

## **General Information**

University: National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE)

City: Moscow

Country: The Russian Federation

Period: September – December 2016

Living address: Ulitsa Kibalchicha 7 (Dorm 5)

## **Preparation**

The preparations for my exchange to Moscow were fairly easy. I had to fill out some straightforward forms that were sent to me by HSE. Once these were filled out I had to wait for my invitation in order to apply for the visa. This took some time, but finally somewhere in the beginning of August I got my visa. This visa is a single entry visa that is valid for 90 days. With this visa you can leave Russia, but you have to apply for a new one when you want to get back into the country. In October I could apply for the multiple entry visa. HSE provided all the necessary information and documents, so getting the new visa is not too hard. Besides the visa, I needed to get a sign from my doctor stating that I was healthy.

HSE gives you the opportunity to live in one of the Dorms of the university. I highly recommend doing this, because you meet a lot of other international students in the dorm. I was placed at Dorm 5, which is close to metro station VDNH.

With the visa and forms ready, I flew from Amsterdam to Moscow on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August.

## **Arrival**

After a flight of only 3 hours I arrived at Sheremetyevo airport, where my buddy was supposed to pick me up. Unfortunately for me, she told me two hours before my plane took off that she was out of town and could not pick me up. However she told me that taking a cab (Yandex or Uber) was possible. Cabs in Moscow are very cheap (about €10 for a 40km drive) and since I couldn't read a single word of Russian this was a far better option than taking the train and metro.

The international student organisation (ESN) from HSE provides you with a buddy, if you want to. I really recommend doing this, although my own buddy was not very helpful. Luckily for me I met some people in the dorm when I arrived and together with them I could get some important stuff, like a metro card (Trojka) and SIM card for my telephone.

## **Courses**

The HSE does not have a campus like the EUR. All my classes were about 30 minutes travelling from my dorm. That's something else than the 2 minutes in Rotterdam, but I got used to this in the first weeks.

When I spoke to friends who had been on exchange before, everyone told me that studying in other countries is very easy. I partly agree with them. The topics discussed in class have about the same level as at the EUR. The main difference is that at the HSE there are a lot of (group) assignments that count for the final grade. This has as a result that I already passed all my courses before I had written any final exam. This gives a very relaxed feeling at the end of the semester.

#### Russian Language course (6 credits)

The Russian language course was very interesting and teacher was very friendly. But be warned this course takes 10 hours a week and needs some work at home as well. I didn't speak a single word of Russian, but this is no problem because there are different levels (I took level 0). I found the Russian language very difficult and I am only able to speak a few (basic) sentences. However, after a few weeks you are able to ask for some easy things to people in the supermarket and this makes life a lot easier.

#### Valuation of the Company (5 credits)

This course takes you through the whole process of business valuation starting with DCF models, but also covers real estate and other asset valuation. I found this by far the most interesting course I took at HSE. The course is built up as follows: There are weekly lectures and workshops. The workshops started with a quiz, which is graded. Next there were three large case studies, these were very time-consuming but also very useful.

#### Programming and Data processing (4 credits)

This course gives you a good and broad knowledge in programming (python and excel). I already had a programming course at the EUR, which was no problem. The first 2 weeks we revised everything I had already learned, after that the pace of the course was pretty high. For the Russians this was an intermediate programming course, for students who had had programming at high school. For this course I had to make a weekly home assignment, which was graded. At the end of the semester we also had to make an end project. Besides the practical assignments, there was a mid-term and a final exam.

#### Economics of Innovation (9 credits)

The course looks at the innovation processes from all different kind of aspect. To be honest I found this course the least interesting, but it was fairly easy. We had to write a paper and there was a final exam, which both counted for 50% for the final grade.

#### **Finances**

Russians use Russian rubbles as currency. The currency is very volatile, in the 4 months I was in Moscow the exchange rate dropped from 75 rubbles to 65 rubbles for 1 euro. In Moscow I spend a little bit more than I did in the Netherlands, although it has to be said that if you exclude clubbing and travelling it is much, much more cheaper. In the table below you can find what I spend on average each month

Item	Rubbles/month
Rent	1850
Telephone (10GB + 200 min)	400
Metro	400
Groceries	17.500
Travelling	10.000
Clubbing + leisure activities + clothes	28.000

## Daily life

Moscow is absolutely an amazing city. Being one of the largest cities in the world there is something to do every day. Russia has been a lot in the news lately. But although the country might have not such a good name in Europe I felt very safe during my whole stay in Russia. When you walk on the street people might not look to friendly, but ones you get to know them a little better the Russians are very friendly and helpful.

Like I said I lived in a dormitory with a lot of other international students. I really liked this aspect, since there are always people in for a good party. The nightlife in Moscow is simply stunning. Ranging from craft beer bars, rooftop bars, secret hidden bars and clubs, Moscow offers something for everyone. But also during the day there is a lot to discover. During the first months it is very nice to walk through the city and the various beautiful parks. Ones it gets colder and darker there are ice skating rings on some large squares in the city and the streets are decorated with all different kinds of lights. The Russians are very culturally minded; there are a lot of different museums, theatres and other exhibitions.

Besides Moscow I really recommend travelling around Russia. The trains are very cheap and a very interesting experience. I really recommend visiting cities like Saint Petersburg and Kazan, but also places like Siberia and Murmansk are a great experience.

All in all, my time abroad has been a rollercoaster and I will never forget it. I got to know so many interesting people from all over the world. I can recommend everyone to go for a semester abroad and in particular to Moscow.

If you got any questions about my time in Russia please do not hesitate to contact me, I am happy to answer your questions!

