

VRG Erasmus Guide



Team 2008-2009 : Thomas, Marnick, Anneleen, Hendrik, Reinert

I. Team Presentation

On behalf of the whole VRG team, we would like to welcome you to our lovely student city Leuven . Last year we have been elected by the law faculty students to organise lots of nice parties, and other joyful activities. We would like to wish you a nice stay. We will attempt to assist you with any difficulty that might occur.

We're a dedicated team of five law students, who are – as part of a larger student organisation, the VRG – designated to inform, entertain, help and assist all foreign exchange students. Four guys – Hendrik, Marnick, Reinert and Thomas - and a girl – Anneleen – are very committed and motivated to make sure that your academic year or semester will be the unforgettable experience you've hoped it to be.

Please bother us with all sorts of questions. Going from 'where should we attend classes' over 'where can I throw up' to 'which lessons can we skip'.

This guide may offer you the very first assistance during your first days. But always keep in mind that our team will be available to help 24/7. (See 'contact information')

The front page will tell you who is who: from left to right you can see: Thomas, Marnick, Anneleen, Hendrik and Reinert.

II. Activities during the first weeks

Opening week

Monday 22th of September 2008

-15.00 h : Erasmus tour

A guided tour through Leuven for all Erasmus students, in which we will point out more places of interest for our new students and during which they are more than free to ask all sorts of questions. Don't hesitate to come, this tour is absolutely free and includes a free drink afterwards. The tour starts at HdR, Tiensestraat 53. We will meet you there at three p.m.

-22.00 h : Erasmus TD @ Rumba

Every year the VRG team organises a TD (abbreviation for a student party) where we especially want to welcome all Erasmus students. The ideal moment for you to get to know other Erasmus students, and also of course to integrate yourself into Belgian student life, since Rumba will also be crowded with lots of Belgian students. Be there!

The entrance fee is only 3 euros, and even less – 2,5 euros – with the VRG student Card. These will be the entrance fees for every TD.

Tuesday 23th of September

22.00 h : Bac TD @ musicafé

The second TD of the year in one of the best party locations in Leuven. Be sure to come and take a look.

Thursday 25th of September

22.00 h : Master TD @ Musicafé

Especially for the older law students, we organise a blast of a party at musicafé. Once again you are very welcome.

Second week

Monday 29th of September

17.00 h : Opening reception at 'Nieuwe Valk'

Traditional openings drink at the law faculty.

22.00 h : Free keg @ The Rector

Your Erasmus team will be there to provide you with a free keg of beer as a welcome present. This is also an excellent opportunity to get to know the other Erasmus students and to have a great time.

Tuesday 30th of October

22.00 h : Opening TD @ three locations : Musicafé, Rumba & Blauwe Kater

One of the greatest parties of the year, known by the entire student society of Leuven ! Three locations for three kinds of music : every location will be easy to find, just follow the carpet, because VRG will connect the three locations with a stylish carpet 😊.

Fourth week

Monday 13th of October

20.30 h: Cantus @ Pavlov

This is a Belgian tradition and last year it was the favourite event of all Erasmus students. It is a combination of singing and drinking and it will be an evening you'll never forget, so make sure you'll be there. You won't regret it!

For more information about coming events through the year, we would like to direct you to our website www.vrg.be . We will also e-mail you when events are coming, so that you have no excuse to miss them 😊

III. Erasmus Student Guide

A. Welcome word

Welcome to Leuven, aka student central, aka city of beer! We are glad you have chosen our city as your home for the next couple of months. Even though to some of you Leuven may seem like a small city, it easily makes up for what it lacks in size, in the sheer amount of activities it offers, the atmosphere it breathes and the rich history it tells.

We will guide you through the non-stop flow of info that will be poured over you in the first couple of days and show you cool stuff along the way. We will try to be your beacon of light in the darkness and provide you with news of what's happening (Balans, Mini-Balans,...), course books, study advice (yeah right...) and also parties and other Erasmus activities.

First of all, a short introduction of our organization, the VRG (Vlaams Rechtsgenootschap), the Flemish Law Society. We are a student organization, run by the students, for the students. After a short (but fierce!) campaign period held annually, all of the members are elected, to represent you and cater to your every need in the following year. We work hard to achieve several goals, mainly being: organization, representation and entertainment. We try to organize the Belgian and international law students' academic life and make their stay at our faculty a little less complex. Very important as well, is the representation of the law student body by the VRG in all the governing university bodies, to make sure your rights (both academic and party-rights) are well respected. In some aspects even more important is our third main goal, providing ample and stimulating entertainment, to make sure that your university experience in our city will be unforgettable.

To keep you up to date about all of our activities, we publish a weekly magazine called "Mini-Balans" in which we announce all the activities that will be organized that week. There's also the Mini-Balans' big brother, enigmatically (!) named "Balans". In this two-monthly magazine, we will supply you with party reviews, interviews and news about big upcoming events.

Now, if you really want to reap the benefits of being a law student in Leuven, there's a little thing called the "VRG Membership Card". You can become a member of the VRG for a year, by paying € 10. Consider the benefits this card will give you! Discounts at stores, venues, bars and all VRG parties! Lower prices for all law textbooks! It's a real door opener! You can get your hands on this golden ticket at the VRG office, at Tiensestraat 53, on the first floor, right above HdR (Huis der Rechten), the law bar.

B. Our Erasmus Program 2008-2009

As your student organization, we will do our best to show you what Belgium has to offer, to make sure that you have a great time while you're here. So we will organize all kinds of parties, events and other interesting activities, throughout the entire year. We'll keep you posted about the activities we're planning, mainly via the Mini-Balans, via e-mail or otherwise via our website. But the more imagination and ideas the better, so if you have any suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact us. Just let us know, and we'll see what we can work out.

In order to organise a lot of nice activities during your stay in our lovely student city, the VRG also collaborates with LOKO, which represents the entire student society of Leuven. They have a good international working, so don't hesitate to check their website: www.loko.be.

Mind you, for a lot of the activities offered by the VRG, you will have to sign yourself up. Just stop by our office, buy a ticket and get dressed for the party!

Naturally, there's more to life than just partying all the time. If we would keep on drinking beer and stuffing ourselves with fries or other heavenly foods, we would soon find our clothes to be too small... So both the university and privately owned firms provide a wide range of sports. There are fitness-centers, squash halls and basketball courts all over Leuven. And at the university sports center, there's a very, very broad offer of sports, ranging from rugby to badminton, and from scuba diving to capoeira. For these programs you will have to buy a sports card, available for €17 at the front desk of the university sports center. If you're interested in practicing one or more of these or if you need some more information, you can always stop by our office and we'll give all the info you need and direct you to the sports facility closest by.

If you're particularly good at one (or more) sport(s) you can always try and join the university team, and defend the honour of the KULeuven on an interuniversity level. Again, if you'd like some more information on this, don't hesitate to drop by our office!

C. The Law School

1. “De Valk”

Our school is known as “De Valk”, Flemish for The Falcon. One of the four original university buildings, it is now the only one remaining. After having been moved around once, the law faculty still is the oldest one in Belgium, dating back to the 15th Century. History has not left the center of our studies unmoved, for example; it was turned into a field hospital for the French troops, during the occupation of the Southern Netherlands by Napoleon.

Today, there are two buildings that make up our school. There’s the “Oude Valk” (referred to as DV 1), the old building, and the “Nieuwe Valk” (referred to as DV 3), the new(er) building, built in the 1970’s. Courses are taught in either one, but the old one also houses the law library and in the new one, most of our professors have their offices.

Whenever you go someplace new, you feel like everything looks the same, so getting lost isn’t far off... To prevent this from happening (too much), you can take part in the guided faculty tour (see program).

2. The Courses

Being in a new country, with a new language, and a new school, things might seem quite overwhelming. So if you can’t make heads or tails of the courses, or if you don’t know which ones to choose or if you can’t figure out the ECTS system, feel free to contact us. There’s a large variety of courses to choose from so we’ll gladly help you find your way.

3. Course Materials

There are three ways to get your hands on those beloved rectangular slabs, widely used as doorstops and paperweights, also known as books.

Your first option is going to the VRG ‘Cursusdienst’ or ‘Cudi’ (our own little bookstore if you will), where you can find a number of textbooks as well as the lion’s share of the legal documentation at the lowest prices. It gets even better, because if you’ve got the VRG Membership Card, you will get a discount on the books. The Cursusdienst is located in the Nieuwe Valk, DV 3 00.18 – 00.20.

It is open from Monday to Thursday from 12 pm until 14 pm and from 18 pm until 20 pm. On Fridays it's only open from 12 pm until 14 pm. (Remark: the first week is an exception for they can't deliver many books yet – see website.)

They accept payment in cash, as well as credit cards. You can always check the website for more information about the books they sell on the following address www.vrg.be/cudi or by sending an e-mail to cudi@vrg.be.

The second possibility is the Acco (Maria-Theresiastraat 2-4). This is the university's own bookstore, with textbooks for all the faculties, scientific publications, legal documentation, stationary and office equipment.

It's a tad more expensive than our 'Cursusdienst', but the prices are still very reasonable. And you can ask your Mentor to buy your books for you with his Acco discount card.

A third possibility is that your professor will print out the necessary course materials himself and bring it to class, so you can buy it directly from him.

4. Important information

Important information is displayed on the Erasmus Blackboard (Valven in Dutch, *ad valvas* in Latin) in the main hall of the Oude Valk. We strongly urge you to check these on a regular basis; they will give you information about course developments, timetables, planning etc. This way you can avoid getting up early in the morning only to discover that your professor didn't show up himself...

Also, extracurricular activities are announced here.

Also very important is the online Blackboard system of the university, called 'Toledo'. The internet link is <http://toledo.kuleuven.be/>.

You will have to login with your student number and password in order to use this system. Once you are logged in, your courses and announcements are displayed. Course related info can be found there, for example powerpoint slides used in class, course documents, assignments etc.

D. More information

1. All kinds of questions

For all kinds of problems you can check the international version of the KU Leuven website (<http://www.kuleuven.be/english/>). There you can find information about administration, living in leuven, internet, courses, sports, etc.

If you can't find the answers on your own, we still got two very useful addresses for you. There is the 'student administration office' located in the 'Universiteitshal', Naamsestraat 22. Between 9 and 12.30 A.M. they will help you there with registrations, course planning and more administrative troubles. For questions related to accommodation and housing you can address yourself to the 'Huisvestingsdienst' located in the 'Van Dalecollege', Naamsestraat 80 between 2 and 5 P.M.

2. Shopping

For all the cooks amongst you, here's an overview of most Belgian super markets.

In the city center you can find some excellent, but rather expensive super markets:

- Match: Bondgenotenlaan 58
- Delhaize 'Denon': Brusselsestraat 31
- G.B. Express: Brusselsestraat 60
- Spar: Brusselsestraat 124

Just a little further, there are some cheaper stores:

- Aldi: J. P. Mincklerstraat 76
- Lidl: J. P. Mincklerstraat 136
- Colruyt: Lombaardenstraat 2

3. Bars, restaurants and partyplaces

The best bar in town is without a doubt our own faculty bar, het 'Huis der Rechten' (House of Law in English), better known as HdR. It's situated underneath our VRG office at Tiensestraat 53. There you'll find the cheapest beer (only 90 cents) and best parties in Leuven, every single night of the week (not in the weekends).

If you are not that keen on cooking yourself, there are plenty of restaurants spread around Leuven, so there is little chance you will starve to death.

Our university has its own student restaurants, called Alma, where you can have lunch or dinner at very reasonable prices. Every day they offer a large variety of meals but you can always buy a sandwich too. You can find them at Tiensestraat 115 (Alma 1, the smaller one) and at Van Evenstraat 2C (Alma 2, the biggest one). The Alma's little brother is called 'Het academisch kwartiertje', located in 'De Nieuwe Valk'. This place is perfect for a quick and cheap lunch such as sandwich, spaghetti or soup.

De Rector is a popular student pub with a variety of possibilities to have a good time. There's a large sunny terrace, a tasteful and wallet-friendly menu (even available in English, Spanish, French and German), and at night there's always some party going on. The best part of it is that you, as an Erasmus student, will have some special reductions on food and drinks.



Of course, there is no lack of clubs in Leuven! First of all there is 'Musicafé' (Muntstraat 5). They have two bars, a lounge and a big dance floor. Every week, many parties are hosted there.

Then there is 'Rumba' (Kiekenstraat 6). You'll find a cosy dance area and great music. It's just a little smaller, but definitely as blasting as 'Musicafé'.

Other interesting places are 'De blauwe kater', 'Exit' and 'Albatros'. Just keep an eye on the publicities all around town, check them out and have a great time!

4. The media in Belgium

a. Radio stations



Radio 1: National broadcasting station n°1 with a lot of news and interviews, maybe less interesting because a lot in Dutch

Frequency in Leuven: 98.5 live-stream: <http://www.radio1.be>



Radio Donna: 'Fun and hits', popular music

Frequency in Leuven: 94.8 live-stream:
<http://www.donna.be>



Studio Brussel: A little bit more alternative than the other stations. Rock, house and techno. (our favorite!)

Frequency in Leuven: 88.0 live-stream: <http://www.stubru.be>



Klara: very nice classical station

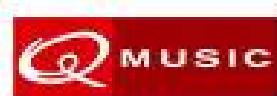
Frequency in Leuven: 89.5 live-stream: <http://www.klara.be>



RVI stands for "**Radio Vlaanderen Internationaal**", or Flanders' International Radio. It's the international channel of VRT, the public radio and television station of the Flemish community in Belgium. They bring information about Belgium and Flanders abroad and this in English. Live-stream: <http://www.rvi.be>



4FM: frequency in Leuven: 99.7 live-stream:
<http://www.4fm.be>



Q-music: frequency in Leuven: 92.2 or 95.8 live-stream:
<http://www.q-music.be>

b. Television

Interesting to know: foreign movies are always subtitled on Flemish television, never dubbed, although main language used will always be Dutch. The five most important TV stations are:



TV1: Main public TV station; family orientated shows, news, human interest reports; mainly in Dutch, although sometimes it offers English spoken shows and movies



Canvas: Public TV station number two. Tends to be more intellectually stimulating: news, in-depth reports, quizzes and cultural programs, also a lot of important sport events (tennis and soccer) British humour (Fast show, The Office, Fawlty Towers, Bottoms, etc) and detective stories (Morse, Frost, Midsummer Murders,...)



VTM: Main commercial station. Mainly offers family TV.



2BE: Commercial station with lots of American movies, cartoons and sports. It also hosts the Champion's League Football.



VT4: Commercial station with lots of American series, cartoons and movies: Friends, Spin City, the Simpsons, ...

c. Newspapers and magazines

Although at least some newspapers in your language will be available in Leuven, maybe there are some die hard Belgium-lovers among you who want to practice their Dutch by reading the Flemish press. Most interesting publications are:

- **De Standaard:** tries to be 'the standard'. Very decent journalism. Website: <http://www.standaard.be>
- **De Morgen:** a little bit more alternative and left-wing newspaper <http://www.demorgen.be>
- **Het Laatste Nieuws:** something more 'liberal' and maybe right-wing, some people view it as the main tabloid newspaper <http://www.hln.be>
- **Humo:** probably the most popular Flemish weekly magazine with interviews and reports. Also holds TV listings. <http://www.humo.be>

- **Knack:** very solid weekly magazine, brings out scandals about the government at least every two weeks. Style is comparable to De Standaard. <http://www.knack.be>
- **Eos:** Main Flemish scientific magazine

E. Contact info

Still got questions? Check out our website at www.vrg.be and click on Erasmus or mail us at erasmus@vrg.be or you can stop by our office. Opening hours: Monday – Thursday, from 11h to 17h and on Friday from 11 till 15h.

Also, because it is a very handy medium to keep in touch and post pictures, we have also created a group on facebook: just search for the group “VRG Erasmus Leuven 2008-2009” and join. This way we can keep you informed at all time and you will get to know your fellow students once again a little better.