



N.14 – 10.2016

## 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!

## “BENVENUTI” TO USI

“Benvenuti” is Italian for “Welcome”, which is how we officially greeted our new exchange students at the welcome event organized, like every year, at the beginning of the semester. The occasion was the perfect opportunity to share information on student events, activities, and practicalities about USI and living in Lugano/Mendrisio, and of course to meet with our international students from all over the world.

This year, we welcomed 39 students in Lugano and 28 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, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Poland, but also from Switzerland, the U.S., Singapore, China, Australia and many others –, will spend a semester or a whole year at USI. At the welcome event, a series of activities were presented to the students. To start with, students wishing to be acquainted with the idiom favoured by Dante (Alighieri) - were offered the possibility to attend free **Italian language classes**, with a programme designed for students at all levels seeking to develop and improve their practical Italian skills.

The aim of the courses is to encourage students to immerse fully in the language, with daily six hours sessions over a period of two weeks. Prior to the beginning of the autumn semester, participating students attended morning classes focused on grammar and writing, whereas the afternoon classes focused on improving listening and speaking skills, expanding vocabulary and developing confidence. The motto that guides the teaching approach to Italian at USI is “Welcome to the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland”. In fact, a language is not only a collection of words, sounds and meanings but also relations, places and culture. During the intensive course we therefore offered a Lugano city tour, an evening at the Aquatic Park Splash and Spa in Riviera, sport activities and a guided tour of a museum. As films are an important part of any country’s culture, we also organized an Italian film viewing, presenting *La migliore offerta* (The Best Offer) written and directed by Giuseppe Tornatore.

**Orientation days** have been organized on the two campuses.

In Mendrisio, the International Relations team in collaboration with the USI/SUPSI Sport service and other colleagues organized a rich two weeks programme: from leisure activities at Capolago lakeshore to the visit of Croci’s house, to the modelling course “How to use machinery” to the dinner at Splash&SPA.

On September 15, the International Relations team and the students had a lunch together at the USI Canteen. During the second part of the day, sever-



Welcome day for exchange students, Lugano Campus.

al USI services were present to assist the students: study advisors from the different study programmes answered students' questions regarding the courses; the USI/SUPSI Sport Service presented its yearly programme (for details: [www.sport.usi.ch](http://www.sport.usi.ch)).

To debunk the cliché that “Switzerland and Swiss people are boring”, we invited our guests to visit **the beautiful Brissago Islands** (famous for their botanical garden) and the city of **Locarno** (known for its particularly warm climate year-round). Find out more about these two top Ticino locations by reading the section Discover Ticino.

## INTERVIEW WITH LAURA, BENEDETTA AND CHELSEA, THREE NEWLY ARRIVED EXCHANGE STUDENTS FROM THREE DIFFERENT CONTINENTS

We had the great pleasure to interview 3 of our newly arrived exchange students: **Laura Aisbett** from University of Technology, Sydney, Australia; **Benedetta Alessandrini** from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy and **Chelsea Tang**, from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Let's hear from them the highlights of their first weeks at USI.

### Please tell us something about yourself and your educational background.

**Laura:** “My name is Laura and I live in Sydney, in Australia. I'm currently in my fourth year at the University of Technology Sydney and I'm studying a double degree - a bachelor of Primary Education and a bachelor of International Studies (Switzerland), majoring in Italian and French. It's a really cool degree, it means I can become a primary teacher but also get to learn a language and go overseas for a year.”

**Benedetta:** “My name is Benedetta, I'm from Rome (Italy) and I study Health Management there at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. I took my bachelor in Corporate and Health Economy and Management, and now I'm attending the last year of the Master.”

**Chelsea:** “My name is Chelsea Tang and I am an exchange student from Singapore. Back at home, I am pursuing a degree in Communication Studies at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University. I am majoring in Journalism, and plan to pursue a career in the magazine and/or publishing industry as a beauty writer.”



Above: Laura Aisbett from UTS, Australia  
Below: left, Chelsea Tang from NTU Singapore and right Benedetta Alessandrini from UCSC, Italy.

### Why did you choose USI as your destination?

**Laura:** “Initially I chose to study in Switzerland because they speak both French and Italian. My University in Australia has a bilateral agreement with USI so I was able to study there even though I wasn't ERASMUS.”

**Benedetta:** “At first I didn't want to come at USI, as it was in the Italian-speaking Switzerland and I didn't really know it. But then I found out this university was very international and it had so many Master programs that covered every aspect of Economy, and I started realizing this could be a very useful experience.”

**Chelsea:** “The Faculty of Communication at USI has courses that are different from NTU, in the sense that they offer courses that bring in the different aspects of communication, such as marketing elements. The faculty is also very compatible with my school in Singapore, and seniors and friends who have studied at USI all had rave experiences here.”

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*“USI is amazing: there is a place for everything and everyone: places where to study, where to meet friends, where to eat. Professors are passionate and it’s nice to have class mates coming from all over the world: from China to Norway, from the US to Thailand, a mix of cultures and languages to meet and to know.”*

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### **What is your first impression about USI and Lugano?**

**Laura:** “Firstly, USI is in a fantastic location, close to the lake and near the mountains. It’s very picturesque and there are lots of outdoor sports to do here. The old town is very beautiful, I love walking around there during the afternoon and grabbing a coffee with my friends. It’s very close to the uni and USIHOME, so I save money in transport. I live in USIHOME with lots of other exchange students, so we always have lots of fun going on day trips, going on hikes or going out at night. It’s never a dull moment living here.”

**Benedetta:** “The city is quite small, being accustomed to Rome, but it has its little jewels, as Parco Ciani, Santa Maria degli Angioli, the city center and the beautiful lake. USI is amazing: there is a place for everything and everyone: places where to study, where to meet friends, where to eat. Professors are passionate and it’s nice to have class mates coming from all over the world: from China to Norway, from the US to Thailand, a mix of cultures and languages to meet and to know.”

**Chelsea:** “The first time I saw the University in real life, I was blown away. The main building looks absolutely gorgeous, with the intricate architecture that is very much unlike the buildings back home. The same goes for Lugano as a city — the place is clean, serene and tranquil with a slow and relaxed pace of life. People here are generally friendly, and I’ve greeted countless people with ‘ciao’ and ‘buongiorno’ and they’ve always returned greetings with smiles.”

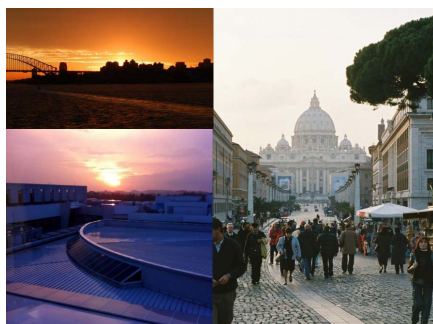
### **Please tell us something about your home country and your home university?**

**Laura:** “My University in Sydney is famous for being a “practical” university, meaning that you get a lot of experience in the work force before you graduate. For example, I was teaching at a Primary School in my first week of University and I have already completed 18 weeks of practical experience at a Primary School. This compares to other Universities who only have practical experience once a year and begin in their second year. Australia really is a beautiful place to live, I’ve lived here my whole life and I still haven’t managed to explore all of it. We have the rainforest, the great barrier reef, snow, desert, mountains and much more. As well as our own animals and plants that you won’t find anywhere else in the world. Sydney especially, it truly and amazing city to live in. There are so many things to do and see, and the people here are really friendly and helpful. Sydney is also a very multicultural city so you won’t have any trouble fitting in.”

**Benedetta:** “I love Italy, and most of all I love Rome. Everything smells of history, walking in the streets you can always stumble in something new, and there are a lot of people, everywhere: people walking, people talking, people sightseeing. My university is quite far from the city center, but it is quite a big campus, with the hospital near and a lot of different students, following several programs, all connected with health. The most beautiful thing of UCSC is that you can spend your entire day at the university without missing anything: you can eat there, study there, have a coffee with your friends, play with your class mates, also have parties there always feeling quite at home.”

**Chelsea:** “Singapore is a bustling city that’s full of energy and spirit. We have skyscrapers built with modern architectural concepts in mind, and a lively hawker culture that boasts amazing food (both sweet and savoury) at pocket-friendly prices. My home university, NTU, is a great place for students to nurture a healthy balance of study and play. It is also one of the top universities in the world with degrees that are globally recognised.”





Left, above: sunset in Sydney.

Left, below: view from Lee Wee Nam Library at NTU, Singapore.

Right: via della Conciliazione, Rome.

### Why should an USI student choose your home university for a semester abroad (3 points)?

**Laura:** “Most of the buildings at UTS have just been built, everything is brand new and we have the most up-to-date technology to assist students with their learning.

- The location is right in the centre of Sydney, next to Central Station. You can walk to Darling Harbour, Surry Hills or Newtown for a drink with friends or a night out. Or you can jump on a train and take a day trip to the Blue Mountains or to the country from Central Station.

- UTS is a student community, there are so many clubs to join and places to go with student discounts, that you won't have any trouble making friends. A brand new shopping centre opened last year right across from UTS and they have some amazing food and shops you can go to during class breaks.”

**Benedetta:** “I think UCSC would be a valid choice for an exchange student: - It provides a great education, related to health but not only: there are also two master programs in Corporate Management and Accounting. - It is in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. - It gives the chance to meet a lot of different students and, who knows, maybe find new friends.”

**Chelsea:** “1. If you're looking for a change in environment to a more upbeat and fast-paced one, Singapore is definitely the place for you. It's great exposure and experience!

2. NTU has a wide variety of courses that students could take, and many of them are very practical-based and hands-on, so you can be sure that learning in NTU won't just be lectures and tutorials in classrooms.

3. We have really friendly Singaporean students in NTU that will be more than willing to guide exchange students around, and an inclusive classroom culture that will sure to excite everyone.”



The 28th EAIE Conference in Liverpool.



The Beatles Story exhibition.

### THE 28TH ANNUAL EAIE CONFERENCE

“In 1971, John Lennon, one of our host city's most influential figures, dreamed of a world at peace. In the year 2016, this dream is as relevant as ever. As international educators, we strive for higher education that transcends national borders, nurtures global citizens and moves humanity closer to freedom, equality and peace.”

This was the *fil rouge* of the 28th Annual European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference ([www.eaie.org](http://www.eaie.org)) entitled “Imagine”, that took place in Liverpool at the end of September. Fabiana Bernasconi, coordinator of the mobility office at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, participated as the official representative of the Università della Svizzera italiana. Most of the workshops were focused on the problems concerning refugees, such as “integrating refugees into higher education”, or “empowering refugees in Europe with transferrable skills”. The main idea was to provide university's representatives with the essential competences to manage cases of refugees, in order to give them equal opportunities in higher education. Even if John Lennon's dream of a world at peace is difficult to realize, the EAIE Conference tried to show that it is still possible to work in the direction of unity and support, through the academic and social acknowledgement of refugees' qualifications.

Another much discussed topic of this year's Conference was “Brexit”. In spite of the many workshops and events about the subject, there is still no official information concerning the political future of the United Kingdom in general, or specific ideas of how a potential exit of the United Kingdom from the EU will influence the role of the country in the network of European universities.

In addition, all the Swiss university representatives, and many selected

partner universities as well were invited by the Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom to a reception. This was a good opportunity to meet again with the colleagues of the mobility offices, as well as a chance to discuss new possible agreements. In conclusion, the EAIE Conference was, as usual, a precious source of knowledge in the field of academic mobility and a great opportunity to imagine a better-unified international network of universities.



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

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

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 2017-2018 will take place in Lugano on:

**Thursday, October 20, 2016, Auditorium (Lugano campus), 12:30-13:30: Information Session.** Exchange programmes, partner universities, application procedures, entry requirements, etc. will be presented. Our colleagues at the USI 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.

**Tuesday, November 8, 2016, Aula Magna foyer (Lugano campus), 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: the ideal occasion for asking specific questions and for gathering information materials.

## DISCOVER TICINO: BRISSAGO ISLANDS AND LOCARNO

To welcome our new exchange students the International Relations and Study-abroad Office organizes at the beginning of each semester a field trip aimed to get to know each other and discover a part of our region. This semester, in relation to the nationwide campaign “Garden Year 2016 – space for encounters”, which aims to raise awareness for the maintenance and development of public spaces and gardens, we organized an excursion to the Brissago Islands and their botanical garden and the city of Locarno. The trip took place on September 24, on a sunny day of early fall. We reached Locarno by train and had short walk to the docks, where we boarded the boat towards the Brissago Islands. During the boat trip, we enjoyed the “Lago Maggiore”, its surrounding landscapes and its beautiful lakeside towns, such as Ascona and S. Nazzaro (Gambarogno region). Some participants joined the captain and the crew on board and had a chat with them. After about one hour we reached “Isola di Pancrazio”, where our tour guide Regula welcomed us. “Isola di Pancrazio” is the larger of the two Brissago Islands and covers an area of 25,568 m<sup>2</sup>, while the smaller one, “S. Apollinaire” or “Isola Piccola”, covers an area of 8,186 m<sup>2</sup>. The Brissago Islands lie at 197 m above the sea level, which is the lowest point in Switzerland. The guided tour was very interesting and fascinating for its naturalistic and historical backgrounds.

The Brissago Islands are immersed in the waters of the “Verbanò” (local name for this part of “Lago Maggiore”), which accumulates heat during the summer and returns it to the atmosphere in winter; the Islands enjoy a particularly mild, subtropical climate with only a few days of frost during the cold season.



Welcome on board!



The guided tour with Regula.

In the garden, around 1,700 plant species are cultivated. They originate in regions of Mediterranean climate (the Mediterranean Basin, Chile, South Africa, Southwest Australia and California) and of humid subtropical climate (in particular from Asia, but also from North and South America and Oceania).

The historical part is very intense: in 1885, the Baron and Baroness Richard Fleming and Antoinette de Saint Leger purchased the Islands, which, at that time, were covered by a sparse indigenous vegetation and were home to the remains of a convent. They restored the convent and brought good soil and dung, built paths and planted subtropical plant species, exotic and rare plants.

In 1897 the Baron abandoned both the Islands and his wife. The Baroness was indebted and her situation became so precarious that, in 1927, she sold the property to Max Emden. Max Emden was not quite a botanic and gardening enthusiast, but cultivated the art of living, which led him to build the palatial residence, erected on the site of the convent, the splendid Villa Emden, which immersed in the exotic vegetation, contributes to the colonial atmosphere of the location.

In 1949, the Council of State of the Canton Ticino, the municipalities of Ascona, Brissago and Ronco sopra Ascona, the Swiss League for the Protection of the National Heritage (today *Swiss Heimatschutz*), and the nature conservation league (today *pro Natura*) purchased the Islands. The conditions stated that: “the island and the building may be used solely for its conservation as a natural beauty spot to be opened to the public, and for cultural, scientific and tourism related activities”. In 1950, the Brissago Islands and the botanical garden were opened to the public. After the guided tour we enjoyed a delicious and “floral decorated” aperitif on the beautiful panoramic terraces and verandas of the restaurant, located in the beautiful Villa Emden.

The Brissago Islands really worth a visit.

Back in Locarno, we enjoyed a walk along the piazza Grande and “città vecchia” (old town). Piazza Grande is the meeting place as well as the heart of the city, and location of the main commercial and cultural activities included outdoor film viewing during the Film Festival. The “Città vecchia” is characterized by a picturesque atmosphere and a rich history, and is full of interesting sites such as palaces, churches, the Visconti Castle and narrow alleys.

#### Useful links:

Train timetables: [www.ffs.ch](http://www.ffs.ch)

Brissago Islands: [www.isolebrissago.ch/en/](http://www.isolebrissago.ch/en/)

Navigazione laghi: [www.navigazioneelaghi.it/eng/m\\_illago.html](http://www.navigazioneelaghi.it/eng/m_illago.html)



In the botanical garden, around 1,700 plant species are cultivated.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Welcome on board, Maurizia!

We are excited to welcome our new colleague, Maurizia Ruinelli. As of September 5, Maurizia works at the International Relations and Study-abroad office on the Lugano campus.



Maurizia Ruinelli joined the International Relations and Study-abroad office in September.

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*“I am looking forward to supporting students in their Study-abroad experience and to welcoming at USI students coming from all over the world. Years ago, I myself spent a few months in Australia and Germany to improve my language skills, and in Mexico where I did an internship. I must say, I cherish the people I met and the life experiences I did.”*

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## **Overall announcement of Government scholarships for students and researchers for the academic year 2017/2018.**

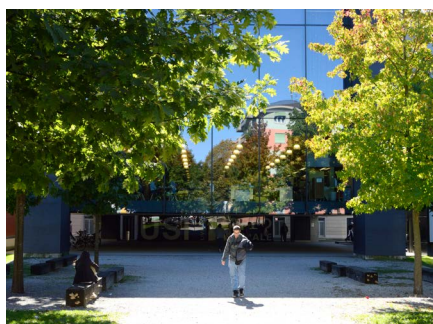
On behalf of the Swiss government, the Scholarship Service of *swissuniversities* manages the Government scholarships which are available to Swiss students and/or researchers interested in studying abroad. The list of the scholarships divided by country are available at:

[scholarships for study abroad](#).

## **Renewal of the Swiss interim solution for Erasmus+**

The Swiss Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER), has officially announced that the interim solution for Swiss participation in the European mobility and cooperation programmes for students, Erasmus+, has been extended by one year. This means Switzerland will continue to bear the cost and organisational burden of its participation to Erasmus+. The importance of the programme is clear: last year, a record number of nearly 11,000 requests for individual projects from Switzerland were granted – an increase of 12% on 2015.

The interim solution for Erasmus+ was drawn up after Brussels suspended negotiations with Switzerland, in response to Swiss voters approving in 2014 a proposal to re-introduce immigration quotas for EU citizens. Currently, the government is still seeking a long-term deal with the EU on future Swiss participation in exchange and cooperation projects.



USI Lugano Campus.

## **EMA General Assembly and Annual Conference at USI**

The Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA) will organize its 10th [General Assembly and Annual Conference](#) at the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), on November 26-27, 2017. Each year, the General Assembly brings together EMA members of more than 170 nationalities and representatives of academia, the European Commission, and other partner organizations. The event represents an ideal opportunity for networking and to contribute to the development of higher education programmes in Europe. On the USI Lugano campus, we are expecting around 200 EMA members hailing from a plethora of disciplines and including both students and alumni from around the world, who believe in the value of European higher education.

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