

# STAP Experience Report Warsaw

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Name: [REDACTED]

Studies: Business Administration - Marketing

Guest University: Akademia Leona Kozmieskiego

Exchange Period: September 2024 – February 2025 (WiSe 24/25)

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*"My Erasmus semester at Kozmieski University was incredible! I gained valuable academic insights through hands-on courses, made lifelong friends, and explored the beautiful city of Warsaw." – [REDACTED]  
Business Administration, Kozmieski University*

## **Preparation**

The preparation for my semester abroad at Kozmieski University was straightforward and quickly completed. Once the confirmation for the exchange semester arrives, you receive an email with a link to the online application. This takes only a few minutes—you enter personal details, emergency contacts, and proof of international health insurance (often, the health insurance card with the EU logo is sufficient).

The course overview is provided shortly before the semester begins. Course selection takes place in two rounds: the first one starts 1–2 weeks before the semester begins, and the second one occurs during the second week. Since course spots are limited, it is best to book immediately when the system opens.

Besides receiving emails, you can also sign up for a buddy program. The buddy supports you before and during your stay. The orientation week organized by the KIS team is a must!

There is a direct flight from Düsseldorf to Warsaw, but the prices have increased over time. Traveling by train is therefore a much cheaper alternative and more convenient if you have a lot of luggage.

## **Accommodation**

Unfortunately, rents in Warsaw are higher than expected. It is worth connecting with other students from your home university in advance to possibly find an apartment together. As far as I know, there is also the option to inquire about accommodation through Kozmieski University, but I would recommend moving to the other side of the river, as you are closer to the action there. The districts of Wola and Śródmieście are among the most popular residential areas. Many of my fellow students found their apartments through Spotahome. I personally found my shared apartment through the website Pepehousing, which even offers a discount code for all Kozmieski students.

Although I found the website relatively secure—since the payment is only transferred after arrival—you should be very careful, as there are many scammers in general. If possible, it would be ideal if your buddy could visit the apartment in advance or at least assess the location.

### **Studying at ALK**

Unlike at the University of Cologne, the university system at ALK is more school-like, and at least in the beginning, you have lectures almost every day. In general, the studies are much more practice-oriented, and a large part of the academic work (group projects, participation during class, presentations, etc.) is completed during the lecture period.

A lecture usually lasts 3 hours, but some seminars go up to 5 hours. I took six courses in total since most courses at ALK are only worth 2–4 ECTS, and I needed 20 credits for my "Abroad Module." My courses were as follows:

- Cross-Cultural Management
- Design Thinking in Innovation Processes & Innovative Research Techniques
- Designing Innovative Organizations
- International Business Strategy
- Strategic Management for Growth: Value Innovation and Capture
- Strategic Negotiations: Multiparty & Multicultural Challenge

In almost all subjects, I had to complete multiple assignments: reports, mid-term tests, final exams, and presentations. You invest a lot of time during the semester, but in return, the exam phase at the end is much less stressful.

My favorite courses were *Designing Innovative Organizations* and *Design Thinking*, where we actively participated and developed our own projects in groups. For example, in *Design Thinking*, we went through the entire innovation process—from developing a product idea to market analysis, target group definition, and marketing.

### **Life in Warsaw**

**Groceries:** The cost of living is now relatively similar to Cologne. Food is only significantly cheaper if you visit so-called *milk bars* (traditional Polish canteens) before 7 PM, where you can get very good Polish food at low prices, similar to a student cafeteria.

**Public Transport:** Once you have your student ID, you can go to any sales point and get a 1- or 3-month ticket. Before that, you will need single tickets, which are unfortunately not available at every stop. I recommend using the *Jakdojade* app, where you can also buy digital tickets that can be validated in any bus or tram. Additionally, Uber and Bolt are much cheaper than in Germany, which is especially useful for airport transfers or getting home late at night.

**Culture:** Warsaw has a lot to offer culturally, as many attractions have free entry on specific days of the week, such as the *POLIN Museum* (Museum of the History of Polish Jews). During the winter semester, there are plenty of cultural and leisure activities, including ice skating in the old town, movie nights, mini-golf, and escape rooms.

Vintage shopping is also a great experience, as the *Praga* district, known for its hipster scene, has many second-hand stores and weekly vintage markets.

**Erasmus Events:** The organization of Erasmus parties, trips, and activities was great, and I highly recommend participating in as many events as possible. You meet a lot of new people and quickly bond through shared experiences. There is both a university-organized Erasmus committee (*KIS*) and *ESN* events. It's best to follow both on Instagram to stay updated.

There are specific nights when almost all Erasmus students gather in certain bars, which is always a blast. Besides studying, partying and group excursions to museums, trips to Polish cities like Wrocław, Kraków, and Gdańsk are highly recommended.

### **Conclusion**

My Erasmus experience was one of the best parts of my studies, and I fully enjoyed living in Warsaw. In my opinion, the city is very much underrated. Warsaw is beautiful, modern, clean, and full of culture, coffee/food places and lots of free time opportunities.

In conclusion I can say that I had a lot of fun in Warsaw, I felt very comfortable and safe, I tried a lot of new things, made international connections, and gained friends for life.