do everything within their power to make your stay comfortable. What was noticeably different from other universities is the personal way in which they treated the students.

The information they give is very clear, and they try to take as many administrative tasks as possible away from the students.

The faculty offered several lunches, dinners or drinks, all for free. This really strengthened the Erasmus student club.

# 3 PERSONAL LIFE

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## 3.1 HOUSING

Personally, I didn't want to stay in dorms, as they are very loud and not very well suited for studying or privacy.

Finding a room in Ljubljana can be tough. Especially when you're trying to find something from abroad, I recommend taking a Skype subscription and start calling the landlords. To emails they scarcely reply, but on the phone you can explain them why you're a trustworthy tenant. Try the Slovenian housing websites, too- not so many international students are checking those, so the competition for a room is a bit less. Don't be discouraged by the majority of landlords that tell you

they don't take Erasmus students- eventually there will be one that you can convince. I called around 150 numbers before finding my room.

I Lived in Bezigrad, near the economic faculty. This is outside of the city centre, and if you're an avid party-goer, it might not be practical as there's no night busses and biking can be rather cold. However, during the day three lines connected to the city centre, and waiting for more than 10 minutes for a bus was rare.

### 3.2 STUDENT LIFE

As said before, I haven't partied in Ljubljana. From what I gathered from some fellow students, it's certainly possible, and there is a range of student bars and dorm parties.

I really recommend making some Slovenian friends; I got to know Slovenia in a much better way through them than through the standard Erasmus trips.

In general, Ljubljana is a student city -just like Groningen- and you will find city life adjusted accordingly. Cheap drinks, food and acceptance of students is commonplace.

### 3.3 GETTING AROUND IN THE CITY

Ljubljana is small, so whichever place you pick to live, 15 minutes by bike will be the limit to get somewhere.

There is a public transportation card for EURO 20 a month; this gives you unlimited trips with the bus.

With the same card you can (for a on-time fee of EURO 3) use the public bikes throughout the city. I used these a lot, especially in the beginning when the weather was still good. You can buy your own bike- I saw them offered for around EURO 50. One advantage of the public bike is that you can use them in the morning, when the weather is good, to head to the uni and drop them at a bike station over there; in the afternoon, when the weather turned bad, you can leave the bike and return by bus.

### 3.4 TRAVEL

Slovenia is located in the middle of Europe; try searching for flights from Venice for cheap connections (under EURO 25 one-way) to Malta, Marocco, Germany, London; try Zagreb for the reasonable fairs to Istanbul, St Petersburg, Greece. Ljubljana airport has very low fairs with Transavia to Schiphol, around EURO 35 one-way.

I rented a car with Renty.si, they have special prices for Erasmus students. We rented a Volkswagen Gold for around EURO 36 a day, 500 k/m and toll-free travel for Slovenia. You can take the car to all Balkan countries. For EURO 10 a day insurance was included. The people at the rental company were friendly and fair.

### 3.5 STUDY LOCATIONS

In Groningen we're rather spoiled with a UB that's open until 00:00. In Ljubljana, most libraries close much earlier, around 20:00. On Sunday's nothing is open and you're forced to work out of a café or from home.

I recommend getting a membership at the national library (one-time fee of several euro's), designed by their (nationally) famous architect Plecnik. The reading room is accessible to members only, and it feels like you're studying in a Harry Potter movie.

### 3.6 LANGUAGE

The Slovene language is very different from both English and Dutch. To me, it was too much effort to learn, especially considering it's only useful for the Balkan region. The university does offer a language course, but even students who took it were not able to keep a conversation.

Practically all people in Ljubljana speak English- it's a tourist destination. In the countryside the level of English is more rudimentary.

### 3.7 FOOD

Food is, of course, the most important, and Slovenia offers you a Boni-system to make it cheap. With it, you can get around 20 meals a month at regular restaurants for very low prices- between 60 cents and EURO 4,60. Don't expect mind-blowing dishes, but they're healthier than taking out a Domino's pizza. My favorite was the Indian restaurant. There are probably around a hundred of restaurants available.

If you're in the need for world-class food, go the Belgrade, and try the better restaurants there. Since they're much cheaper, you'll be able to get the best dinners for the price of an average one in the Netherlands. Very special in this regard is Salon 5; you won't forget this.