

Studying around the world – From Lithuania via Ghana to Germany

Toma Katinaite graduated from Vilnius University in Lithuania with a Bachelor's degree in *Culture Information and Communication*. After working as a project manager, she realized that she wanted to continue her education in the field of business. In October she will start her Master's degree in Management and Economics at the University of Tübingen.

WiWi-NEWS: Why did you decide to study abroad? Are you an adventurous person?

Toma Katinaite: During my studies at Vilnius University, I was in Germany with an Erasmus program. The semester abroad gave me a lot of new insights and useful experience. I met many great people and got acquainted with the German culture. I was very satisfied with the quality of studies and the opportunities Germany offers; therefore, I decided to obtain a master's degree in Germany.

I am very keen on traveling and exploring new countries. During my summer holidays I used to participate in international projects and summer schools. Furthermore, I was active in youth organizations and took part in youth projects in all of Europe. After my second semester at the university, I went to the USA with Work&Travel program and later had a summer job in Cyprus. After my studies I applied for a project in Ghana and conducted training sessions for young teachers. During the master's program at the University of Tübingen, I also want to challenge myself and go for one semester abroad to get new perspectives, learn about the culture and gain some insights on my master's thesis.

What you're nervous about before leaving and what you might expect?

I was uncertain about the studies and if I can manage all the courses. I took several courses in German language and it was a real challenge for me. I had to get used to the new country and language. I expected that it won't be easy but I am very happy that I always had some nice people around who helped me to cope with all the challenges and uncertainties.

What do you like about Tübingen?

I find Tübingen very cozy and a lovely student town. Moreover, it is green-oriented and supports small businesses and sustainable solutions. I can get here many great ideas and I am inspired to start something similar in Lithuania. For example, I found the foodsharing.de initiative great and useful in order to tackle the food-wasting problem. It would be wonderful to have something similar in Lithuania too; therefore, I have already contacted an organization which solves food wasting problem in Lithuania and proposed this idea. Maybe it will be possible to launch an organization somewhat comparable in Lithuania too.

Why should other students come to Lithuania?

During my studies I was a mentor to international students who came to Vilnius University. When I asked how they like Lithuania, many of them said that they are positively surprised, because they thought that Lithuania is still in the post-communist period. However, when they saw a country which attracts many international investors, a country which is a leader in laser technology, has one of the fastest internet speeds in Europe and cutting-edge technologies, they change their opinion and stereotypes. I am very proud and happy about Lithuania's development and how fast our economy is growing. We are very small nation with less than 3 million people; however, we have a rich history and deep-rooted traditions which are maintained from generation to generation and it makes Lithuania so unique and worth visiting.



Toma Katinaite (photo: private)

Vilnius University is the oldest university in the Baltic states and offers studies with an internationally recognized content. It has a rich heritage and most of the faculties are situated in the UNESCO-inscribed old town of Vilnius. Therefore, I definitely recommend my international friends if they have an opportunity to come to Lithuania and get acquainted to its traditions, beautiful nature, amazing food and friendliness of people.

Do you already have ideas how your professional future should look like?

In the future, I envision myself as working in a diverse and multicultural company. I want to specialize in project management and work with projects that focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Also, I want to continue volunteering in various organizations and take part in the initiatives that cope with important environmental and social problems.

The interview was conducted by Laura Scherer.