

Exchange report

2023

Alin-Eugen Gusanu

Email: alin1962@stud.kea.dk

Exchange period: Fall 2023(August-December)

Receiving institution: Høyskolen Kristiania

Place: Oslo, Norway

Introduction:

For my 5th semester I had the opportunity to take part in an amazing experience abroad. After long consideration I have decided to go to Kristiania University in Oslo, due to the courses they were offering. As a Business Economics and IT student I've always found myself more inclined to the technical part of my bachelor, and Kristiania had just the courses I needed. Therefore, I have picked the data science program, and I took part in the following courses: Advanced programming for data science(7.5ECTS), Data structures and algorithms(7.5ECTS) and Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing (15ECTS).

Academic Experience:

The transition into the new environment was seamless, thanks to the exceptional support provided by Kristiania's international coordinator, Karoline. Her guidance was invaluable throughout the settling process, ensuring I felt well-assisted every step of the way. Moreover, the welcome week proved to be an incredibly enjoyable experience, brimming with a diverse array of engaging activities. It was an absolute delight and stands out as one of the most enjoyable times I've had during my time abroad.

Out of all the classes I took, the one that really stood out was the Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing course. Diving into the foundations of AI and language models, especially considering how popular they became in the last few years, was immensely rewarding. Getting a handle on the core principles behind these high-tech fields really opened my eyes to how tech's changing and how it impacts our world.

The class I had on data structures and algorithms was also very helpful, and it had provided me with a good understanding of the various data structures used nowadays in IT projects as well as an overview of the most famous algorithms.

The "Advanced programming for data science" course was not what I was expecting, and it would have been nice if it went a little bit deeper into the theory. A good part of the course I had already knew from previous courses at KEA, but I can say it was still helpful to have an overall revision of all the programming knowledge I already had.

Practical experience:

The application process was surprisingly smooth, and both KEA and Kristiania's coordinators were incredibly supportive and kind throughout. They provided all the necessary information and guided me through every step, making the process very easy. Thankfully, settling in Oslo was a breeze, and I didn't face any practical challenges upon arrival. I have lived in Sofienberg Studenthus, in Gruenlokka, a student dorm close to the city center, offered by Kristiania's partner organization SIO. The

accommodation was not only affordable at 6188 NOK per month, but it was also conveniently located and well-equipped. Opting for a room with a private bathroom and shared kitchen turned out to be a great decision. I've got along very well with my 6 kitchen mates, and we have become very good friends. The kitchen became our hanging out area, and it was a very cozy place where you could walk in anytime and have a chat with your flat mates.

Oslo turned out to be a bit more expensive than anticipated. While going out matched Copenhagen's prices, groceries, surprisingly, were pricier. The real kicker was alcohol, it is extremely expensive with strict purchasing limitations. I ended up spending more than budgeted, especially on going out and fun experiences. A tip for future visitors: buy as much alcohol as you can from the airport 😊.

Financially, I relied mainly on the Erasmus grant, which amounted to around 2600 euros for the entire stay. Alongside that, I dipped into my savings to cover additional expenses during the exchange. While the financial aspect was a bit challenging due to Oslo's higher costs, the experience and the memories made were undoubtedly worth it.

Cultural/Personal Experience:

While getting to know the Norwegian culture better, I came to the conclusion that Danish and Norwegian cultures are very alike. And as you probably already know, making Danish friends as a foreigner is a challenging task, I can say the same applies to the Norwegians. They are incredibly respectful and kind, but breaking the barrier to truly connect and build friendships with them was very hard.

I can say that the best part of my experience was pushing beyond my comfort zone and getting into a new environment, adapting myself to the new challenges. Embracing the opportunity to meet new people and adapt to this new environment was incredibly rewarding. I'd highly recommend the exchange experience to other KEA students. It's been a period filled with making lasting friendships and having an absolute blast. I'm definitely going to stay in touch with the friends I've made during this semester.

For other KEA students heading to the receiving school, my advice would be to embrace the similarities and differences in the cultures. If you're fond of Danish culture and seek a northern twist, Norway is a great choice. Also, come prepared with warm clothing as the weather can be chilly, and ensure you have enough savings to navigate the slightly higher expenses. Overall, it's an enriching experience that's absolutely worth diving into.