

Coimbra, quem não te amor não vive”

“Coimbra, who does not love you does not live.” This is a quote from a song I learned and started to understand during my exchange at the University of Coimbra in Portugal. Even though Portugal was not my initial choice to go to, I would not have wanted this experience to be anywhere else or any different. I would definitely recommend going here to everyone and to make it the best experience of your life!



Preparation

Going on exchange is a lot of fun, but you have to be aware of all the practical issues you have to arrange in order for everything to go smoothly. I spent a lot of time on the website of the University in order to find out what possibilities there were for exchange students and what things I had to arrange. I found out that it was very important to speak Portuguese, since there were only a limited amount of English courses. For economic students, however, it is possible to follow all courses in English. Therefore, I started learning little bits of Portuguese here in the Netherlands and also did an intensive course in Portuguese at the University in Portugal. Information about this intensive course can be found on the website of the University (www.uc.pt/fluc/ensino/cpe/ci_set/cintsetingles). The course will cost you €275, but is very useful and a lot of fun. You do not have to make any scary exams for it and at the end you also even receive 4 ECTS for it! Since the course started three weeks before the actual classes started, it was a good way for me to already make some friends and to get to know the city and the university already. But it was especially useful since I had two courses taught in Portuguese. It would have been possible to follow other English courses instead, but then there would be overlap in my timetable. Besides, I really wanted to make most out of my exchange and challenge myself by learning all about the language and culture.

Students from within Europe don't have to worry about arranging a Visa but on the website can be found other practical information which you have to take into account. For me, this consisted mainly of sending my learning agreement and to look for accommodation. The University offers some accommodation possibilities so I got a room in the Jardim Residences.

Flight tickets to Portugal are not that expensive. A ticket, without costs of extra luggage, can cost you only 30 euros. It is cheapest to fly from Eindhoven to Porto with Ryanair, and take the train from Porto to Coimbra when you arrive, which will cost you around 12 euros.

Lastly, it is important that before your arrival, you have to be aware of the Academic Calendar of the University of Coimbra. Classes there only start halfway in September (however, go earlier since they will ask for an appointment at the exchange students office) and will thus also end later. For me, this meant that my exams took place until the 15th of January and I would have to miss two weeks of the classes again here in the Netherlands. Some courses offer continuous assessment for which you don't have to make an exam in the end. You can send an email about which courses these are. Questions will be answered quickly. However, it was not possible to make the exams that I had earlier or in the Netherlands. So even though you cannot do much about it before arrival, it is a practical issue which is good to be aware of.

Arrival

Before your arrival, you will be sent an email with a date and place for an appointment at the International Students Office. At this appointment, you will have to bring your learning agreement and a photo and you will receive all the information you need. If you are staying longer than three months, you will also have to register as a citizen in Portugal, which will cost 15 euros for students from Europe. However, this is mainly important for when you have to open a bank account or have to travel a lot. When I went to register, they told me that for me it was not necessary to do so, so it will depend on your situation. The University however, will tell you to register yourself and where you can do so. You also need to pay the school taxes which amount 20 euros.



Besides these formalities, you also have the possibility to get an Erasmus card, which will give you discounts at parties, drinks and would also provide you with a Portuguese Vodafone SIMcard, with which you can text and call others with this same provider for free. There also is a Coimbra Erasmus Facebook-page, for which they will invite you and on which they offer a whole Erasmus Welcome Month with drinks, dinners, proms, pool parties, BBQ's and guided tours inside Coimbra but also in other cities in Portugal (for which you get discount with your Erasmus Coimbra card). I would definitely recommend joining at least during the first week of this month, since it is a very good way to get to know the people and the city.

Courses

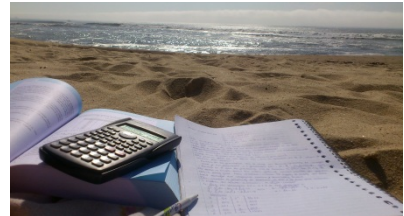
For your exchange period, it is obligatory to obtain at least 24 credits. However, at the University of Coimbra you have to follow at least five courses. Each course gives you six ECTS, so if you pass everything, you would have 30 ECTS (or 34, if you participate in the intensive language course).

I participated in the following courses:

- *Marketing management*: When you followed the marketing course in your second year of Bachelor, you will not learn many new things. The course consists of a continuous assessment in which each week, a group of students has to present some chapters from the marketing book. Also, with this team, you have to write a marketing plan for a company which will present itself. It is thus a very practical course with a lot of team work which will count for 60 % of your grade. The other 40% will be obtained by the exam, which will consist of practical marketing cases.
- *International Negotiation*. The aim of this course is to write an essay on negotiations with which you have to start immediately the first class. Since it is a big assignment and by that time, you do not have any information other than: "write an essay about a negotiation", a lot of students will choose to drop out. However, during your writing process, the teacher will provide you with the necessary information so that you can apply the theory directly to your case which turned out to be very effective. Also, after handing in the assignment in November, you do not have to make any other test or exam so you can focus on the other subjects.
- *Gestão de Operações (Management of Operations)*. This course was taught in Portuguese and consisted of a midterm and an exam, both counting for 50% of the grade. Following a book, which will be explained by lectures and making exercises at tutorials, you will learn how to manage projects, manage projects, forecast demand and to manage the stock of an organization. It was actually my favorite course!

- *Economía Internacional (International Economics)* . Also this course is taught in Portuguese and differs a lot from the International Economics course taught at Erasmus in Rotterdam. It followed the theories of Ricardo, Adam Smith, Stuart Mill, Harleber and many more in chronological order. Each week, a group of two students had to present an exercise about one of the economists, which counted for 10% of the grade. The exam at the end counts for 80% and the other 10% consists of a review on a documentary on income division.
- *Lingua Portuguese B2*. Lastly, I followed a language course at level B2 since I already did an intensive course. This course focused more on grammar and writing skills than learning new words and pronunciation. When you do not want to pay a big amount of money for the intensive course, at this language course especially made for exchange students, you can also learn very well how to speak Portuguese.

For most of the courses, I did not have to prepare any exercises at home since they were all made and explained in class. In Portugal, university life is quite relaxed. It is for example no problem to be half an hour late in class and even the professors could arrive 15 minutes late. However, it is important to attend the classes since no information or lecture slides are put online.



Finances

Life in Portugal is quite cheap compared to the Netherlands. I had a budget of 6000 euros, but I think I might have spent around 2500 euros in total on my exchange. For example, for 8 euros, you can go to the cinema and have a full dinner included! Accommodation prices vary, but it is normal there to pay around 200 euros per month. For the hotel residence I paid 320 euros per month, but after a month I moved out to another apartment for which I only had to pay 175 euros per month everything included. Social life is also not expensive: a beer will cost you most of the time just one euro. Food is also quite cheap and if you don't like to cook, you can get a full meal at the university canteens for only €2,40. For transport it is very easy to take the bus, for which you can buy a bus-card for a very small amount and put money on it like you do with an OV-chipcard. Also going by train is not that expensive, since you get a lot of discount as a student. However, within Coimbra you can do everything by foot since it is a small city, so I ended up not using the bus at all. An overview of some costs you can expect:

Costs occurring only once

Plane tickets	€150 (luggage included for both flights)
Erasmus card	€10
School tax and books	€50 (for most subjects, I received hand-outs)
Traveling	€200
Intensive course	€275

Costs per month

Accommodation	€200
Food	€150 (when you eat at the canteens)
Social life	€20

Mobile phone

€7,50

Daily life

Life in Coimbra is a lot more relaxed than here in the Netherlands. People are very nice and are always ready to help you. It is quite a small city, in which you can do everything by foot and mostly even meet someone you know on the way. The city consists mostly of students, who are clearly visible by their Harry Potter-like black capes they wear. The University itself is beautiful to see and it has a lot of traditions. Not only do the students wear black capes (which you don't have to wear, but you can buy one if you want), they also have a big introduction week in which they will go around town singing and screaming the songs of their faculty. After this week, the new students will be "baptized" in the river Mondego which is usually a big happening. After that, they have a whole week of parties in October called "Latada", in which every night, students gather themselves in a huge tent to have fun. The Portuguese students will definitely be kind enough to ask you to join. I would recommend everyone going to this beautiful place with its crazy moments and its huge amount of students and traditions. It is an opportunity to make friends from all over the world and I would recommend to absolutely make the most out of it! It will be an experience you will not quickly forget. I hope this report will help you during your preparation for your exchange and I wish you a lot of luck... and fun!



All the best!

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