

EAST, WEST – HORSSENS IS THE BEST



More than 250 international students decided to spend their summer holidays this year in Horsens. And they didn't come to Denmark as tourists – they came mostly to learn and enjoy summer time as participants of VIA Summer School organized by VIA University College in Horsens.

“We are sitting in a boat much tilted to the one side, that left edge is almost touching the surface of water. The sun is shining, the wind is quite strong, so we have perfect weather for sailing today. Everyone is excited and at the same time a bit scared, because we are sailing for the first time. But there are 2 experienced skippers with us, everything is under control. Sport is the best way to relax after a hardworking day at school”, this is what Dominik from Germany wrote on Facebook at his second day of attending a summer course. He, like the rest here, came to Horsens to experience something completely new in their lives. On the one hand, they have the opportunity every day to study an interesting topic, often related to their education. On the other hand, summer studies are mixed together with fun, joy, and being with people from different countries. That's the best opportunity to spend the summer time in a useful way, learn something new, make friends from all over Europe, and enjoy the summer period.



WHAT IS VIA SUMMER SCHOOL?

Summer education is the best chance for students to gain 5 ECTS points in a relatively short time. Several universities in Europe offer some courses during the summer holidays. One of these schools is VIA University College (VIA UC) in Horsens, Denmark. It has already been 3 years since VIA UC started to run summer courses. “In the beginning, we only provided 1 course to check if something



like Summer School would be attractive to students at all”, said Jens Cramer, Head of the ICT Engineering Department at VIA UC, also initiator of Summer School at VIA UC. “In fact, we didn't expect that so many students would be interested in coming to classes every day during the holidays. But each year more and more people are asking about the possibility to study during the summer, so we are motivated to expand the program offered by us”, added Jens.

This summer, 9 different courses were conducted in Horsens during July and August. All courses are mainly on Bachelor level, but in some cases they can also be relevant for Master students. Each course lasts for 2 weeks and ends with a presentation. Attendance is compulsory every day in order to pass the course. Moreover, the last day all students must show (individually or in group) what they have achieved and learned during those 2 weeks. Official examination is provided only for those who wish to have a grade. The tuition is in English and courses are spanning from the ICT Engineering programme to the Global Business Engineering and Marketing Management programme. “In the



future, we would like to expand the range of summer courses even more, to be able to provide courses also from other programmes”, said Jens Cramer. “For example, this year for the first time we offered a course called “English & Intercultural Communication”. This course proved to be very popular, and we received more than 90 applications. Consequently in order to accept all of them we had to create 3 classes, around 30 participants in each, conducted over 2 different time

periods. And that’s only one course. Additionally, I have to mention here that 99 % of the participants at that course were students from different countries. They came to Denmark only for the VIA Summer School. And they were not disappointed because they even started to consider further education in Denmark afterwards. We found 2 brilliant teachers for this course, Alexis Walhovd and Vanessa Tavoletti, who are native English speakers. They were switching between classes, so every student had the chance to follow lessons with both of them. In this way people really improved their skills of speaking and making presentations in English. And because of the international environment in the class it was quite easy to discuss many intercultural communication topics and relate to them”.

IT’S NOT ONLY ABOUT STUDYING

“Everyone who came to Horsens for summer education can definitely confirm that Summer School is not only studying, it’s especially the life after school too“, said Rafał Robert Szymański. He is the Coordinator of the VIA Summer School, and has been for 2 years already. “Since we have more and more international



students every year, we had to look a bit closer at social aspects. People come here from different parts of Europe; they don’t know anyone in Horsens. Our goal is to help them to get to know one another, but also to get to know our full-time students. Additionally, we are trying to show them the best side of Denmark. Many events were organized by tutors, almost on a daily basis. For instance,

we play different games on the beach, or we go all together to the Aqua Park, etc. If the weather is nice, I try to organize a sailing activity on Horsens Fjord, or other sport activities”.



Summer School is conducted over 3 different time periods. In each period, at least one big trip is organized for students to visit interesting places in Jutland. “For me, the most exciting was when we went to the Tropical Forest in Randers”, confessed Andrzej from Poland. “Besides all those exotic animals and plants which I saw there, I tried one of the craziest things of my life. They arranged a special attraction for guests where several bugs, which were still alive and of more than 5 cm in size, were placed on frying pan. They were fried in hot oil for about 1 minute. Afterwards, guests could try to eat them to find out that when you put salt on fried bugs it tastes almost the same as chips. And I ate one bug too, even though my brain was telling me not to do this. It was difficult especially when I

looked closer at it. Honestly, it wasn’t as bad as I expected”.

“I noticed that there are still a lot of young people who are afraid of studying abroad, in a different country than their home country”, added Rafał. “I think that Summer School is one of the easiest ways to try at least for 2 weeks how it is to study in English in a completely different place. Lots of people are shocked when they arrive in Denmark, about differences in prices and the way of living here. It is probably because they are comparing it



all the time to what they are used to at home. But people often forget that Europe is differentiated and almost every country is different. In the beginning, Denmark seems a bit expensive to students, and that’s true. Therefore, we have our social budget to support most of the things which we offer them. Our goal is not to pay for everything that they receive, but to offer them rational “student



prices” which are affordable for their pockets. I am happy that this year, we were able to offer students even some things, which they didn’t have to pay directly for. For example if we look at everyday expenses, the only thing that they had to cover was accommodation. At each tuition day, we provided free lunch and breakfast. And when it was necessary, we also arranged free transportation between school and the dormitory at least 3 times per day.”

SUMMER UNIVERSITY

In August, VIA University College in Horsens became one of the biggest centers of summer education in Denmark. Besides VIA Summer School, which had more than 150 participants in total, there were also 2 other initiatives taking place at Campus Horsens. Danish Intensive Language Course and the European Summer School gathered more than 70 international participants in total.

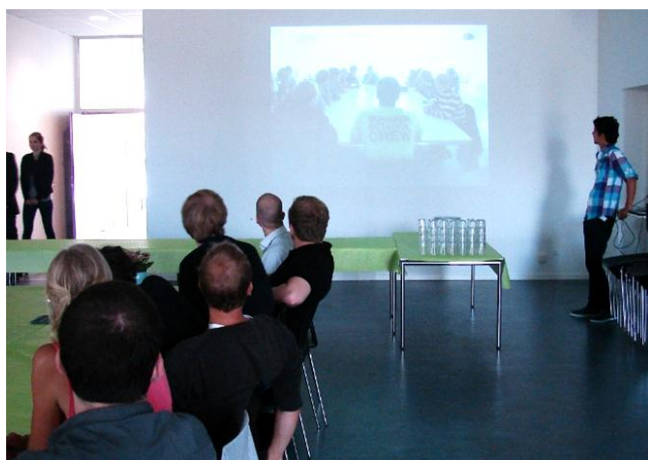


Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) has been organized by VIA UC for many years now. It is a three-week intensive course about Danish language and culture, offered during the summer holidays mostly for Erasmus exchange students. Such courses are offered in EU countries with less spoken languages, such as Danish. Some basic knowledge of language and culture is quite important for a good start-up in a new country. Moreover, it gives freshmen students a chance to adapt to the new surroundings before the semester starts. Therefore every year, the course organized in Horsens is



very popular, even for those students who are going to start their education in Denmark at a different university than VIA UC.

European Summer School is a special kind of cooperation between the partner universities, organized this year by: VIA University College in Horsens (Denmark), TEI University in Crete (Greece), and University of Applied Sciences in Dusseldorf (Germany). Each of those universities and also other partners provided either students or teachers for a two-week course about "Telecommunication and Multimedia Technologies". Every year, the education takes place in different location. This year, it was held at the Vitus Bering Innovation Park at Campus Horsens. Such summer organization at university level is very unique, because teachers from different universities take part in the course in order to cover all topics about telecommunication and multimedia. It is also a great experience for everyone, teachers and students, to try studying in English during the summer time, where it is organized in a different and more relaxed way. Everything is sponsored by the Erasmus Intensive Program, part of the EU funded Life Long Learning Program.



MULTINATIONAL ACTION

All educational summer activities at Campus Horsens were highly international this year.

Besides other organizations, only at VIA Summer School were more than 62 percent of all members international students from other countries than Denmark. That means almost 100 international

guests, where most of them have visited Denmark for the first time, and definitely not the last time. “Summer School can be a challenge for people who have never lived and spent time in an intercultural environment”, adds



Aśka from Poland. “If you don’t want to waste time at home, it’s the best way to meet new, interesting people from other parts of Europe, and sometimes even the world. I learned more here than I expected, for example some intercultural similarities but also a lot of differences – things you will never realize just by sitting at home. That’s a good feedback and experience which I would like to repeat again”.



Planning your summer holidays is not as easy a decision as it seems. Everything depends on what is your real goal in life, and how brave you are when it comes to accepting new ideas. Summer education could be an interesting option, but remember that for everyone it will be something completely different. “From my point of view, Summer School was a really good way to finish off my Erasmus trip”, admits Nicolas from France. “I

wasn’t sure what I should do after the end of the semester, when my Erasmus was over. But I definitely didn’t want to go directly back home to France. Accidentally, I ended up at VIA Summer School, and this gave me such a great experience again, which I would never have expected. I think it is because of the international atmosphere, and studying during the summer which is completely different than during semester. Every day, you have the same subject, so you can focus more on it. You drink coffee with your teacher in the morning, you have lunch with other classmates where you get to know each other better, and because of the friendly and relaxed atmosphere you would rather stay at school after classes to make some homework, instead of just going home. In fact, we meet every afternoon to do some activities together. But if you want to chill out, you always have room on your own”.

For Mario from Germany, the experience with VIA Summer School was a bit different. “Besides all the theory which I learned, like how to organize and structure your reports, develop skills in giving an oral presentation etc, I finally better understood some of the aspects in communicating with people from completely different cultures. And finally, I had to wash laundry on my own – that was a very useful skill ☺”, laughs Mario.





To be honest, having a lot of different nationalities from Europe around you, and to work with students of different ages and with different background levels, all that could turn out not to be fantastic “by rule”. But at VIA Summer School it is, and someone like me can personally confirm this”, says Jochen from Germany. “Without any stereotypes and any

national prejudices, you will clearly realize here, how people are similar to one another, no matter what part of the world they come from. And it was very nice that VIA UC represented by the VIA Summer School Team did everything in order to make our stay become a great time and great experience. Believe me; it is hard to find such well organized arrangements in any other places”.

GOODBYE OR RATHER SEE YOU SOON?

The last summer lessons are over now, and most of the students from Summer School are already back home. What they took back with them is a great experience and a lot of memories saved in plenty of pictures. Even though VIA Summer School 2011 is already in the past, its Facebook wall is updated every day with a lot of fresh news from members and great pictures which fulfill the official group gallery. “It's been a long time we haven't seen each other guys. Time to change it! What about some meeting?”, wrote Gabi from Poland on the Facebook wall. Shortly afterwards, more than 40 comments appeared under this note. All those young people who came to Horsens for a summer adventure want to meet again. Perhaps they plan to meet in some other place than Horsens, but definitely with the same group of friends.



All those things show that VIA Summer School is not only a short summer activity for its participants. In fact, it makes a significant influence and improvement on their lives, and it gathers people from completely different places, who wouldn't ever have had the possibility of getting to know each



other before. But now, a lot of them have become friends and some even became couples. How long all these friendships are going to last – time will show. But summer education is definitely going to run at VIA University College again next year. And again a lot of students are going to spend two weeks of their holidays in Horsens, Denmark.

Wolto