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Studying Abroad Experience Report

- 1) **Are we allowed to publish your report anonymously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?**
[x] Yes [] No
- 2) **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**
[x] Yes [] No
- 3) **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)**
[x] Yes [] No – in this case your report won't be published
- 4) **Please be aware that all the published photos in this report have to be taken by you and are not the property of a third party. By sending this report you are giving us the legal right of use for your pictures (if we publish the report). The copyrights still belong to you after all.**
[x] Yes, I confirm that all photos are mine.

We would appreciate it if you could include the following topics (the report should be at least two pages long, there is no maximum):

- **Preparation:** Recommendations about preparing to leave, for example (if applicable) Visa, insurance, travel? How was the application process at the university abroad? Were there any introduction events? Were they obligatory and when did they take place? Was there a Buddy program or tutors?
- **Accommodation:** How did you find your accommodation? Any tips about mistakes that should be avoided? Were there any special student accommodations? The cost of rent? Which area of living would you recommend?
- **Studying at the university abroad:** How was the day to day life on campus? Was the attendance mandatory? Which courses did you take? Were you allowed to take courses from different faculties? Please attach links to the course list if possible. How did the exams take place? Were there any language courses? What is your overall opinion of the university in general? How well did the university take care of international/exchange students?
- **Day to day life and free time:** How high are the costs of living in total? How much money should be accessible monthly? How much does the public transportation cost? What can an exchange student do in their free time? What did you do?
- **Conclusion:** worst and best experience
- **Suggestions/Feedback:** In your opinion, how can we improve our exchange program especially considering consulting, information, application process at the Viadrina? – This section is just for the department of international affairs of the Viadrina and will not be published.



Preparation

During the preparation process, there were no particular difficulties. Application submission was easy enough, but the people in charge from the university respond quite slowly, so you have to be prepared for the waiting process. Given the fact that the registration and part of the semester was exclusively online, the orientation days went fairly quickly and had little impact on further study or getting to know other students. The Buddy program was also there, but it was optional, so I can't say anything about it.

Accommodation

Regarding Accommodation, I searched all by myself and found a good option in the city center for 400 euros, but during my stay in Porto prices there increased significantly, as they began to remove the covid restrictions and the flood of tourists came. The next room I found through friends I met already there. The city is quite small, so you can live in almost all neighborhoods. However, not all of them are 100% safe, especially in the center, such as Bolhao and Ribera. Because of the large number of tourists, there is also a lot more crime. But if you live in nearby areas, it is much cheaper and safer. Public transportation is quite reliable, but also you have to use it only in case of long trips, usually everything is within 15-20 minutes on foot or a ride on the Bolt (+- 2-3 Euro).

Studying at the university abroad

Like I said, all of our studies were online, so we only showed up on campus to take some exams. The university campuses are very beautiful and in quite interesting places, I regret that I didn't get to spend more time there. Attending classes (online) was usually mandatory, and the quality of this or that course depended entirely on the professor. I could recommend the Advanced Strategic Management class, where the teacher works full-time on the board of directors of a large company and really shares her experience while working on cases with students. At the same time I would advise to avoid Strategy Implementation course where the instructor was totally incompetent, it was just a waste of time. In general, I am satisfied with my interaction with the university, all the employees were quite helpful. However, I can't say that I was impressed by the level of tutoring. Some professors were completely uninvolved in the subject, often showing screenshots or slides with text. At the same time, some courses were noteworthy and worth taking. What else I can point out is that all of the instructors, even the incompetent ones, are demanding and assign a tremendous amount of group or homework.

Day to day life and free time

As for life outside the university, Porto is a great city for young people. You can always go to the beach, go surfing, or just go to the nearest bar with friends. The prices are always very nice and everything is incomparably cheaper than, for example, in Berlin. If you know the right places where the locals go, you can easily have lunch for 5 euros even every day. A little remark - Portuguese culture is very much focused on meat, so vegetarians or vegans will have a hard time. However, there are also vegan cafes in the city, although they are much more expensive than others. My advice would be to keep an eye on Gaia and be sure to do some exploration of her. Even though it looks less attractive, there are plenty of interesting places and things to see. However, it is very different from Porto itself, so you should be prepared for a completely different experience. I also advise you to drive around Porto and, if possible, in Portugal as a whole. The nature is very beautiful, the people are generally friendly and everywhere you can find a place to stay or a good meal. The best part of my exchange was probably the incredible number of people I met along the way. People from all over the world who became my friends. The worst experience was when several of my friends were attacked by people in the street at night or robbed. However, this is life and you have to be prepared for anything, even in Porto. Porto is a wonderful city that opened Portugal to me, where I definitely plan to return soon.