

# Erfahrungsbericht EPFL

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## Getting there and Useful information

I had the chance to study at EPFL during the summer semester (February-July) 2022. As soon as I received the confirmation from the university, I was provided with very well organized information through Emails and the EPFL App I had to install.

Regarding accommodation, the university does not have its own student housing, though they give you a list of private dorms - which are rather expensive and it is hard to get a place, if you do not register very early. Nonetheless you should at least visit "Vortex"! We were two people sharing a centrally located apartment found on a Facebook group (1100 CHF) but I can say we were very lucky as rents are generally way more expensive. Though, Movetia (Swiss-European Mobility Programme) offers every exchange student a scholarship of 2200CHF/semester. This excepts one also from paying the city taxes which you are informed about per post as soon as you register for "Titre de séjour" (mandatory residence permit) at "Service du contrôle des habitants". Half Fare Travelcard (50% discount for any transport ticket, 185 CHF/year) is a good idea as travel prices in Switzerland are very expensive. I didn't need a visa and my European Green Card was enough as a health insurance.



## Degree program, language and courses

As an exchange student at EPFL you are allowed to take any courses you want (Master and Bachelor), in French or English. No language certificate is required to apply. There is a French intensive course at the beginning of the semester for which you also receive credits. The whole experience was multilingual as most people can speak both or even German. The main project I did (Studio Weinand) was in English but some students preferred to have their critiques in French. There are a lot of amazing courses and you should not see language as a barrier if you have a basic vocabulary and interest, curiosity for the content.

"Introduction to computational architecture" was for example a really great course held in French about Rhino, Grasshopper, Python and I could always ask in English and clarify what I did not understand at the end of the class. The main project is 13 ects (usually 10 + 3 if you do an extra task), UEs are modules from Master which require more time invested but are worth 6 ects and normal modules are 3 ects. You have 2 weeks at the beginning to try as many courses as you want, but afterwards you have to decide and you cannot change them (only if you pay 50 CHF). There is a big diversity of courses and very dedicated professors and assistants. I truly recommend "Magma and principles" and "Constructing the view".

There is an exemplary model-making workshop with impressive machines and nice people always willing to help and give advice on how to build the models in an efficient, sustainable and beautiful way. The materials and glue one can also be bought directly from there. The students do not have to pay for using the machines, laser etc. For using the printers every student has an allocated sum by the university (100CHF).





## Free-time and life on Campus

Unexpectedly, I learned the value of free time at EPFL. In the studio I did we had to work in Master-Bachelor pairs. Most master students had a healthy work discipline which they mostly acquired during their mandatory internship: they were very structured in their workflow and knew that they have also other things to do after university which allowed them to have refreshed energy the next day.

The courses are demanding, but if you're focused, organized and do not fall down a self dug rabbit hole then you can also have time to profit from the wonderful activities of the Campus, from the beauty of the city and the lake.

The Campus atmosphere is pretty different than what we know from TUM. It feels like a small city where students from all faculties meet to eat together at the "Agora", learn, rent or buy books and enjoy a snack at the Rolex Learning Center (space always giving a sense of fluidity of thought and freedom), wander around the intricate buildings or chill in the hidden inner and rooftop courtyards. There are a lot of associations on various themes which you can be part of. I joined "Artepoly" which focuses on everything that has to do with art, design, events and workshops in this sense, (Open Air) film projections on campus. I also participated at the "TooShortFilmContest" organized by them and wrote for "Superboom". Most importantly I found an environment of passionate people who turned into friends and with whom I am still working on independent projects.

In May the Campus turns into the biggest music festival organized by students in Europe - "Balelec". There are always exhibitions, concerts, conferences, great events happening! On the way to the lake you pass by the Sports Center, which is offering a large range of low-priced possibilities: from Contemporary Dance to Sailing and Horse-Riding (remember to register as soon as possible for them!). At the lake there are barbecues, parties, people reading, having picnics, swimming - all the time, everyone enjoying the astonishing view. The city is a labyrinthine hang with beautiful hidden corners and incredible places like the Hermitage Museum and its garden or the bar "Terrasse des Grandes Roches".

## Integration and intercultural awareness

I think participating in the Welcome Week organized by ESN is a great opportunity to get insights about the life in Lausanne and at EPFL and UNIL, to make (mostly international) friends, and feel integrated fast. You can also work at the Lab and get insights into the work of PhD people (and you are also paid 24 CHF/hour). Students, even professors and assistants at EPFL are curious to know more about your background and willing to help you with every occasion. During the exchange semester, everyone was happy to share knowledge and interact which is simply wonderful!

