

Exchange Report – Niina Hulkkonen

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I spent my exchange semester in Paris during autumn 2016. I chose Paris because I wanted to experience living a big city and improve my French skills. I got the opportunity to study in IESEG School of Management which is a highly-ranked business school. Its original campus is in Lille but they extended to Paris about ten years ago, and that campus I chose.

At the beginning of the semester there was an orientation week for the exchange students. It was organised by the International Club of the school. The week was full of different kinds of activities where everyone could find something they liked. The International Club continued to organise parties, events and trips during the semester. I joined the trips to Belgium and Loire but other examples were trips to Normandie and Disneyland.

The course system in IESEG is totally different than in Sweden. I had 14 different courses during the semester and most of them lasting only one week. Those courses are called intensive courses which usually include four obligatory lectures on Monday to Thursday and an exam on Friday. Every course usually has also a presentation and some assignments. My course subjects ranged from marketing to accounting and from HRM to entrepreneurship. Even though I am a bachelor student most of my courses were master courses. It was not a problem because the course content was fairly easy. What made the courses difficult was the workload. It was possible to choose extensive courses as well which last through the whole semester and have a final exam at the end of the semester.

The quality of the courses differed a lot. Some courses were excellent with motivating professors and others were badly planned and with old content. The school has many visiting professors from all over the world which is very interesting but then the teaching style changes a lot as well. I had some French professors also but the problem is that English skills are not the best. Common things about courses are that there are no books at all. All study material is on Power Point. The courses are very interactive and the students are encouraged to speak and hold presentations.

I lived in a private apartment with three flatmates just outside of Paris in Puteaux. One of my flatmates found it through a housing agency. We had to pay an extra fee for using the agency but that way we made sure that we were not being tricked. Puteaux is a peaceful and nice area with only 20 minutes-walk to the university. I enjoyed living there especially because it was next to the

biggest park in Paris, Bois de Boulogne. It is a beautiful park with many paths which are perfect for running. The students are warned not to go there during the night and prostitutes are a regular sight even by day but I never felt scared when I was running there.

I guess many have already heard about bureaucracy in France. It is not a joke – it is actually horrible. In the beginning, there is a lot of paper work by the school, French government and many more. You have to be prepared that everything takes time: setting up a bank account, house insurance and even telephone subscription is hard to do. What makes it more difficult is that even at banks it is hard to find people who speak English so even knowing a little bit of French helps. Especially Scandinavians can feel themselves frustrated with everything being illogical and disorganised but it gets easier after the beginning.

The best thing about IESEG is the international atmosphere. The school has many foreign students, exchange students and staff from all over the world. You get to learn about different cultures and broaden your perspective. Paris is such a beautiful city as well with so many things to do and see that you won't get bored!