



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Study programme WUR	Internationale Ontwikkelingsstudies
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	19/09/2023 until 15/01/2024
Exchange destination: University	Izmir University of Economics
Faculty	Political science and international relations
Country	Turkey
City	Izmir

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I chose to go on exchange because it seemed like a highly valuable experience to me, both academically and personally. It's certainly a great addition to your CV, but it has also shown me that I am capable of navigating myself in another country and culture.

What is the reason you chose for this country/university?

I didn't find the courses I was taking during my bachelor's degree very enjoyable at that time. Therefore, I considered it important to choose a university where I would once again enjoy attending classes. The variety of courses offered was thus a crucial factor in my decision. This was certainly the case at Izmir. Additionally, Turkey seemed to me a very interesting country with a culture very different from that of the Netherlands. The location and climate in Izmir also appealed to me greatly.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?

I flew to Izmir. I think you could theoretically also take the bus, but that would take several days. Also, considering the amount of luggage, I decided to take the plane. There are direct flights from Amsterdam and Eindhoven to Izmir, so you can get there within 4 hours

4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Foreign Policy Analysis	6		4	
2	Conflict Resolution	6		4	
3	Citizenship, Multiculturalism & Democracy	6		5	
4	International Relations Through Motion Pictures	6		5	
5	International Security	6		5	

What is it like to study there?

E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material.

I found IUE to be a very pleasant university to study at. It's a private university, and you could definitely tell. Everything was well organized, and the education was of high quality. I would say the level of education was just right. It wasn't too difficult, allowing for enough free time to explore the city, but I definitely feel like I've truly learned something over the past few months. The language of instruction was English, so it was easy to connect with both students and professors. The class sizes were quite small, averaging just 25 students, but I found this to be very beneficial. The classes were highly interactive, and you were almost compelled to actively participate

What is the culture of the university?

E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with the WUR?

Communication with the professors was very approachable. They were highly interested, and I felt they genuinely enjoyed having a chat. Interaction with fellow students was good. They were all very kind and interested, but you could still sense that English remained a barrier. They did try to engage in conversation, but you could tell that the dialogue didn't flow smoothly due to the lack of fluent English.

What does the university offer students additionally?

E.g. catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?

The university was open 24/7, so you could study at any time, which was very convenient. Furthermore, there were several large cafeterias offering hot meals, as well as a Starbucks and Subway on campus. Additionally, there were various sports teams such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball. There was also a gym accessible to every student for free. Dormitories were available on campus as well, but I didn't utilize them.

5. Housing-travelling-living

What are the possibilities for housing?

I personally didn't encounter any issues with finding accommodation. I posted a message in a few Facebook groups and received dozens of room offers. Eventually, I chose to share an apartment with another Erasmus student. I paid 190 euros per month for this.

What is the culture of the country like?

E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?

The Turkish culture differs greatly from the Dutch culture. However, I didn't notice as much of a contrast in Izmir. Izmir is known as the most modern/Western city in Turkey, which made the differences much less pronounced compared to other cities. For instance, there were large supermarkets with almost all the products we have here in the Netherlands."

You could still sense that the country is much more nationalist than the Netherlands. Turkish flags were hung everywhere in the streets, and portraits of Atatürk adorned every lecture hall. Additionally, there was a much larger police presence on the streets. During every short walk, you would encounter several police cars or officers. Furthermore, almost every public building required a security check upon entry. This difference was quite noticeable to me

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

Usually, I walked to the university, which took about half an hour. There was also the option to take the bus, but it took almost the same amount of time, so I only took it when the weather was really bad. The public transportation system was decent. Buses and trams ran regularly. However, they were almost always either late or early, so it wasn't very useful to check beforehand when they were supposed to depart. You just had to stand at the bus/tram stop and hope for the best. This could be annoying sometimes, especially when you were in a hurry but had no idea when the bus or tram would arrive."

The costs were very cheap. Students received discounts, which meant we only had to pay 5 TL (15 cents). With this, you could use public transportation unlimitedly for 2 hours.

6. Expenses

Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

E.g. you can also indicate price differences (higher/lower/equal) in comparison to the Netherlands.

Actually, almost everything was much cheaper compared to the Netherlands. You could dine out really well for just 8 euros, and the rent I paid was also significantly lower. The only things that were more expensive were Western brands, like Apple and Zara. Alcohol was also relatively expensive, but these prices were comparable to Dutch prices. They were a bit higher, but for everything else such as groceries, transportation, day trips, etc., everything was really much cheaper.

Additional remarks regarding expenses?

7. Free time

What are must-sees in the area?

E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?

During my stay in Turkey, I visited several different cities. I would highly recommend Cappadocia, Istanbul, Fethiye, and Antalya. Pamukkale, on the other hand, I would recommend slightly less, as it was incredibly touristy and the pictures looked a bit nicer than the reality. I travelled to all these places by bus. You can easily book tickets for a cheap price on the website 'obilet.com'. You'll spend a few hours on the bus, but the scenery ensures you won't be bored for a moment.

So, I would definitely recommend visiting as many places as possible outside Izmir. Turkey is an incredibly diverse country and has so many beautiful places, both cities and natural sites

What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth a visit?

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?

E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

One thing I struggled with quite a bit was the fact that the Turkish population hardly spoke any English. They did at the university, but outside of that, hardly anyone did. I sometimes found this challenging, because as a result, it was difficult to integrate, and even with the simplest things like asking for a bag at the supermarket, I wasn't understood. I found this frustrating at times. Although I didn't completely overcome this, I did try my best to accept it and have a little more patience when I wasn't understood.

What is your best memory of your time abroad?

I found the many trips I made really enjoyable. I travelled alone to Cappadocia, a city known for its numerous hot air balloons. I woke up at 6 o'clock in the morning to see the balloons, but unfortunately, I didn't get to see them. Instead, I found myself in the midst of nature, watching a stunning sunrise. This was truly a special moment for me and made me realize how awesome it was that I was just here, on my own, in Turkey.

9. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
Name/e-mail	Fiep van der Wilt, fiepwilt@gmail.com	