

Review of my internship in Brussels, Belgium

1. General Information, Planning and Arrival

I'm studying International Business and for finishing my bachelor I need to do an internship abroad for at least 21 weeks. In my case I did it in the capital city of Belgium Brussels in a start-up company called Zensor from September 2022 until February 2023. It was very difficult to find a convenient internship due to different reasons, so plan a lot of time in advance to search for one. One of the main reasons was that there are indeed a lot of internships positions but most of them do not fit into the criteria of being a right internship for the university. I did find my internship through a event of the Hochschule Landshut where a previous intern from our university presented her experiences. So, I advise to always have a look on previous positions of students at our university to get in touch with these companies being that most of them will offer internships again and they also already have some experience how the German way of internship works. A big advantage of Brussel is that you can get there by either bus, train, or plane. So, in case you do not want to fly, this is a perfect option. In my case I always went by plane cause its faster, more cheaper and easier especially when you have a lot of luggage in the beginning. (Note: There are two airports in the city, one is very outside (Charleroi), and one is more in the city centre (BRU-Zaventem) which I advise to fly to.)

2. The city Brussels, living situation and leisure possibilities.

Brussels, the city has beautiful old buildings and a lot of tourism attractions. There are plenty of restaurants from different nationalities and you will find a plenty of Friterie's, Waffle places, bars, and chocolate stores, as Brussels is famous for their Belgian fries, waffles, chocolate and beer. What surprise me the most is that you can find literally every kind of food even from Africa, Lebanon or Syria as the city is so international and contains a lot of different cultures and nationalities. Due to that I meet people from all over the world and surprisingly I did not meet a lot of Germans. Visiting the Atomium or the European quarter with all the European institutions is amazing and really shows you what Europe really means and its stunning to see it all in the real life. Most of the attractions, museums or tours inside the European institutions are mainly free and informative. In general, the city offers a huge possibility of cultural and social attractions and a lot to discover in your free time. A huge plus point is that Belgium offers a well-connected trains and public system which makes it possible to travel easy to cities like Bruges, Antwerp, Gent and much more. Plus, it is very close to the Netherlands, France, and Luxembourg. So, it is very easy and convenient to visits cities like Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Paris, Lille, or Luxembourg. Belgium itself is divided into the French, German, and Flemish part. That means that they have three official languages: French, Flemish and German. In Brussel itself, there is no problem if you don't speak French or Flemish as most of the people can speak English. Also Flemish is very close to German, so I mostly can understand what is written in Flemish but in general you will find a lot also in the German language.

One big disadvantage is the current living or housing situation for students here in Brussels. It is very difficult to find affordable and liveable apartments. I personally live almost in the city centre which is from the side of being near to public transport, the main station and all attractions and going out possibilities very loud, dirty, and sometimes not really safe. I live close to Gare du Midi which is not a good neighbourhood. In fact, there are some places which might be cheap but then it's in areas where I would not advise to go. This would be the

districts Anderlecht, Marolles, Maelbeek, Molenbeek and the area around Gare du Midi or Gare du Nord. In general, I must say that as a woman there were several times I did not feel safe compared to other big cities. My apartment on the other hand is really nice, very big, clean and well equipped. But I can also only afford this apartment cause my employer does finance the most of it. But all in all, I'm very happy that I found a good apartment in a short time, which is very unusual. I found it through the website: spotahome but the website erasmusu is also very good. Be careful with Facebook inserts as most of them are scams. (Note: Most of the apartments do not have a washing machine or washing machines that costs money. I personally go to a laundry service, and it is a fact that you will find a lot here in Brussels.)

To come to a conclusion, Brussels do have his dark side but overall is a very great city. It is beautiful to discover and live in Brussels, trying out the local specialities and get to see so many different cultures and nationalities for a while but I would not want to live here for ever.

3. My internship and the company

The company I'm working at is a start-up and offers comprehensive, integrated, and intelligent monitoring solutions for the renewable energy and infrastructure sectors as well as for the manufacturing industry. I particular work in the marketing department and my task are mainly connected to writing, designing, monitoring and evaluate social media post and everything what is connected with that. For example, research and finding strategically solutions for a better social media performance.

Due to that, that my company is still a start-up it is a very small company and only a few people working here. This makes the environment very cozy and we have a friendly, family like atmosphere. I really feel welcomed in the team, and it does not feel like a strict working environment. We also have the possibility to work from home and can decide mainly on our own how and when we do our task. This gave me the possibility to grow a lot and I gained a lot of knowledge also for my future workplace. I also did teach myself many things on my own which is simply due to the reason that the company itself is also still learning a lot as they are a start-up. First it was a bit challenging for me to find my way as you really need to come up with your own ideas for your own work as there is no one who really tells you what to do. Of course, there are some inputs from our responsible person but it's like not a classical workplace where you get everything prescribed.

Furthermore, what I also really liked was that the main language in the company was in English since some people were French speaking, and some people were Dutch speaking. But also getting in touch with these different languages and thus practice them is another plus point in this company.

4. Conclusion

All in all I enjoyed my stay and I recommend working in a start-up for everyone who wants to experience something that is different than the classical workplace. It brings a lot of challenges but in the end your personal growth is immense. Even though Brussels has also his challenges I highly recommend to go here, as this place is a good way to have an insight in the international workplace and gives you a lot of possibilities to get to know people from all over the world. Often Belgium is underestimated that it does not have to offer much but the opposite is the case. Belgium is very diverse and has a lot to offer.