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THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS NEWSLETTER "COME AND GO"

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WHY THIS NEWSLETTER

"Come and go" is the International Relations and Study-abroad newsletter which aims at keeping our readers up-to-date on the latest news and events related to our activities. It is published 4 times per year and reaches approx. 4'000 readers, in particular USI students, faculty and staff, incoming students and staff from our many partner universities and other collaborators. We do hope you will enjoy reading it!

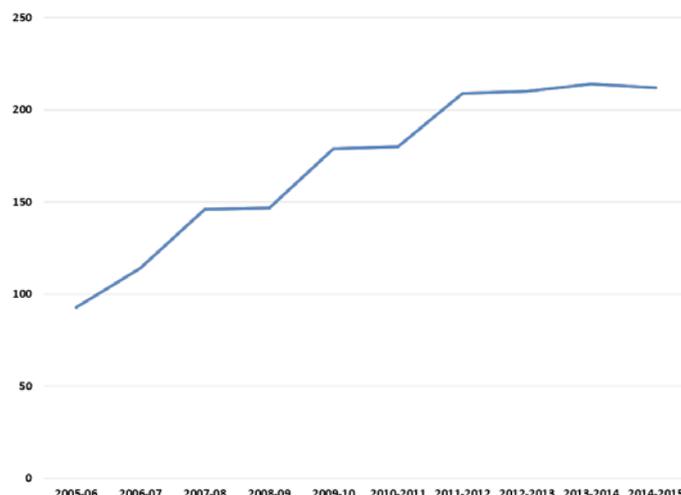
2005-2015: 10 YEARS OF STUDENT MOBILITY

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the International Relations and Study-abroad Service and, as it starts its adolescent years, it is a nice occasion for looking back at its development.

During the academic year 2005-2006, USI started the Service as a way of consolidating its international identity and presence. The first round of exchanges already counted a sizeable number, with 93 students participating in the various programmes. 51 students from USI went to study abroad, Spain being the most popular destination, and 42 students from partner universities spent time in Lugano and Mendrisio, with Spain again the most popular country of origin. In the following years, the number of mobility students at USI increased quickly and steadily to the current number average number of 170 students each year.

During the past 10 years, on average, the most popular foreign destinations in Europe for USI students have been Spain (usually 9 students per year), France (6), Germany (6), Denmark (6), and Finland (5). The strong attraction of these countries has also been mirrored in the number of agreements signed with their universities: they account for 35 out of 78 currently active partnerships between USI and other universities. On the other hand, incoming European students at USI have mostly been from Spain (usually 18 students per year) and Germany (13), which perhaps is unsurprising given the number of agreements with those countries, but also from Italy (8), France (7), and Portugal (6).

2005-2015: EXCHANGE STUDENTS TO AND FROM USI



In addition to the successful Erasmus programme, now the Swiss European Mobility Programme (SEMP), USI has also worked hard to establish partnerships with universities of countries further away from the Old Continent. These Bilateral Agreements include, among others, schools in the United States, such as Virginia Tech that regularly attracts up to 8 students, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, which since 2008 has been a coveted destination especially for Communication students, and Australia with the University of Technology Sydney and Perth's University of Western Australia that, because of their distance, usually only attract around 3 students a year. Moreover, in April 2015 a new agreement with Peking University HSBC Business School was signed.

Last but not least, the Swiss Mobility programme, which lets Swiss students go on mobility exchanges with other Swiss universities without administrative barriers, has always been very popular. USI regularly exchanges roughly 15 students with the big names in the Helvetic academic world, with especially the Faculty of Economics taking advantage of the offer.

This year also appears to be a good one for the International Relations and Study-abroad Service, with a provisional total of a 120 incoming students between the campuses of Lugano and Mendrisio. The origins of the current mobility students spending time at USI show a relative majority of Italian students, with strong delegations from Singapore and the Czech Republic in addition to the historical origin countries, like Spain and Germany, which have sent fewer students than usual. This, as a trend, could suggest a possible shift towards a different composition of students in the next few years. Conversely, the so far 80 outgoing USI students are keeping to their usual study-abroad habits, except for a particularly strong increase in people taking a semester abroad in Australia. The complete figures are available at: [USI in figures website](#).

All in all, then, the International Relations and Study-abroad Service appears to be entering its adolescent years in good health and ready to grow both in numbers and quality, with many new partnerships in the works, much more interest in USI from abroad, and an ever-present willingness of USI students to explore the world and promote their university.

INTERVIEW WITH ILARIA FREGNO, PhD STUDENT AT IRB



Ilaria Fregno, who thanks to a SEMP Mobility for Traineeships grant spent a semester at the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB).

Ilaria Fregno, from the University of Padua, has received a SEMP Mobility for Traineeships grant that allowed her to perform her master thesis at the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (affiliated to USI) in the laboratory of Dr. Maurizio Molinari (Protein Folding and Quality Control). The cooperation proved to be very successful, so that Ilaria is now a PhD student at IRB.

Let's hear from Ilaria the highlights of her interesting experience.

Hi Ilaria, thank you for accepting our invitation for this interview. Please tell us something about yourself.

"I am Ilaria Fregno and I was born in Verona. I obtained my bachelor degree in Health Biotech and master degree in Pharmaceutical Biotech at the University of Padua. Now I am a PhD student in the lab of Dr. Maurizio Molinari at the Institute for Research in Biomedicine in Bellinzona."

Why did you choose Switzerland for your Erasmus/SEMP internship?

"During my Master studies I've found out about the Laboratory of Dr. Maurizio Molinari between the Erasmus destinations. The possibility to perform my master thesis in Molinari Lab was very stimulating to me:

Molinari group is focused on the study of molecular mechanisms regulating chaperone-assisted protein folding and the quality control processes. Since I was really interested in this research field, I thought that this was a great opportunity for my scientific training. Last but not at least, another reason drove me to this destination: the country where IRB is located. Switzerland is an advanced country with strong interest in research and science. Summing up, my choice depended on the strong interest for the subject and on my huge desire to work in an international and excellent laboratory in Switzerland.”

What was the internship about? Please describe a typical day at the office. How was the working environment?

“During my internship I studied the fate of wild type and disease-related variants of Myelin Protein Zero. This protein is expressed in peripheral nervous system. Several mutations in the myelin protein zero gene (MPZ) have been identified as the cause of various forms of demyelinating neuropathies in human. A typical day in the lab was divided between work at the bench, study, scientific discussions and seminars organized by the Institute. The working environment was great, highly professional and stimulating.”

In which way has this period abroad enriched you, both professionally and personally?

“I think that working in an international laboratory with people coming from different countries, everyone with his experience and knowledge, was very important for my scientific and personal training. This experience gave me the possibility to grow both professionally and personally.”

What does your research activity at IRB focus on?

“The lab of Dr. Molinari is focused on the study of the molecular mechanisms regulating chaperone-assisted protein folding and the quality control processes determining whether a polypeptide can be secreted, should be retained in the Endoplasmic Reticulum (ER), or should be transported across the ER membrane for degradation. A thorough knowledge of these processes will be instrumental to identify drug targets and/or to design therapies for diseases caused by inefficient functioning of the cellular protein factory, resulting from expression of defective gene products (e.g., rare genetic disorders), or elicited by pathogen.”

What would you say to other students wishing to benefit from this kind of grants?

“I would say that this is a great opportunity. Switzerland is a wonderful country!”

Please describe your experience in 3 keywords.

“Amazing, Enriching, Extraordinary”

THE 27TH ANNUAL EAIE CONFERENCE

Arianna Imberti Dosi and Fabiana Bernasconi attended the 27th Annual European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference (www.eaie.org) that took place in Glasgow on September 15-18. The theme of the 2015 edition was “A wealth of nations”, in Honour of the Scottish economic philosopher Adam Smith, who studied and worked in Glasgow. The participants were more than 5000 higher education professionals from 90 countries. As in the previous editions, the event offered a lot of activities: campus tours, workshops, sessions and networking events. The Swiss delegation, together with representatives of selected partner universities, were invited by the Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom, represented by Dr. Lutz-Peter Berg, Head of Science & Innovation, to a reception. This

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The EAIE Exhibition.

was a special opportunity to meet colleagues from partner universities in a relaxed atmosphere, but also to explore the possibilities for new collaborations. USI had the chance to promote itself thanks to the Swiss higher education booth hosted at the exhibition. In addition, Arianna Imberti Dosi and Fabiana Bernasconi seized the opportunity of this trip to visit one partner university: The Glasgow School of Art (GSA). Below you can read more about this visit.



Assembly Hall sign, Glasgow School of Art.

Glasgow School of Art

The Academy of Architecture can boast its oldest exchange partnership with the Macintosh School of Architecture of the prestigious Scottish school, and during the past 15 years the bilateral exchange of students staying for an entire year abroad has always been very strong.

The visit comprised of all the departments of the School of Art – among which photography, fine art, sculpture, environmental design, industrial design and architecture.

Unfortunately, however, it wasn't possible to visit the School's famous historic Bourdon Building, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh between 1897 and 1909 and named after the French architect Eugene Bourdon, the first Professor of Architecture at the School of Art. In 2014, the building was severely damaged by a fire that, exploiting the flammability of Victorian wooden construction materials, also destroyed the renowned library of architectural texts, now housed temporarily in the modern building just in front of the historic one.

At the end of the day, this visit was an excellent opportunity to further strengthen the relationship between the Academy of Architecture and GSA, which will hopefully remain an exchange for many years to come.



Reid Building, Glasgow School of Art.

A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR HAS BEGUN

The 2015-2016 academic year has begun, and new exchange students from all over the world have arrived at USI. This September, we welcomed 36 students in Lugano and 27 in Mendrisio as part of the different exchange programmes, namely the SEMP (Swiss European Mobility Programme), the Swiss mobility, and the International agreements programme. These students, who come from different countries – such as Germany, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Poland, but also from Switzerland, U.S., Singapore and many others –, will spend a semester or a whole year at USI.



Welcome day for exchange students, Lugano Campus.

Orientation days

Orientation days have been organized on the two campuses. In Mendrisio, it was held on September 1: the International Relations team welcomed the exchange students and explained the first important administrative steps to be undertaken in Switzerland. A welcome Drink followed.

On September 10, in Lugano, the students and the staff had the chance to taste the typical Ticinese dish “risotto and luganiga” at USI Canteen. In the second part of the day, several USI services were present to assist the students: study advisors of the different study programmes answered students' questions regarding the courses; the USI/SUPSI Sport Service presented its offer for the year, (if interested: www.sport.usi.ch); the ESN Lugano illustrated the wide range of activities, such as parties and trips in Ticino and in Switzerland. The following day, a welcome aperitif was offered in collaboration with ESN Lugano.



The group of exchange students at the Tree of Life, Expo Milan.

USI@Expo2015

On Saturday 26 September, USI was hosted at Expo Milan, and exchange students were offered the chance to attend the special day-long event USI@



Enjoying a pint at the Slovenian Pavilion.

Expo2015 for free. After an early morning bus ride from Lugano, with a pick-up stop at the campus in Mendrisio, to Milan, USI's delegation of roughly 160 people between students, alumni, professors, and staff was met with massive crowds at Expo's entrance. It was to be a record breaking day for the exhibition, whose attendance almost broke through the 260,000 people mark, probably spurred by the marvellous weather in Milan that weekend.

With so many people, it was a real struggle to navigate most of the length of the site to get to the Tree of Life, where USI President Prof. Piero Martinoli gave a short speech welcoming everyone who could make it to Expo. International students were then given the afternoon free to explore Expo. A good number of them headed for the Swiss pavilion for a short recital by 260 Swiss Alp horn players at 12.30, before going for their home country's pavilion or just roam around looking for some fun attractions – like having a pint of Slovenian beer poolside at Slovenia's pavilion.



Meeting with the Mayor of Lugano, Marco Borradori at Expo Milan.

At 4pm, international students converged on the Swiss pavilion in order to enjoy a guided tour of the Swiss Towers, whose well-thought sustainability theme was one of the most fitting to the general theme of Expo Milan and thus one of the pavilions most enjoyed by the students. Right after the tour, the same pavilion became the stage of the show "Hovering city", a drone choreography illustrating the fascinating architectural concept of a flying city, created and performed by Mendrisio Academy of Architecture architect Riccardo Blumer and some of his students. Unfortunately, the afternoon breeze at the pavilion interfered with the performance preventing the drones from flying steadily. The fact that most of USI's delegation was in attendance, however, made for an excellent opportunity for networking, also aided by an offered cheese tasting just besides the stage. Some international students were also lucky enough to snap a picture with the Mayor of Lugano, Marco Borradori, who was also in attendance at Expo that day.

After some little more free time to explore, USI's delegation headed back to the busses in the evening. Everybody was very satisfied with the day – even if the crowds prevented some from both visiting the pavilions they were looking forward to and having a nice meal – and enjoyed a relaxing ride back to Ticino. Pictures of the day are available on our and [USI's Facebook page](#), as well as in the event's website (<http://www.expo2015.usi.ch/>).

TWO INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR USI STUDENTS WISHING TO SPEND A PERIOD ABROAD



During the Information Session, exchange programmes, partner universities, application procedures,... will be presented.

The International Relations and Study-abroad office is pleased to announce that two information sessions for USI students interested in studying abroad during the academic year 2016-2017 will take place in Lugano on:

Thursday, October 22, 2015, Auditorium, 12:30-13:30: Information Session. Exchange programmes, partner universities, application procedures, entry requirements, etc. will be presented. Our colleagues of the Career Service will present the SEMP scholarships and the Career Service Scholarship for International Placement. The brand new edition of the Study-abroad guide will also be distributed.

Monday, November 9, 2015, Aula Magna Foyer, 12:30-13:30: International Fair. Host students spending a semester at USI in the framework of an exchange programme will represent their home universities. It will be the right occasion for asking specific questions and for picking up information materials.

DISCOVER TICINO: THE TIBETAN BRIDGE



The Tibetan bridge in the valley of Sementina.

If you suffer from vertigo, this is definitely not the right place to be. In fact, today we would like to suggest you a unique experience: the thrill of crossing one of the longest Tibetan bridges in Switzerland (270 m)! The footbridge is in the valley of Sementina, located on the outskirts of Bellinzona. It was officially opened in spring this year and it acts as a connection between the communities of Sementina and Monte Carasso. Anchored at a height of 696 m, with a point center that rises 130 m above the river below, it is the right place to admire the beautiful panorama, including the Magadino Plain, the mountains and, in the distance, the Castles of Bellinzona.

The walkway, made of larch wood, is approximately one meter large. One of the main features is the elasticity, in order to resist to the wind strength, or the heavy snow loads, and obviously the people's weight crossing it. Thanks to tight safety measures, including a safety wire mesh on the sides and a handrail, crossing it is risk-free, even if the dizzying views from underneath the feet make it a breath-taking experience.

The bridge is accessible by catching the funicular Monte Carasso-Curzùtt-Mornera. Curzùtt, an ancient housing cluster with stone buildings, gardens and terraces planted with fields of grain and vineyards, is another worth seeing attraction. The small hill village has been beautifully restored in recent years and it includes a hostel and a restaurant.

Fondazione Curzùtt – S. Barnard, 6513 Monte Carasso, www.curzutt.ch

NEWS IN BRIEF

Welcome on board, Francesco!

We are excited to welcome our new intern, Francesco Bortoluzzi. As of August 3, 2015, Francesco works at both the International Relations and Study-abroad office at the Lugano Campus and at the Administrative Office at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio. He obtained a Bachelor degree at USI (Communication sciences) and a Master degree in International Relations at the University of Edinburgh.

Meeting with the representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Bern.

The Cultural Attaché Ms. Stephanie Morimura and the Cultural Affairs Specialist, Mr. Alexander Sigrist of the U.S. Embassy in Bern, paid a visit to USI on August 10. The aim of the meeting was to explore what kind of cooperation could be mutually fruitful. We had the opportunity to learn more about the Fulbright and other programmes offered to students interested in an experience in the U.S. On the other hand, the guests were offered a guided walk tour through the Lugano Campus. We thank our colleagues for the visit.

Overall announcement of the government scholarships for students and researchers for the academic year 2016/2017.

On behalf of the Swiss government, the Scholarship Service of swissuniversities (the new Rectors' Conference of Swiss Universities) manages the government scholarships which are available to Swiss students and/or researchers interested in studying abroad. The list of the scholarships divided by country are available at: [scholarships for study abroad](#).

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