Experience report about my Erasmus semester in Budapest from February 2019 to July 2019

The preparation for the Erasmus semester in Budapest caused some difficulties: It took until the end of November / beginning of December 2018 until I received any feedback from the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest regarding my enrolment. Then it lasted until shortly before Christmas, until I got a concrete contact persons and should register online. After the registration I received no feedback whether it had worked, only a few days later a message that it had to be repeated.

There were also difficulties with the Learning Agreement because I only received an outdated list of courses and I had to wait several weeks for the History Coordinator from Budapest to reply.

The apartment search was also not easy: Although it was possible to register online for a dormitory, but these could not make a promise before the end of January / beginning of February, but the semester already started at the beginning of February, so that I through a friend who knew someone in Budapest, looked for a room in Budapest and found one quite quickly. It was located right in the city centre and I felt very comfortable there. But the rent of 300 Euro per month was rather expensive for Budapest. But the apartment and my room were very pleasant and well equipped.

I received a message later that I should take care of a private apartment because Erasmus students were not available in the student dormitory. I then did not pursue this any further and can only recommend everyone to look for a place to live privately.

I travelled by train via Munich to Budapest. From Munich there was a direct train, which was reasonably priced and took about 7 hours.

The chaotic preparation had dimmed my anticipation somewhat, but once I arrived in Budapest, I felt immediately comfortable. In the first week there was an orientation week in which everything important was explained and shown. Here I got to know other students immediately. There were a few problems with the courses, because the offer was only conditionally the same as the one sent to me before and some courses came a little later. This could be clarified after a mail with the coordinator, some of the missing courses were still added and not yet mentioned offered.

In general, I would say that most of the organizational things were quite chaotic, but everything could be solved unbureaucratically on demand.
Most of the courses were offered especially for Erasmus students, which unfortunately meant that little contact was made with Hungarian students. The quality of the courses varied a lot and unfortunately very little was offered on Hungarian history. However, these were the most interesting courses, especially one on the history of Hungary Towns in the Middle Ages, which included informative guided tours through the old towns of Buda and Pest.

Although the individual lessons in the courses were very informative, I did not have the impression that the teaching for Erasmus students was taken particularly seriously. This was particularly reflected in the grades, as I had the impression that if you were frequently present and passed an exam, you would always get the highest score.

That was acceptable, but I would have liked interested students to have had more opportunities to get a little deeper into the subject and to learn more about Hungarian history. Thus it remained with very general courses, of which rather little remained.

Through a friend who had taken courses in Hungarian, I learned that these were probably much more challenging. It was a sad fact that people who only took courses in English were not given this opportunity.

It was a good thing that Hungarian language courses were offered free of charge. In these you learned (they took place 2 hours a week) only basics, but these were enough to be able to communicate fundamentally in everyday life.

Everyday life was what made my stay in Budapest an unforgettable experience. In the orientation week and in the courses I got to know some people very quickly and immediately had a fantastic circle of friends with whom I did something almost every day. In just Budapest there was enough to visit and for the evening there were countless possibilities to go out in pubs, music bars or clubs. The evenings in which we sat on Margit Island, talked about God and the world and enjoyed the fantastic view of the Danube, the castle hill and the parliament remain unforgettable. Anyone who has experienced this once can no longer imagine leaving this city after the end of the semester.

But there were also plenty of opportunities for excursions in the region, be it to the picturesque village of Szentendre, to other Hungarian towns such as Székesfehérvár, Visegrád, Veszprém, Pécs or Szeged, or to neighbouring countries and towns such as Bratislava, Zagreb, Belgrade or Cluj-Napoca.
Within Budapest, one got everywhere quite fast with the very good and for students low-priced local traffic, there are also plenty of stores and the cost of living is compared to German conditions relatively cheap - the beer in particular.

It was great to get to know so many people from different countries and to exchange experiences with them. I avoided other students from Germany and had a circle of friends with people from countries like Poland, Nigeria, Romania or Turkey. Getting to know Hungarians was a bit more difficult and I was glad that through a Hungarian Erasmus student from Romania I got in touch with Hungarians, about whom I got to know a lot about the country, could talk to them about Hungarian history or could have controversial discussions about (Hungarian) politics.

Altogether I can only recommend a stay abroad in Budapest. Not so much because of my studies (at least in history), but because of the opportunity to meet great people from all kinds of countries in this cosmopolitan city. And because Budapest is a city with endless possibilities, where I immediately felt at home and never had the feeling that I couldn't discover anything new.