

Experience Report: Gleb Morozov's Exchange at ESADE Business School

1. Introduction

My name is Gleb Morozov, and I am a student at the TUM School of Management, pursuing a degree in Management and Technology. During the autumn semester of 2023, I had the opportunity to participate in the Entrepreneurship Exchange Program at ESADE Business School in Barcelona, Spain. This report provides a detailed account of my experiences, insights, and reflections during my exchange, highlighting the academic rigor, vibrant student life, cultural immersion, and professional development opportunities that defined my time at ESADE.

2. Education at ESADE Business School

2.1 Academic Structure and Environment

ESADE Business School, located in the serene suburb of Sant Cugat, offers a learning environment that is both innovative and student-focused. The campus in Sant Cugat is modern, with state-of-the-art facilities that support a dynamic educational experience. The setting of the campus, surrounded by nature, provides a peaceful atmosphere conducive to focused study and reflection.

One of the key differences between ESADE and TUM is the smaller class sizes, which allow for a more personalized and interactive learning experience. At ESADE, professors often engage students in discussions and group activities, making the classes highly interactive. The curriculum is designed to be practical and applicable, with a strong focus on real-world scenarios. Unlike the exam-centric approach at TUM, ESADE emphasizes continuous assessment through projects, presentations, and case studies, which I found to be more aligned with the demands of the modern business environment.

The campus is equipped with the latest technology, including interactive whiteboards and advanced software tools, which are integrated into the teaching methods. This technological integration enhances the learning experience, making it both engaging and effective.

2.2 Group Work and Collaboration

Group work is a fundamental aspect of the ESADE experience, reflecting the collaborative nature of today's global business environment. During my time at ESADE, I was involved in several group projects, particularly through my work with Ennova Consulting and 180 Degrees Consulting.

At Ennova Consulting, I had the opportunity to work on a project aimed at helping a local startup streamline its operations and scale its business. The project involved conducting market research, analyzing the competitive landscape, and developing a strategic growth plan. Our team, composed of students from various countries, worked closely with the startup's founders to identify key challenges and opportunities. The project required a combination of strategic thinking, creativity, and analytical skills, and the collaborative effort led to the development of a comprehensive strategy that was well-received by the client.

Similarly, my work with 180 Degrees Consulting involved providing strategic advice to non-profit organizations. One of the projects I worked on involved helping a non-profit optimize its fundraising strategy. This project was particularly rewarding as it allowed me to apply my business knowledge to a cause that had a positive social impact. Working in a team of highly motivated and diverse individuals, we were able to develop innovative solutions that significantly improved the organization's fundraising efforts.

These projects not only enhanced my consulting skills but also provided invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by startups and non-profits. The experience of working in diverse teams, each member bringing their unique perspectives and expertise, was enriching and closely mirrored the collaborative nature of the global business environment.

2.3 Specialized Courses and Modern Technology

ESADE's curriculum is designed to be at the forefront of business innovation, with a particular emphasis on emerging technologies and their impact on business. During my exchange, I took specialized courses in Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning (AI & ML) and Supply Chain Management. These courses were instrumental in expanding my knowledge of how technology is transforming industries.

The AI & ML course provided a deep dive into machine learning algorithms and their applications in business. We worked on hands-on projects, using real-world datasets to build predictive models and analyze trends. ESADE's investment in modern technology was evident in the tools and software provided, such as Python, R, and TensorFlow, which we used extensively throughout the course.

The Supply Chain Management course offered insights into the complexities of global supply chains, with a focus on efficiency, sustainability, and resilience. The course included guest lectures from industry professionals and visits to local businesses, providing practical insights into how leading companies manage their supply chains.

3. Student Life in Barcelona

3.1 Social and Cultural Integration

Barcelona is a city that thrives on diversity, culture, and energy, and this vibrancy is reflected in the student life at ESADE. The Erasmus Student Society at ESADE is particularly active, organizing a wide range of events that cater to various interests, ensuring that every student finds a community they resonate with.

One of the most enriching aspects of my student life was participating in ESADE's Volleyball team. The team is highly competitive, and the tryouts are rigorous, reflecting the high level of athleticism and commitment required. Being part of the team allowed me to travel to Paris for the World International University Competition, an experience that combined sports, travel, and international camaraderie. Locally, we participated in several tournaments across Catalunya, each event providing an opportunity to explore different parts of the region while competing against other universities.

Socially, Barcelona's nightlife is second to none. The city is known for its vibrant club scene, with venues like Twenties, Bling Bling, and Sutton being popular among students. These

clubs are known for their lively atmosphere, great music, and opportunities to socialize with both locals and international students. Barcelona's rooftop bars are also a highlight, offering stunning views of the city skyline. The Roof, located on the top floor of the luxurious Edition Hotel, became a personal favorite for evening gatherings with friends.

Beyond the nightlife, Barcelona offers a wealth of cultural experiences. I regularly visited museums such as the Museu Picasso and the Fundació Joan Miró, both of which provided deep insights into the city's rich artistic heritage. The city's numerous festivals, such as La Mercè, are also integral to the local culture, offering a blend of music, dance, and traditional celebrations that provide a unique window into Catalan culture.

3.2 Exploring Barcelona and Beyond

Barcelona's fantastic climate makes it an ideal city for outdoor activities and exploration. The city enjoys mild winters and warm, sunny summers, which allowed me to spend a lot of time outdoors, whether it was exploring the city's parks, lounging on the beach, or hiking in the nearby hills.

Living in Barcelona provided endless opportunities for exploration. The city's architecture, influenced by the works of Antoni Gaudí, is nothing short of mesmerizing. I spent many afternoons wandering through Park Güell, marveling at the intricate mosaics and organic forms that characterize Gaudí's work. Another favorite was the Sagrada Família, a basilica that, despite being under construction for over a century, remains one of the most iconic landmarks in the world.

The Gothic Quarter, with its narrow medieval streets, offered a stark contrast to Gaudí's modernist masterpieces. This area is a maze of history, with ancient Roman walls, Gothic churches, and charming plazas. The blend of historical and contemporary elements in Barcelona's architecture is a testament to the city's rich history and vibrant culture.

Barcelona's coastal location also means that the beach is never far away. Barceloneta Beach, though popular with tourists, is a great spot to relax and enjoy the Mediterranean sun. For a quieter experience, I often visited the beaches in the neighboring town of Castelldefels, which are less crowded and offer a more serene environment.

Beyond the city, Catalunya is a region of incredible diversity. I took advantage of Barcelona's excellent transport links to explore the region. A highlight was a trip to Montserrat, a mountain range about an hour from the city. Montserrat is home to a Benedictine monastery and offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside. The hiking trails in the area are challenging but rewarding, providing a perfect escape from the urban hustle.

Another memorable trip was to the coastal town of Cadaqués, located in the Cap de Creus peninsula. Known for its whitewashed buildings and crystal-clear waters, Cadaqués was a favorite of the surrealist artist Salvador Dalí, whose house-museum in nearby Portlligat is a must-visit.

4. Accommodation and Living Arrangements

4.1 Finding Accommodation

Finding accommodation in Barcelona can be challenging, particularly in popular districts like Gracia, Eixample, Sarria, and Les Corts. The city's popularity as a tourist destination, combined with a limited supply of rental properties, means that demand is high, and prices can be steep.

However, I was fortunate to secure an apartment in Gracia at a reasonable cost of €1,000 per month, all included. This was a great find, especially given the neighborhood's central location and vibrant atmosphere. Gracia is known for its narrow streets, colorful buildings, and lively squares, such as Plaça del Sol, which is a popular gathering spot for both locals and tourists. The area is also home to a variety of independent shops, cafes, and restaurants, making it a lively place to live.

The apartment I rented was comfortable and well-located, close to the metro and the Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC) railway, which made commuting to the Sant Cugat campus and exploring the city convenient. Given the competitive nature of the Barcelona rental market, I recommend future students start their search well in advance and be cautious of potential scams.

4.2 Daily Life in Gracia

Gracia is a neighborhood that offers a unique blend of traditional Catalan culture and modern urban living. The area is known for its community spirit, with residents often gathering in the local squares to socialize. The neighborhood is also famous for its annual festival, Festa Major de Gracia, which sees the streets decorated with elaborate, handmade displays, each competing for the title of the best-decorated street. The festival is a week-long celebration of music, dance, and art, and is one of the highlights of the year in Gracia.

Daily life in Gracia was a delight. The local markets, such as Mercat de la Llibertat, offered fresh produce, artisanal goods, and a taste of local life. The neighborhood's cafes and bakeries, like the renowned La Nena, were perfect for studying or meeting friends over coffee and pastries.

Gracia's central location also meant that it was easy to explore other parts of Barcelona. The excellent public transport connections, including the metro and FGC, made commuting simple, whether I was heading to ESADE, the beach, or any of Barcelona's numerous attractions. The neighborhood's lively atmosphere, particularly in the evenings, made it a great place to live and experience the local culture.

5. Travel Opportunities in Catalunya

5.1 Exploring Catalunya

Catalunya is a region of breathtaking beauty and cultural richness, offering endless opportunities for exploration. Barcelona, as the capital, is well-connected to the rest of the region, making it easy to explore Catalunya's diverse landscapes and historic towns.

One of my first trips outside of Barcelona was to the coastal town of Sitges. Located just a 40-minute train ride from Barcelona, Sitges is famous for its beautiful beaches, charming old town, and vibrant cultural scene. The town is particularly known for its annual Carnival and the Sitges Film Festival, which is one of the most important events in the world for fantasy

and horror films. I spent a weekend in Sitges, enjoying the sun, exploring the town's narrow streets, and visiting the Cau Ferrat Museum, which houses an impressive collection of modernist art.

Another memorable trip was to Tarragona, a city with a rich Roman heritage. Tarragona's well-preserved Roman ruins, including the amphitheater, aqueduct, and the ancient city walls, are a UNESCO World Heritage site and provide a fascinating glimpse into the region's past. The city's medieval old town, with its narrow streets and beautiful cathedral, offers a perfect contrast to the ancient ruins.

For a taste of the Catalan countryside, I visited the wine region of Penedès, located between Barcelona and Tarragona. Penedès is known for its production of cava, Spain's famous sparkling wine. I toured several vineyards, learning about the production process and, of course, tasting the wines. The region's rolling hills, dotted with vineyards and small villages, make it a perfect destination for a day trip.

5.2 Cultural and Historical Insights

Traveling through Catalunya also provided a deeper understanding of the region's cultural and historical heritage. Each town and city has its own unique identity, shaped by centuries of history and cultural influences. The region's distinct Catalan identity is evident in its language, traditions, and festivals, which are celebrated with pride by the locals.

In addition to visiting towns and cities, I made it a point to explore Catalunya's natural landscapes. One of the highlights was hiking in the Pyrenees, the mountain range that forms a natural border between Spain and France. The Pyrenees offer some of the best hiking in Spain, with trails that take you through stunning alpine scenery, past glacial lakes, and up to breathtaking viewpoints. The town of Vielha, in the Val d'Aran, served as a base for my hikes, offering a glimpse into the unique culture of this mountainous region, which has its own language, Aranese.

The Costa Brava, the rugged coastline stretching north of Barcelona towards the French border, is another area of outstanding natural beauty. I visited several towns along the coast, including Tossa de Mar, with its medieval castle overlooking the sea, and the picturesque fishing village of Cadaqués. The clear blue waters, hidden coves, and dramatic cliffs make the Costa Brava a paradise for nature lovers and a perfect escape from the city.

6. Costs and Budgeting

6.1 Cost of Living in Barcelona

Barcelona is an exciting but expensive city, particularly for students. The cost of living is significantly higher than in many other European cities, and it's important to budget carefully to ensure that you can enjoy all that the city has to offer without overspending.

Accommodation is the biggest expense, particularly in popular districts like Gracia, Eixample, and Sarria. As mentioned earlier, I was fortunate to find an apartment in Gracia for €1,000 per month, which included all utilities. This was a relatively good deal considering the central location and amenities.

Public transportation in Barcelona is efficient and relatively affordable. A monthly transport pass (T-Jove) costs around €40, and it covers all metro, bus, and tram services within the city. The integrated public transport system makes it easy to get around without needing a car, which is an advantage given the city's traffic and parking challenges.

Dining out can vary significantly in price. Tapas bars and casual dining options, like Champanillo, offer affordable meals, while more upscale restaurants, particularly those in tourist areas, can be quite expensive. Cooking at home is a good way to save money, and Barcelona's many markets offer fresh, high-quality ingredients at reasonable prices.

6.2 Managing a Budget

Managing a budget in Barcelona requires discipline, particularly given the city's vibrant social scene and numerous attractions. The temptation to dine out, attend events, and explore the city can make it easy to overspend. I found that setting a weekly budget for entertainment and dining out was essential to managing my finances effectively.

Another aspect to be mindful of is the high level of petty crime in Barcelona, particularly pickpocketing. Tourists and students are common targets, especially in crowded areas like Las Ramblas and on public transport. It's important to stay vigilant and take precautions, such as using a money belt or anti-theft backpack, to protect your belongings.

7. Professional Experience and Work Opportunities

7.1 Entrepreneurship Exchange Program and Loop Diagnostics

The Entrepreneurship Exchange Program at ESADE provided a unique platform to gain hands-on experience in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation. During my exchange, I worked with Loop Diagnostics, a Barcelona-based medical startup focused on developing innovative diagnostic solutions for infectious diseases. This opportunity allowed me to apply the theoretical knowledge gained from my courses to real-world challenges, particularly in the areas of market entry strategy and due diligence.

My role at Loop Diagnostics involved conducting market research to identify potential entry points for the UK markets for the company's products, analyzing competitive landscapes, and developing strategies for market entry. I worked closely with the startup's leadership team, gaining insights into the strategic decision-making process and the challenges of scaling a healthcare technology company.

One of the most valuable aspects of this experience was the opportunity to engage in the due diligence process. I was responsible for gathering and analyzing data on potential partners and competitors, assessing the regulatory environments in different markets, and evaluating the financial viability of various expansion strategies. This work was both challenging and rewarding, providing a deep understanding of the complexities involved in bringing new medical technologies to market.

7.2 Thesis Work and Academic Integration

My internship with Loop Diagnostics also formed the basis of my thesis, which focused on the challenges and opportunities of market entry for medical startups in Europe. The practical

experience I gained during my internship was instrumental in shaping the direction of my research and provided a solid foundation for my thesis.

Working on my thesis while interning at Loop Diagnostics allowed me to integrate academic research with practical experience. The company's founders were highly supportive, providing access to company data, industry contacts, and regular feedback on my work. This collaboration not only enriched my thesis but also deepened my understanding of the healthcare technology sector.

Despite the lower wages compared to other regions, the experience was invaluable, offering insights into the startup ecosystem in Barcelona and the broader European market. The connections I made during this time, both within the company and in the broader entrepreneurial community, have already proven to be beneficial as I consider future career opportunities.

8. Support from TUM School of Management International Office

8.1 Pre-Departure and On-Site Support

The TUM School of Management International Office provided outstanding support throughout my exchange experience, from the initial application process to the completion of the program. The staff were always available to answer questions, provide guidance, and assist with any challenges that arose.

The pre-departure orientation sessions were particularly helpful, offering detailed information on what to expect during the exchange, how to prepare, and practical tips for living in Barcelona. The sessions covered everything from academic expectations and cultural differences to practical advice on housing, transportation, and safety.

During my time at ESADE, the International Office continued to provide support, ensuring that my academic and professional experiences were smooth and rewarding. They were always willing to assist with any issues, whether related to coursework, internships, or adjusting to life in Barcelona.

8.2 Post-Exchange Reflection and Gratitude

Reflecting on my time at ESADE, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Entrepreneurship Exchange Program. The experience has been one of the most transformative periods of my academic life, providing invaluable insights, experiences, and connections that will shape my future career.

The support from the TUM School of Management International Office played a crucial role in making this experience possible. Their guidance and assistance ensured that I was well-prepared for the challenges of living and studying in a new country and that I could fully take advantage of the opportunities presented during the exchange. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire team at the International Office for their unwavering support.

9. Conclusion

My exchange at ESADE Business School was an incredibly enriching experience that provided me with a comprehensive understanding of business education, practical work experience, and a deep appreciation for the cultural and social life in Barcelona. The combination of academic rigor, professional development, and cultural exploration made this exchange a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I would highly recommend this program to other students who are eager to expand their horizons and gain a global perspective on business and entrepreneurship.

