

NAME OF STUDENT: MARIE GROES-PETERSEN

E-MAIL: mariegroespetersen@gmail.com

Host institution:

VILNIUS COLLEGE OF DESIGN

Host institute contact person:

MINDAUGAS LATIŠENKA

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Introduction

I chose to study abroad in Lithuania because I was too curious on what this experience would bring me. Going on exchange is a huge opportunity which I don't see any reason to miss. I chose to study graphic design at VDK because we don't focus too much on this field at KEA and I could imagine myself working with this in the future. I chose Lithuania because I have a big love for Eastern European countries and the Baltics are the only ones I still had not visited. I was in the mood for a big culture shock and I think Lithuania seemed the most dramatic out of the countries available. Also I imagined that Lithuania would be one of the cheaper options, which allowed me to go on exchange despite being quite broke. It was actually also appealing to me that none of my classmates would choose Vilnius, as I wanted to grow more independent and meet new people on my own



1. Where and when did you study abroad?

I studied at Vilnius College of Design in Lithuania,
from September 2022 to January 2023

2. What KEA program did you attend at the time?

Design and entrepreneurship

3. What classes did you take during your semester abroad?

The overall program was GRAPHIC DESIGN, and I studied the following subjects:
Drawing, packaging design, movie industry, project management, Lithuanian culture &
history, marketing and intercultural communication

4. Please briefly explain what each class was about.

Drawing

Technical drawing techniques like geometrics, shading, perspective, dimensions and at the end a larger project studying a chosen building and scenes from a movie

packaging design

This class was mostly project based and highly focused on individual work where we designed packaging for simple boxes, rebranding of an existing product and a larger project of designing both packaging shape and the graphics

movie industry

This class was focused on one project throughout the whole semester. In groups of 4-5 students, we created a short film. The class was very ambitious and highly focused on the 'pre work' of creating any type of movie

project management

Teaching different project management strategies and time/cost managing tools. In the end we created our own project in groups with focus on the planning phases.



Lithuanian culture & history

Class teaching the history and culture of Lithuania with focus on art

Marketing

Marketing techniques and encouraging students to give presentations every class. The class ended with a larger individual branding and marketing strategy of a 'fictive product'

Intercultural communication

This online class focused on communication strategies and various ways to spread awareness of a brand, quite a technical class with a good amount of homework.



Academic Experience

1. How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

I received a list of description of each class some weeks before school start, however some of these classes were not quite what I expected. Some students did successfully switch classes, so I think the school was quite willing to help with this. Overall they were very helpful and available for any questions and also good at checking up on us

2. What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

Personally, I quite enjoyed packaging design as this is something I've never done before, so I probably learned the most from this class. However, most of the things I taught myself as there was almost never any class teachings, instead we were just working on our own project and the teacher was available for questions. For me this worked quite well as I learn better on my own, however if you're struggling to motivate yourself, I imagine this class would not be very giving. The same goes for drawing class as this was also highly based on your ability to search for techniques yourself and very little class material.

3. What classes/study experiences did you find least relevant or least valuable to you? Why?

Marketing and Project management was pretty much a repetition of everything I've done the previous two semesters at my own school. The standard of education was also not as good as my previous, so I was having a hard time finding something new to learn. Movie industry also ended up being a bit exhausting as our project turned out very bad and this is what we had focused on for the entire semester

4. What classes would you advice other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I would advise to choose the subjects that sounds most different from what you have had previously. The level of education is quite basic (at least compared to Danish standard) so it should be easy and more interesting to follow a new type of class.

Cultural/Personal Experience

1. What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

It took me quite some time to get used to the fact that Lithuanians don't smile. For the first month I was a bit depressed thinking that everyone HATED me. When going to any shop in Lithuania do not expect a hello or smile or even a single sentence. But eventually I realized that it's not because they're angry, but the culture is just this way. So finally, I learned to navigate in it my own way, by being EXTRA nice. This gave me a satisfying feeling. I sometimes would get a tiny smile from some people. Vilnius is also quite a small, but amazingly beautiful city. I had to be quite creative to entertain myself, but somehow, I enjoyed this more peaceful break away from busy Copenhagen. I was spending more time alone than I ever have in my entire life. At school we were only 7 Erasmus students and a large group of Germans from the same course. I'm not complaining about this, but I think I was expecting some more students, (if I remember correctly: due to the invasion of Ukraine less people came this specific semester) But this also forced me to become friends with locals, which was a more authentic and existing experience.

a. How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

The school invited us to the cinema the first day to get to know each other and during the semester there was an Erasmus event and the school hosted one Halloween event. But that's also about it for social events... VDK is a very small school so don't expect them to organize any parties or Friday bars.



2. What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

My best cultural experience was probably becoming a more independent person. Lithuania is a lovely country, but you really have to work for everything you want! I'm so proud of myself for becoming completely comfortable with going to the club alone, approaching new people, taking my studies further on my own, starting a small business and taking responsibility to make social events for the whole class and school. I think a shy country like Lithuania is exactly what I needed to get the courage to do these things, as strange as it sounds and I really hope that I'll continue to be like this when I return. Another great cultural experience was also to discover an 'unknown' country in the sense that my existing knowledge of Lithuania was so small, that everything seemed more interesting to me. I personally was very fascinated to discover the peoples stories of being an ex-soviet country and going around the city to find buildings from the soviet time. Also Lithuania is covered in the most fairy-like amazing forests, where I spend a lot of time in complete quietness.

3. What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

Be prepared to find the locals very cold, because if you're prepare for it, I'm sure it's not going to affect you! Just see it as an interesting cultural investigation. Vilnius is also much colder than cph! We have had snow now for the past two months, so bring warm clothes, but somehow, it's nicer because it's never windy! Regarding the school be prepared to do much individual work and not too much interreferece from teachers. If you're planning to go to VDK, look forward to a peaceful and authentic experience and don't fear spending some time alone



Practical Experience

1. How was the application process?

The application process for me was completely fine, many files to upload of course, but I started very early and planned of when to do what

a. What did KEA help you with?

KEA hosted various speaking's about going on exchange and how to handle the application process, they were very helpful and available during the whole process!

b. What help did you receive from your school abroad?

They were also very helpful, however on quite a long summer break so I received my final acceptance letter after the deadline, but it worked out just fine

2. Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your destination?

I chose to move a very impractical and expensive way that I do not recommend! I took the ferry from Sweden to Lithuania and had my sister drive me in her car. I also had to be picked up this way, because I brought a car full of things, so I paid 4 ferry tickets and gas, which was TOO expensive! Ha, so just find a plane ticket and bring a large suitcase! Because I rented a large apartment, I wanted to buy cheap secondhand furniture from a thrift store, but this apparently does not exist in Lithuania! I created a Lithuanian bank account called Paysera which never worked for me, so I would just recommend keeping your local as most places take apple pay.



3. Where did you live?

So once again, I did something which I really don't recommend! I was so keen on finding my own, big apartment as this would never be possible in expensive Copenhagen! I spent many hours on Aurodas.lt (long-time rental homes) calling people (most who hung up when I spoke English) but in the end I found a BIG apartment in cool and central position of Vilnius (sodu g) however the landlord wanted an extra €100 each month for renting for such a short period and it ended up being way too pricy. When I saw the apartment, it did not look like the pictures and it was impossible to heat up, so I slept with jacket and gloves! I really recommend just living in student complex which many of my classmates did for €400 per month



4. What kind of expenses did you have in general?

For accommodation I ended up paying approx. € 850 per month, food from supermarket is luckily very cheap. I was cooking a lot, because (sorry) but Lithuanian food is not too interesting! However there is quite a cool Lithuanian way of eating out at 'cafeterias' which serves SUPER simple and cheap food, with nothing extraordinary about it, but it's quite an authentic experience! I was going to cafes to work almost every day, because the coffees are SO cheap; € 2,5 for a good flat white! Transportation is also very cheap, with a student discount card a bus withing Vilnius costs € 0,30 cent. Going out to bars is also relatively cheap € 3-4 for a large beer. I was probably spending most of my money at thrift stores which was the highlight of my trip! :-D

a. Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

I'm sure I spent less, excluding the ferry tickets, as I was cooking most meals at home, but still the school canteen and drinking out was super cheap!

