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**Host University:** Universite Libre de Bruxelles

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### Exchange Experience

**Belgium** is a small country, not much bigger than Israel. It has French parts and Flemish parts and you can tell the difference. I travelled to Bruges, Ghent, Ostend and Antwerp – each city is very unique and colorful, and all of them are very different than Brussels.

**Brussels** is a small city and as a tourist, you could be there 3 days and that will be enough. Living there is a completely different experience – the people in Brussels are very kind, the costs are a bit cheaper than Israel (Belgium is considered expensive in Europe) and the atmosphere is very nice to live in.

**ULB** is in Ixelles, outside of city center. Most of the buildings are old, but the Solvay faculty (Business) has a new building. It is located near the Ixelles cemetery, and although it sounds a bit weird, there are plenty of restaurants, bars, chocolatiers etc. The university has some academic events, most of them are in French, but the biggest one I think is the SBG (Solvay business game) in February – a 2 day event of finding business solutions with winners at the end.

The university organizes lots of social activities, mainly parties, beer-pong and such. Recently it started cooperating with **ESN**, the student organization for Erasmus students (refers to all students that are not Belgian). This organization also organizes parties, speed-friending, game nights, song contests etc.

If one thing I can say about the social experience is that you will never be bored – there is always something to do. Also there is a sports center and you can purchase their card for € 30 – they have a gym, cheerleading, badminton, table tennis etc.

**The academic level** is high. The grades are between 0 to 20. I took 5 courses (had exams only in the first two):

- Negotiation skills – only 10 spots for exchange students. I enjoyed this course very much and felt that it gave me essential tools for negotiating. The professor and the TA were both excellent.
- Organizational behavior and leadership – same professor as the previous course and very interesting material for those who like psychology.
- Introduction to entrepreneurship – other than meeting new people I personally felt that this course didn't enrich me too much, thus I can't really say a lot about it.
- Project management – interesting course and a good professor.
- International supply chains – this course has some aspects of introduction to value creation, but it goes far beyond. I found the material interesting and challenging.

**Transportation:** once you receive an approval that you are a student at ULB, you should go with it to a bootik store (<https://mobib.be/en.html>) and with your ID picture. For 55 euros you will receive a mobib card for the full year (metro, tram and bus – not train!). The transportation ends at around midnight and in this case uber is a great option.

To go outside of Brussels there are trains – the tariffs are half price on weekends and if you are under the age of 26, you can buy 10 trips for € 53.

To go outside of Belgium you can take the FlixBus (very cheap), the train or flights (either from Brussels airport or from Charleroi).

**Food:** waffles and chocolate are the most known food in Belgium. People say the fries is also good, but I wasn't too excited (better in Amsterdam). There are some other dishes:

- Vol au vent: a pastry with chicken and mushrooms in cream (amazing).
- Cuberdons: small cones in different colors. It's like a super sweet jelly, I would recommend trying one.
- Croustillons: similar to the Hanukka donuts (tried it in the Christmas market).
- Tartiflette: potatoes and bacon with cheese (tried it in the Christmas market).
- Seafood: if you like it, Belgium is very good at it, especially in Ostend since it's on the beach.

**Night life:** except for all the parties organized by ULB and ESN, you can hang out near the Ixelles cemetery (bars and restaurants), Flagey (Belga bar is very popular) or in city center – there you can go near De Brouckere, Saint Catherin or Grand Place (the most touristic place in Brussels).

**Accommodation:** there are several dorms available around the university and also in the city center. Usually the rooms are small, and the beds are single. For example, "365" has small rooms but it's very close to ULB, but "the link" has big rooms and big beds (it's a bit further but only 3 bus stops from ULB).

It took me a long time to find accommodation, but finally I found a place in Auderghem, near Ixelles, 4 bus stops from ULB and direct metro to city center. I lived in a two-bedroom apartment with a Chinese roommate that was also taking the same courses as me (490 euros each including bills).

An important thing to know is that since you are Israeli, and after 90 days you need to have a **visa**, you have to do a residence permit in your city commune. In order to receive this permit, a policeman will come to your apartment and authorize you live there. Therefore, you need to find a place with domiciliation – it means that you have the landlords consent to register their address under your name at the commune (that is why a sublet is not a good option).

I first contacted the Belgian Embassy regarding the **visa** in April and arrived there with all my papers in the end of July. I would recommend you to do the same, since their application is not the clearest.

**Insurance and Health Services:** I did the health insurance with Harel and I had the option to add traveling insurance (for mountains etc.) up to 4 times. I only had to go to the doctor one time for a common cold and I got the refund for this and the medicines. I went to doctor Grinberg (Jewish and speaks Hebrew), his phone at the clinic is +32475741677, very recommended.

**Living expenses per month: € 920**

Accommodation: € 490

Public transport: € 60

Food: € 150

Spending money: € 150

Communication: € 20 (I used mobile Vikings, € 15 for 5GB and 50 min or € 25 for 10GB and 150 min, the first was enough for me)

Health insurance: € 50

**Tips and General experience:** make the most out of this experience! Educationally speaking and socially, professionally and culture wise. I met so many people from so many countries and have some good friends I stayed in touch with.

Also, travel as much as you can – I've been to the different Belgian cities, but also visited Paris, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, Dublin and London.

I was in Christmas time and Brussels (Europe in general) is very beautiful – the lights, the markets and of course the sales in January.

Photos:







