

MY ERASMUS EXPERIENCE

Hey folks! I am first year Master student and studying International Marketing as my major at the Lappeenranta University of Technology. And here is the story about my exchange semester in Belgium.

After a half year of my program I decided to go for Erasmus exchange. I was considering several options but selected the Louvain School of Management as some of my friends gave me positive reviews.

The tickets are booked, the stuff packed so the trip begins. I was flying from Lappeenranta to Brussels with a change in Riga. The flight was quite harassing as I spent the night in Riga's airport. Soon after arrival to Brussels international airport I took a bus to get the metro. I had a printed map of how to reach my hotel but it was not really helpful so I got lost and faced my first Belgian experience – nobody speaks English in this country. The situation was worsening because of snow. That time there was a lot of snow on the streets, and carrying my heavy luggage I was wondering why they are not cleaning the roads from snow. After one hour hanging around I went to Police and they explained to me in half English half French where should I go. Accidentally the place was really close to the metro station I had just missed one street. So totally exhausted I found the place. It was SUN hotel and I would advise it as price quality ratio is quite good.

After 5 days in Brussels I picked my LUT friend from the airport and we moved to Louvain La Neuve. The city is located quite close to Brussels – just 30 minutes by train from Brussels Central station. At first the city seemed a little bit weird, as people are not allowed to drive cars in almost the whole city and it is mainly pedestrian. Initially it looks crazy as there are a lot of streets some of them are really small and they are not straight at all. But soon after arrival you feel like at home.

Studies

Soon after the registration procedure and the introduction meetings studying start. We had one week to finalize the courses we are going to take. I must say it was quite hard as some of the courses which were available before were cancelled and otherwise some of the courses were additionally available for exchange students. After visiting the first lectures I finalized my choice. So I picked a set of courses in Supply Chain: Operations Management and Factory Physics,



Transportation and Logistics and Supply Chain Planning (5ECTS each); French step-by-step (10ECTS), Brand Management (5ECTS), E-Marketing (5ECTS) and Advanced Strategic Management (5ECTS). Let's discover all of them in more details.

Supply Chain courses are one of two sets of courses available in Louvain School of Management. There is also a set of 3 courses related to procurement. But as you already know I picked SC. In general I would say that the courses are really hard and you should have proper background, which I did not have, to succeed. The courses are advanced Master courses in supply chain, and Belgians who are taking them are usually specializing in this field and are business or industrial engineers. For Factory Physics course you are supposed to have basic knowledge of programming and I picked it without doubts as I had experience in programming in C++ and Paskal. But the program which was using during the course is built on Java. During the semester you are supposed to accomplish several assignments in groups of 2. The assignments are focused on simulation of production process, queuing modeling etc. As far as I know almost all exchange students dropped this course after 1st assignment. I would say that was the most time consuming course for me.

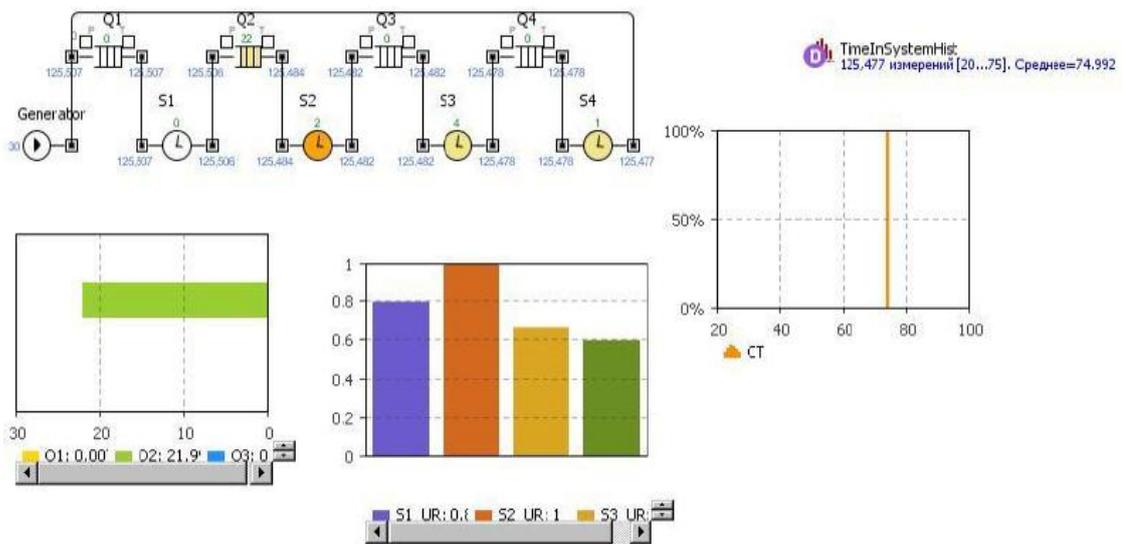


Figure 1. Operation Management and Factory Physics results example.

The second course was Transportation and Logistics. This course was split in 2 parts. The first part was aimed to get us know the current issues in scientific research in the field of international supply chain and different kind of problems existing and approaches to solve them. The second part was much more interesting as it was an intensive week and we had a guest lecture from Paris. The lecturer gave us a very interesting case study which we were supposed to solve and

defend our solution. I was working with a group of Belgians and it was great experience for me.

The last supply chain course was Supply Chain Planning and after the course you are able to take a SCOR certification, which is professional supply chain certification society. The course is mainly aimed at describing supply chain of any organization and basically is systematization of supply chain knowledge.

The French course was incredibly good and useful. Also it was a little bit intensive as in 3 months you are supposed to pass A1 and A2 exams, so I had 3 classes per week and a lot of home work. The teacher was Belgian and she was really nice with us, steadily organizing different kind of games and activities.

Brand management course was quite interesting as well. It was full of guest lecturers, and once we even had the CEO of Nestle as a guest lecturer. During the course we were supposed to participate in L'Oreal Brandstorm competition, your progress in the contest was affecting your final grade and counted for 50%.

E-marketing course was full of guest lecturers as well, but the normal classes were quite boring for 8 o'clock in the morning. But we had quite interesting assignment during the semester. We were supposed to come up with business plan of e-business and defend our idea and budget.

The last course is Advanced Strategic Management (ASM). This is definitely the best course I had taken in LSM. If you are keen on strategy I would strongly advise to take it. It was based on LVMH assignments and some guest lecturers from BCG.

Nonacademic activities

The local inhabitants enjoy the beautiful lake near the city center. It is the place to enjoy some rare sunny days, play Frisbee or volleyball and do some BBQ or just to read a book.

There is also picturesque forest nearby the city with a lot of small lakes. If you are keen on jogging that would be the perfect place for it.

As any other student city Louvain La Neuve is partying almost every day in different parts of the city. There were a huge amount of parties, pre-parties and after-parties.





Figure 2. Ready for ABC (Anything But not Clothes party) with Agnieszka (Poland) and Daniel (Peru).

The location of the city conditions the convenience of travelling. Thus a lot of students mainly from South America and Asia were travelling most of their free time. Amsterdam, Paris, Barcelona, Antwerp, Bruges, London, Budapest, Germany and even Greece can be easily accessed by train or nearby Ryan air airport. Unfortunately I did not have a lot of free time for travelling as I took 40 ECTS and some courses were really time consuming, but I travelled a bit inside Belgium.

Housing and other facilities

I am not sure if I know a person who was fully satisfied with his apartment in LLN. Thus when I moved to my apartment it was huge amount of mold on the ceiling but thankfully they cleaned it quite fast after my complaint.

Students in LLN have 3 options of finding a place to leave. The first one and the best one, but also the most expensive is private landlords. Here you can rent quite big 2 room apartment in a good location for about 700 euro. Other options are related to “UCL logement” – the company which is kind of local LOAS. Here you have two possibilities: to leave in normal student house with 3-5 neighbors or to leave in so called ‘Kot a project’ which is usually bigger and all the

people there are sharing common interests and doing some common projects while leaving. Thus we had Linux Kot or Kot delicious which was aimed at sharing cooking experience and organizing some events. UCL logement prices vary from 225 to 300, but you also need to separately pay for electricity and the internet.

The city is so small that it is actually not so matter where your apartment is. I was leaving in a place near city center, and the main problem there was parties. It is incredibly noisy outside and sometimes I even had to use earplugs in order to fall asleep.

Laundry service is not free and there are quite many of them located in different parts of the city.

Shopping is not a problem in Louvain La Neuve as there are a lot of shops to buy whatever you need. In the city center you will find Lesplanade - big shopping center with Delhaize supermarket and smaller shops selling cloth etc. Aldi is probably the cheapest shop in LLN, and is a kind of Lidl where you cannot buy any fresh meat or good fruits. There is also number of night shops which are open until 3 a.m. but usually they have much higher prices. If you need any sport equipment there is Decathlon nearby the city.

As for entertainment you will find there cinema, number of pubs and some night clubs, bowling which offers student shifts for only 2 euro.

The local students also enjoy a huge sport centre, where you can do almost every kind of sports using your sport card.

If you need a place to study there is quite big library which you can access using your magnetic card. Also in the building of Louvain School of Management you will find some rooms for your group assignments.

Final remarks

In general I must say that it was one of the best times in my life. I met a lot of people from all around the world, received great academic experience and simply had a lot of fun in LLN.

If you still have questions about the university or city itself please contact me via pavel.solodovnikov@lut.fi. I would be glad to help you.

