



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	BSc Health and Nutrition
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	22/02/2024 until 03/07/2024
Exchange destination: University	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU)
Faculty	Food Science and Biotechnology (mainly)
Country	Austria
City	Vienna

2. Motivation for exchange

a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I wanted to get out of my comfort zone, learn about other countries, improve my languages. I wanted to learn more about myself, be more independent, improve my social skills and my ability to adapt.

b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

I wanted to go to a country that was not too far from home for my first solo travel. I also wanted to improve my third language (German). I did not choose Germany because that could be so close to home that it wouldn't feel like I would really be away from home. Austria was perfect for me, not too far, not too close and a German-speaking country. I also heard from others that Vienna was an amazing city, although I didn't know what to expect before, I had never been there and I was pleasantly surprised.

c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

The WUR has good bonds with this university. Themes of courses are very similar. Moreover, the university is relatively small and very involved with students.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

As I always prefer train over airplane travelling (mostly sustainability reasons), I rather take the train even though it takes quite a while. The train can also be more expensive (depends). When I left to go to Vienna for the first time, I took the train during the day and it was super exhausting because of all the luggage and several times I had to switch trains. However, there is a direct night train (nightjet) from and to Amsterdam and Vienna, which also stops in several cities like Utrecht and Arnhem. For 20 euros extra you get a spot where you can lie down and sleep. This is not that expensive if you book in advance and I would say pretty comfortable as it is a direct train to the Netherlands. Not too much of a hassle with luggage and switching trains.

4. University and studying

a. 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	Food Biotechnology	5	Elaborated foodtech knowledge, lots of examples	4	Many ects for a BOKU course (+), makes it also more work to learn for though but is really interesting. My lecturers spoke with a very understandable English accent, in contrast to most other teachers.
2	Food Packaging Technology	3	Interactive course with lectures about different types of food packaging and why they are used. Also sustainability aspect	5	Interactive element is nice, teacher gives original assignments (which you don't get a mark for but helps you understand the content)
3	Vine nutrition	1.5	Few lectures about e.g. minerals and vitamins that plants need. Nothing to do with human nutrition, only nutrition plants need, in specific vine plants.	3	Oral exam. I was the only student that did not have a plant science background. Did not really need it to pass the course but it made it a lot harder for me than it was for others but with enough studying you can still get a good grade
4	Specific and Emerging Topics in Food Microbiology	3	Do literature search and make a scientific presentation about it. Also writing an abstract about it. A food microbiology topic can be chosen from a long list to do the presentation about. For everyone there is something interesting.	5	! had deadlines in easter vacation was a bit stressful because I didn't know, they weren't communicated very well and it was especially confusing for me because I had 9 courses which all had deadlines. But it was a very interesting course. You mostly learn from the specific topic you're doing your own presentation on though.

5	European Regulatory Framework for Organic Production	3	About rules/laws about organic farming within the EU	3	Really focussed only on law, hoped to learn something more on organic production itself. But was still interesting. Only the fact that this year the course existed of 2 days of 9-hour lectures (of which 1 was on a Saturday) and a hard to understand accent, made it very exhausting and made me like it less. Easy to do when you don't have much previous knowledge about (organic food) law and a good start in this topic.
6	Developmental Genetics	3	Lectures about how genes develop/work in plants (mainly) and a bit about animal genes	3	Hoped that this would be more about animal genes, but was mostly about plants. The lectures were quite difficult without a plant background but with knowledge about animal genes. It helped that most of the grading was about writing articles, so scientific skills (good understanding of scientific articles, academic writing skills and some background of animal bodily processes/plant processes/genes help you)

b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in

English (Yes, No - Explain): There were enough courses in English. Only not that I had the previous knowledge for and was interested in and, most importantly, did not overlap. Many courses overlap because the teachers can choose when they do the course whenever they want. Also only master courses in English (which BOKU says is not allowed if you're in a bachelor, but WUR allows it and the level is not too hard). In the end I might've been able to do more courses that interested me though, as most teachers were quite flexible with presence and a lot was not mandatory or to be discussed.

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest

(Yes, No - Explain): No, because most courses have so little ects I needed to do many

courses. The offer of English courses was not that broad and for a lot of courses I also didn't have the previous knowledge. There were many more German courses that seemed more interesting.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain): Yes, in general the level was good. Some were quite easy, some were quite hard, some were the perfect level. There was a lot of difference between levels of different courses. Partly depended on the fact that I did not have the same amount of previous knowledge for every course though.

e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain): For most courses yes, some not. Some were really out of my field of interest, I just chose them because they were the best option left.

f. What is it like to study there?

Examination and courses were very different. If you had 15 people in a course, that was considered a lot. Because of this, very personal teaching. No large courses of 6 erts but mostly courses of 1-3 erts which only include either a written or oral exam, or only a large group work, or a large presentation but mostly not several or only 2 grading components in contrast to most Wageningen courses. Workload was not too high, made it myself harder by mostly not choosing courses in my study field. There was a lot of flexibility in how you divide your time. It was a bit chaotic sometimes though because of the amount of courses and the flexibility sometimes also made it confusing sometimes. Making my schedule and choosing courses was one big puzzle, it is very complicated because of many overlaps and many small courses. Examination dates were very flexible though and sometimes chosen with all classmates, not by the teacher, often multiple options if it was no presentation.

g. What is the culture of the university?

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

In general lecturers are very interested in the students, very approachable and flexible, helpful, especially to erasmus students. As an Erasmus student who doesn't have German as a native language, it was hard to make friends with local students. I know Germans who did though. But as I think in every university, locals engage most with locals and internationals with internationals. Local students were very kind though and always happy to help if you asked something.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

The university has a school café, but quality is not good in my opinion, better to go to a bakery close by. School offers many events for all students, and separately for erasmus students, has its own ESN section. Gatherings and small parties at the school pub, and some larger events like a ball in the winter semester and a midsommar fest in the summer.

5. Housing-traveling-living

a. What are the possibilities for housing?

No campus rooms from BOKU exist. Housing availability is way better than most popular student cities but you should still start searching on time. Several sites can help you like Stuwo, Oaed Housing etc., I used HousingAnywhere because it was trustworthy, but a bit

more expensive. Also Wien Gesucht is popular but I wasn't sure how to spot a scam there. Didn't hear anyone who was scammed though.

a. What is the culture like?

Locals are more courteous than Dutch people and less blunt, however they can come off as not as welcoming but they often just don't exhibit their feelings as much and don't mean to be rude. People respect each other more. Viennese coffee house culture, fancy culture, a group of elite, cultural people exist in this city which can be nice to see how they live. If you speak German, or at least try (anywhere), the people are way nicer if you speak English. And always give at least 10% tips in a restaurant or café or people can be very rude sometimes. Costs of living are generally high, especially for groceries and if you want to do cultural things (also because it is touristic, only in specific places though). Coffee is very good, and also pastries and cakes etc. Würstel/kebabstands are very popular, and often open till early in the morning. Inhabitants are very diverse, lots of different religions and different races but you barely notice as they mostly behave the same and everyone is accepted. Also the LGBTQ-community is well accepted. Specific neighbourhoods (districts) are inhabited by people with specific heritage, but you mostly notice this by the type of church/religious building and the type of cafes/bakeries there are and sometimes you see people walk through the street in their religious clothing. And one big cultural difference: they love paperwork. For everything you do you need to fill in a form. Also in a lot of places you need cash to pay.

b. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

Public transport is extremely good and cheap, as a student you pay 75 euros for a semester and can take any kind of transport within Vienna city limits. There is no metro station close to the university (only Muthgasse campus where food/biotech is at mostly), which makes it harder to reach than most places in the city. It will take you max 45 min from one place in the city to the other, most often about 20 min, even though the city is huge, but sometimes you forget that because of this. I really loved having a (swap) bike there though to do short distances.

6. Expenses

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

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	150-50 (green travel) = 100
Visa - if applicable	-
Vaccinations - if applicable	-(tick vaccination possible but did not take it)
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	Few euros more to be co-insured with my parents outside of the netherlands
Daytrips/sight-seeing	7- 20 to do activity in Vienna like museum or theatre (student

	discounts!) / trips in easter vacation ~20 per day (accommodation still cheap in this period, Bratislava, prague and budapest close by and cheap with flibus)
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	589 + 50 (admin costs for housinganywhere), shared apartment in 20 th district, 3 other students/phd aged 18-35. 8 m2 room but with build in bed at the roof so enough space, good landlord service and own kitchen and g/w/l incl
Grocery costs per month	~300? (very expensive, even at Lidl/Hofer, one of the cheapest) buy fruit/veg at Turkish shop/market!
Public transport costs per month	~15
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	Mostly did a coffee/cake at cafe, going out for dinner often is too expensive and only did with people visiting, dinner prices are just dutch prices, slightly cheaper when you go to more local places, only you need to tip. Coffee+cake ~7-10 eu a time

b. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands: higher (esp. groceries, rent and cultural activities)

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

Budapest, Prague (both by flibus), Bratislava can also be done by flibus but I also biked there which was really nice. Vineyards (heurigers in Vienna outskirts, drink cheap

fresh grapejuice or wine here with amazing atmosphere and view), you can hike here or go by bus. Also hike around Vienna, within 30 mins you have a view from up the mountain all over Vienna. Also wanted to go to the mountains in Austria but accommodation here is quite expensive, better idea is to go camping but you need a tent etc.

b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?

Download app TicketGretchen and get seating places at the theatre/opera from 7 eu onwards as a student under 27, instead of 50-200 eu you would normally pay.

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?

Had some health problems, called my insurance, was sent all over town to different doctors, wasn't helped very well but for the time being it was okay.

b. Best memory?

I can't really choose but the summer days in Vienna were amazing. Great weather all the time, barely any rain, BBQ at the donau, chilling in the park, chilling at friends places, going from one place to another, everyone was open for everything and there were always people who spontaneously wanted to do things. And I really loved Donau Insel Fest (largest free festival in the world in Vienna).

9. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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