During the fall semester, I had the honour to participate in an Erasmus+ programme in France, Toulouse. Toulouse is a very welcoming city in the South, very close to the Pyrenean. Its population is about 475,000 people, it is the second largest University city, after Paris in France. Therefore, the atmosphere is very vivid, it is mainly filled with young people and students. The city has two parts and in the middle a river can be found, which is called Garonne. On the riverside and in the city center lots of bars and pubs are colouring the profile of the city. I really recommend Toulouse for those, who would like to spend a semester in a city with young people and lots of internationals.

My accommodation was located in the centre of the city, five minutes from my University, which was called Institut d’Études Politique de Toulouse (Sciences Po Toulouse). It was a college-like student residence. Location, and price-wise, this was the best option, I paid 264 euros per month. Moreover, in France, the French state offers for students an aid, which is called CAF. For that, I had to open a bank account in a French bank, and go to the „CAF bureau”, the survey can be also filled on the Internet. Thanks to CAF, I received 85 euros per month, which was automatically deducted from the accommodation fee. The drawbacks,
Regarding the accommodation, were with the heating system, unfortunately, it did not work properly, and my room was really cold. The room was 9 m² with a bed, a table, a chair and a bathroom. On one floor, around 60 people had to share 3 kitchens. At the residence, there was also a restaurant, a park and a library. The residence was located between Capitole and Compans Caffarelli, 10 minutes-walk from both metro stations.

Regarding the prices in France, obviously, it is a lot higher compared to the Hungarian prices, but all in all, Toulouse is cheaper than Paris. For public transport, in Toulouse, there is the chance to have a card, which is called “carte Pastel”. At the first time, I paid for this card 20 euros, after that the monthly fee was around 10 euros. Public transport was really well-organised with two metro lines, trams and buses. However, as I lived in the city centre, I did not use public transport too much, basically, I could walk anywhere. It was worth it to go to the suburb (Balma Gramont) if I was looking for a supermarket (Auchan) as it was a lot cheaper than in the centre. Going to the airport, it took about an hour to get there by metro and tram, however, there was an airport bus with extra fee (8 euros), which got to the airport from the centre in 15 minutes.

My university, Sciences Po Toulouse or Institut d’Études Politique de Toulouse was located in the centre, 5 minutes-walk from my accommodation. At Corvinus, I study International Relations but at Sciences Po the courses are mainly political and highly academic. I attended lectures, but internationals are able to apply to any courses, both BA and MA seminars and open lectures as well. Seminars are very interactive with 10 students; both the seminars and the open lectures took around 2 and a half or 3 hours. Open lectures mainly end with an exam, which we wrote during the exam week in January, seminars mainly end with a paper work and include presentations during the semester.

Regarding the lectures, I have to admit that my choices were not the best. All in all, I had six courses, mainly in French, I chose one in English. It is called ‘Immigration and diversity in France and the UK from 1930 to present’, which I found really useful and interesting. Besides, I had a French course, it was not my favourite, but it was good that I could use the language and boost my vocabulary. I had three lectures in French, ‘Sociologie de l’État’, Introduction a la science politique’ and ‘Passions, culture et société francaises’. For the first two, I studied a lot for the exams, however during the semester, I did not have to study for them at all, they were not interactive with no midterm tasks. The last one was the worst course from all, it was
only for Erasmus students and I found it really boring. We had to present, topic in front the others and at the end we wrote an exam, where we could use electronic devices. So I really could not learn anything from it unfortunately. All in all, regarding the courses, it was worth it except for ‘Passions, culture et société francaises.’

Regarding cultural diversity, thanks to the student association, which organised programs, parties or picnics, we could easily get in touch with the Erasmus students, and a few French students. However, groups and friendships mainly emerged among the internationals. It is told that a cultural shock is likely to happen during an Erasmus semester and I’d like to emphasize this statement. It is very interesting to get to know foreigners and see how different is there thinking but also very similar. We all shared a pretty similar way of thinking about politics and international relations, but the atmosphere where we came from differed, and therefore shaped our opinions. I suppose, this experience was the best during this four and a half month that I spent in a foreign country.