



# ERAZMUS EXCHNAGE REPORT

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## Abstract

From the very first day, I fell in love in Milan. The beauty of the city and its charm. The organization of things by Politecnico di Milano was far from perfect but I learned to handle it. You can quickly get used to this place, even though it is very different from our school in Copenhagen.

Both the school here and the city can offer you a lot of opportunities for future, if you are willing to work for it. At the same time, you will be able to just have fun, travel and meet people.

Living costs are not big and if you want, it would not be hard to find a spare time job, to get some extra cash.

I learned a lot of valuable things while being here and I can highly recommend this place to any student who thinks about joining Politecnico di Milano for a semester.

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## Introduction

One of the greatest opportunities provided by KEA is in my opinion possibility to study abroad for a semester in so many different schools all over the world. From the very beginning I wanted to participate in an exchange programme. However, before I decided to apply I wanted to plan the best time for me to do it.

The school offers possibility to participate in exchange in semesters from third to fifth. In my case, the fifth one was the best choice. Since that semester I was simply long enough in Denmark to keep receiving my SU even abroad and without working.

## The Choice

My choice for the destination was mostly indicated by the thought of what I want to learn and whether or not the school is offering master programmes. Naturally, I wanted at the same time to have fun and travel, but I also wanted to learn something that I cannot in KEA.

This thinking process lead me to Politecnica di Milano.

## Academic Experience

### Language

Before arriving to Milan, I wanted to make sure I am very well prepared for it. My first decision was to take Italian course, since I heard that not all the classes might be in English. Moreover, in the country where not everyone speaks English as fluent as in Denmark, it seemed to be the good idea.

The choice was definitely not a bad one, however maybe not exactly necessary. I quickly learned that there are a lot of courses offered in English to choose from. Moreover, the host school was offering Italian course for the duration of the whole semester for only 100€ as a total price.

### The choice of courses

The number of courses to choose can very much vary. Each course provides you with particular amount of points which u collect after passing it. The total amount from all your courses needs to match the amount you would get in KEA.

At the beginning, before my arrival, I decided to go for two big courses that provides me with a lot of points and one smaller. Later I found out, that it is not that simple. There are types of courses, which us as exchange students can take only one of – those were called *studio*. The

rest of the points needs to be filled out with smaller courses. For me that meant necessity to re-apply for the courses after my arrival.

In order to make it easier for students to choose the right course, the host school devoted 2 weeks for us to go for different classes and change our courses list if needed.

Courses that you choose do not necessarily have to be from one semester. I mostly attended courses from 1<sup>st</sup> semester – 3<sup>rd</sup> year, but also some from the 1<sup>st</sup> year – 1<sup>st</sup> semester. You can mix it up as much as you want.

I ended up attending 5 courses in total: *Historical Preservation Studio*, *Sociology of Contemporary Cities*, *Traditional and Innovative Building Materials*, *Design to Fabrication*, *Fundamentals of Representation*.

### Brief introduction of chosen courses

#### ***Historical Preservation Studio***

This was my main course during the semester which I had twice a week. It was divided into two subjects: *Historical Preservation Studio* and *Materials of Historical Buildings*.

During the course we were working on the site of old Milanese hospital, turned into university. The task was to prepare preservation survey, where we had to describe the state of the building, what is damaged and what could it be caused by.

This was the course I found the most interesting and also the most time consuming, when it comes to the work-load.

#### ***Sociology of Contemporary Cities***

This was the course that I was very excited about at the beginning, but it turned out to be something completely different. The contemporary cities ended up being cities of XXth century, and we were discussing how society changed the way cities were design beginning with times of industrial revolution.

It was not boring, but it was not exactly what I hoped for. However, it ended up being course easy to pass and did not require a lot of work.

#### ***Traditional and Innovative Building Materials***

The courses that were discussing different materials, their properties and their use in architecture - ended up being my top favourites. It was a combination of interesting topics and great teachers, that run those subjects. I believe, that the knowledge gained during this subject will be one of the most useful in my future work.

## ***Design to Fabrication***

That course was one of the most fun to participate in for me, as it was focused on design, something we do not do much in KEA. As a project the group was supposed to design an anamorphic installation somewhere within the campus and actually make it real.

## ***Fundamentals of Representation***

This was the one course that I chose from 1<sup>st</sup> year courses. The subject was focus on teaching technical drawing and perspective drawing – another thing that we do not really practice in KEA. Therefore, I found it interesting to participate in, even if it was not a 3<sup>rd</sup> year course.

## Teaching Methods

The teaching is much more traditional than what we do in KEA. In fact, after a semester in a school with more traditional approach to the education, I grew to really appreciate the way things are organised in KEA.

There are a lot of different courses within the programme to choose from in order to collect proper amount of points per semester. As a result, in every course you might find completely different group of people. Additionally, each class can have different location and sometimes they even overlap with each other's schedules so u have to leave one class early to catch another.

Unlike in our school, subjects are not connected with each other by one shared project but you work on different thing for each class and at the end have more exams.

The overall approach is much more theoretical than practical. By that I mean, tha you will be required to study a lot of theories and have exams form that. Not every course will include practical exercises or tasks.

## Practical Experience

### Application Process

The application process was something that I was afraid of being quite complicated, time consuming and overall annoying. It was not. The exchange programme coordinator was very helpful and easy to reach in case of any uncertainties.

The coordinator in the host university was not as easy to reach and I had unpleasant situation where I was waiting for 2h due to delay, but that was to only thing I can point out.

After my arrival I got very disappointed with the organisation of the intro week by the host university. There was way too many students and things were very chaotic. We had time to talk with professors from our subjects before signing up for them, but we did not know where to exactly find them or how they look. That was good thought but was a waste of time.

### Health Insurance

This was one of the things that has been the most disorganised in my opinion, on both ends. Shortly after my arrival I found out that blue health insurance card does not cover a lot. It is viable only in emergency cases, but if you get a virus and want to go to doctor, you have to pay yourself.

There is an option to receive full Italian health insurance for free. First you have to have the EU blue health insurance card. Secondly you need to get from Danish sygesikring S1 form, fill it up and get it approved by sygesikring. Then you deliver it in Italy and get health insurance on the same basics as Italian citizens. Seems easy, right? It is not. Danish sygesikring refuses to give the form unless you are staying in foreign country at least a year and without it the only other thing you can do is to pay for the insurance or get private one. No way around it.

All in all you either spend money or do what you can to not get sick.

### Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Membership

During the intro week we were introduced to Erasmus Student Network (ESN). It is sort of organization for exchange students, offering various discounts, parties and tours for its members. Membership cost is that of getting the ESN card (10€) and as great offer it is, sadly it is waste of money for students from our school.

In order to get access to all the discounts offered by ESN membership (like discounts for Ryanair flights, Flixbus, some hostels etc.) the card needs to be registered in their system with both host university and home university. Sadly, KEA is not in their system and therefore makes it impossible to register and access most of the things.

However, there are still a lot of cool getaways and parties organized by the network that are cool to participate in as a member, so it is not all so bad, even without discounts.

### Accommodation

Before the arrival to Milano, I received from the host school a guide booklet including all sort of information preparing me for the exchange. However, the accommodation advices were not the most accurate.

Based on the information received from Politecnico, the accommodation prices ranged from 350 – 600. However, anything that costs under 450 / 500€ per month is shared room in a shared apartment. I got lucky with accommodation, which I got via my personal network, but there are student dormitories available. Those unfortunately sell out very fast, so you have to apply for them as early as May (if you start from September).

## Living Costs

Costs of living in Milan can be very various, depending on your lifestyle. In comparison with Copenhagen, food, drinks, clubs are rather cheap. It is very common here to eat out so that can quickly become a rabbit hole where most of the money goes.

The booklet guide will tell you that approximate money spent on food per month would be around 250€, which is some sort of correct, if you stick to keeping it simple.

Monthly transportation card for students costs 22€ and it covers most of the city area in Milan. Areas outside of the access of the card are considered sort of suburbs.

## Cultural Experience

### Cultural Shock

From the very beginning the one thing that was a challenge for me to deal with was Italian bureaucracy and lack of good organization. It took me 2h waiting in the queue filling up paperwork for receiving the transportation card.

Some other documents I have not even ended up getting, because of amount of paperwork needed. Like health insurance or residency.

Surprisingly, language ended up not being a problem at all. You can easily live here for 5 months not speaking Italian and that would not create much problem.

Some of the coolest things that I found here is how open people are and how easy it is to make new friends. If you will have possibility, get to know some local people from university, which should not be hard. With them, you will quickly get to know all the coolest places in town and won't feel like a tourist.

### Travel

If there is one thing that I would list as must do while being here it would be to **travel**. Italy has very good public transportation between cities.

With high-speed trains you can get to Venice or Rome within 3 hours, Torino in 2 or Genua in 2.5.



From places that I found the most charming I would recommend traveling to Santa Margherita Ligurie and having a walk to Portofino or visiting Cinque Terre, even if just for one day trip.

There are also a lot of incredible places that are within 30min to 1h distance from the city. Make sure to visit Lake Como, Lake Garda and Lake Maggiore. The small lake-side cities like Varenna, Sirmione or Como have incredible charm and you would definitely not regret going there.

## Conclusion

All in all, I can definitely recommend Milano as a destination for student exchange. From academic point of view, it was great to get some more academic and theoretical knowledge besides our practical from KEA. Combination of those two will definitely put you ahead of others.

Moreover, you will get a chance to meet a lot of amazing people and some places that before required a whole holiday planning will be just few hours away for way lower cost than you expect.

My main advice would be to find the balance between having fun and taking something out of here. Being here would give a chance to learn a lot of amazing things and look at different approach to design than what we have in Denmark.

I can honestly say, that I would choose this location for my exchange in a heartbeat.