At the beginning of the current academic year, Prof. Boas Erez was appointed Rector of Università della Svizzera italiana. We seized this opportunity to ask him a couple of questions about USI and its internationalization.

Thank you Prof. Erez for accepting to share with us and our readers your insights as newly appointed Rector of Università della Svizzera italiana. Could you please introduce yourself in a few words?

Prof. Boas Erez: “I have spent the first few years of my life in the German part of Switzerland and then I went to school in Ticino until the end of high-school, before moving to Geneva to study mathematics. After that I have never quit the world of higher education, with professorships at Harvard and in Bordeaux. Mathematics is the only field I have followed a thorough training in, but I’m interested in many very different things. As an example, I have recently dwelt into psychoanalysis, which is a fascinating and important topic.”

Your profile clearly shows how important international experiences are in your life, both academic and personal. In your opinion, which are the main benefits of internationalization?

Any drawbacks?

Prof. Boas Erez: “Speaking more than one language allows you to realize how peculiar and relevant your mother tongue is. Of course, it also allows to reach out to more people and enrich your life experience. The same goes with moving from one country to another. Academics are naturally lead to move around and spend time in different parts of the world. I would imagine it is less of a constraint for someone in my world than, say, someone who has a different kind of job. The major difficulty with job-related mobility is that it imposes hard choices on where to possibly settle and, for instance, grow a family. It is easier to do it while you are young.”

What are your future plans for the internationalization of USI?

Prof. Boas Erez: “USI counts a very large number of foreign students and has teaching staff with very different origins. Many courses are taught in English. So, in a sense USI is the most international public university in Switzerland. There is however room for improvement. We could for instance increase the number of joint international programmes, that is organize together with partner universities courses that include a compulsory mobility. This would increase the academic offer and allow the students
enrolled in these programmes to extend their personal network and experience, in a safer way than through the more classical, but less structured, exchange programmes. USI should also tighten its institutional network and more generally develop its international networking activities, e.g. by participating in more multi-party research programmes.”

In many countries, the internationalisation of programmes is linked with the use of English as a medium of instruction. Do you consider that to be a threat to Swiss culture and national identity?

Prof. Boas Erez: “Of course, universities are important to foster one nation’s culture and identity, but I would not say that Swiss universities, as institutions are responsible for the fact that in Switzerland the English language has taken on such a great importance. This said, I personally regret that many of my colleagues do not really care anymore about speaking more than one national language. USI contributes in different ways to promote Italian and the choice of English as a teaching language is a necessity given the varied origins of our students. It also is a service to our Swiss students, who will need English on their jobs. All of the students who come to us, learn about our culture and the Swiss way of life. Many would not even have considered coming, had we not decided to offer courses in English.”

Why would you recommend USI to students/researchers coming from abroad?

Prof. Boas Erez: “USI is a young and dynamic university, many good things are possible here that are hard to come by elsewhere: low student numbers per class, an international environment, professors which are successful in competitive research activities, an original selection of interdisciplinary courses, job opportunities, nice facilities, swift decision procedures, administrative staff who care about their work, access to the Swiss higher education system, which is one of the best in the world, etc.”

**TWO EVENTS TO INFORM STUDENTS ON EXCHANGE PROGRAMS**

The International Relations and Study-abroad Office organised two events during the current autumn semester to inform interested students on the opportunities of studying abroad in the academic year 2017-2018; both events were very successful.

On October 20, all USI students were invited to the Auditorium for the Information session: Arianna Imberti Dosi, head of IR office, presented the various study abroad programmes, the internal application procedures, the entry requirements, and the financial aspects.

Students can choose among a number of study abroad programmes, in line with individual expectations, objectives and other personal reasons:

- **Swiss Mobility programme**: an agreement between Swiss Universities, with unlimited seats available.

- **Swiss-European mobility programme, SEMP (former Erasmus)**: mobility in Europe, the number of seats for each university is limited, students benefit from a monthly scholarship of CHF 300.00.

- **Extra-European exchange programme**: bilateral agreements between USI and extra-European partner universities; the number of seats is limited.

In addition to these options there are other kinds of mobility opportunity such as the freemover programme, Eurocampus and Summer Schools.

The application for the Academic Year 2017/18 must be submitted by **February 22, 2017**.
The student information events featured our colleagues from the USI Career Service, who presented the SEMP scholarships and the Career Service Scholarship for International Placement.

The information session was followed three weeks later by the **International Fair**, an event where most partner universities were represented to give USI students the opportunity to browse through promotional materials and gather information in order to choose the mobility programme that suits them best. The success of the Fair also relied on the engagement of the incoming exchange students who represented their home universities. Therefore, we would like to thank Remo, Diana and Florian (from Universität St. Gallen), Helene (from Copenhagen Business School), Yumin, Chenxiang and Xinlei (from Shanghai University of Finance and Economics), Tommaso, Markus and Jasmin (from Free University of Bozen), Badi and Aliaksandr (from Kozminski University) for their support.

**DISCOVER TICINO: THE SWISS NATIONAL SUPERCOMPUTING CENTRE, CENTRO SVIZZERO DI CALCOLO SCIENTIFICO (CSCS)**

On December 5, we had the great pleasure to invite exchange students at USI and at SUPSI (University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland) to visit the Swiss National Supercomputing Centre in Lugano-Cornaredo.

We were welcomed by Angela Detjen, communications officer, and Dr. Michele De Lorenzi, Deputy Director, who gave a speech on the center prior to the visit.

The CSCS, a unit of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich), was founded in 1991 in Manno and, in 2012, it moved to Lugano-Cornaredo. CSCS develops and provides high-performance computing services to solve complex problems in science and society. Its resources are available to national and international academia, users from industry and private sectors.

A supercomputer can simulate processes that would be too expensive or impossible to study in a laboratory, in different fields such as astrophysics (birth of galaxies, stars and planets), biology (study of the interactions between cells, viruses, bacteria), chemistry (interactions between molecules, development of drugs), physics (superconductivity, development of new materials) and fluid dynamics (combustion, optimization of turbines and wings), and can analyze scientific experiments, as for example the data from the Large Hadron Collider (the world’s largest and most powerful particle collider, at CERN in Geneva), database with genomic information or observation from radio telescopes.

CSCS was one of the driving forces that led to the creation of the Institute of Computational Science (ICS, Faculty of Informatics at USI). ICS exploits the computing power of CSCS to study complex problems through numerical simulation, allowing USI to become a key player in national strategy on high performance computing and networking (HPCN) and opening up new multi and interdisciplinary opportunities in the field of research.

Scientific users can access CSCS computing resources for free by submitting project requests that are assessed by international experts. Currently 568 users working on 105 projects are hosted by CSCS. In the year 2015, 1.2 billion computing hours were spent!

In addition, CSCS operates third party systems for paying customers, among them it is worth mentioning MeteoSwiss, the Federal Office of Me-
The supercomputer power is expressed in FLOPS (Floting Point Operation) per second performing a huge number of mathematical operations in parallel.

Since 1991 CSCS has housed a diverse pool of supercomputers, with very evocative names, here some of them: Adula, 1991 (5.5 GF), Gottardo, 1996 (10 GF), Prometeo, 1999 (64 GF), Venus, 2002 (1.3 TF), Palu, 2005 (5.8 TF), Blanc, 2006 (4.5 TF), Monte Rosa, 2009-12 (402 TF), Piz Daint, 2012-13 (7.7 PF).

To give you an idea of the amazing development of technology, today's iPhones, with 10-30 GF, would be ranked after Gottardo!
Piz Daint is the most powerful supercomputer in Europe and can compute in one day more than a modern Laptop could compute in 900 years!

About 70 employees are currently employed at CSCS, representing 15 different countries, with backgrounds ranging from the technical and administrative fields to information, technology and science.

When it comes to sustainability, it is worth mentioning that CSCS is one of the most energy-efficient and sustainable supercomputer centres in the world, thanks to its achievements in reducing the environmental impact. The rather “noisy” machine room, which measures 2000 square meters with no supporting pillar or any partitioning, was designed to minimize restrictions to the installation and operation of supercomputers in the future. The basement of the computer building houses the “resource deck” containing 960 batteries for the emergency power supply, the electricity and the water supply systems.

CSCS needs a great deal of electricity to run and, thanks to a lake water-cooling system, it uses the natural resource of the Lugano Lake to cool its supercomputers and the new building. In the central Parco Ciani, a station pumps water from the lake at 45 meters depth. The station's three pumps convey, through an underground water pipe, up to 760 litres of water per second. 460 liters go to CSCS for cooling, while up to 300 liters are available to AIL (Aziende Industriali Lugano). Before the water returns to the lake, it passes through a stilling basin, which collects the water and makes sure that it flows freely down the pipe back to the lake at the right temperature of maximum 25 degrees in order not to affect the ecological balance of the lake.

The participants enjoyed the visit very much. Even for non experts in the field of informatics or electrical engineering the guided tour of the computer centre facilities is very impressive. CSCS organises and offers free guided tours on a regular basis: the schedule and the registration form are available at: http://www.cscs.ch/events/index.html
**ERASMUS DAY 2016**

The Erasmus Day 2016 was organised by the new National Agency Movetia, in Solothurn on November 23rd. It was the first time Movetia presented itself to the 110 participants, mainly the staff of the International Offices and coordinators of Swiss universities and other educational institutions. The Swiss Foundation for the Promotion of Exchanges and Mobility (SFAM) was established in March 2016 by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), the Federal Office of Culture (FOC), the Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO) and the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK). The Foundation sees itself as a platform for providing contacts and information related to exchange and mobility. It raises awareness on the importance of the topic among the public, policymakers and the media. It is also responsible for implementing exchange and mobility programmes in Switzerland and abroad. The Foundation operates under the name Movetia, and its new director, Mr. Olivier Tschopp, presented the new structure of the agency and the new logo. The programme also included the launch of the 2017 Swiss call for proposals and the presentation of application deadlines, related forms and funding details, as well as further information on the various programmes.

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**Meeting with Bishop’s University**

On November 7, we welcomed Dr. Miles Turnbull, Vice Principal Academic of Bishop’s University, a small primarily undergraduate university located just outside of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada. The guest had the opportunity to get acquainted with USI and to enjoy a guided tour of the campus. The International relations and study-abroad service staff was very delighted to meet with Dr. Turnbull. Thanks to this visit the two institutions discussed the possibilities of creating a partnership in terms of student exchange and research collaborations.

**EURAXESS website relaunch**

The [www.euraxess.ch](http://www.euraxess.ch) website has been relaunched and is online from November 14. EURAXESS is a Europe-wide network that promotes mobility and careers for researchers within the European research area. The website provides researchers with information regarding relocation or career conditions, and Higher Education Institutions can advertise their research vacancies across Europe. In Switzerland, the initiative is coordinated by [swissuniversities](http://www.swissuniversities.ch). The EURAXESS Services Centers and Welcome Centers of the Swiss Higher Education Institutions are a part of this European network and also offer researchers individual advice on site.

**IRUS Meeting in Bern**

On November 20, 2016, the University of Bern hosted the autumn session of the IRUS meeting. IRUS is the network organisation for all employees at Swiss universities in the area of international issues and mobility. The bi-annual meeting is the platform to discuss about topics related to the activities of the IR offices. During the day, themes very dear to the IR offices were discussed. To name a few, Annie Cottier (UNIBE) presented the project MILSA – Mentoring Intercultural Learning through Study Abroad, a mentoring program supporting outgoing students in their intercultural learning processes before, during and after their stay abroad. The representative of the University of Geneva, from his part, confirmed that the edition 2018 of the EAIE Conference will be hosted in Geneva and that by the end of the year the coordination group will be created with representatives of the University, of swissuniversities, of Présence Suisse and of Geneva Tourism. The next IRUS meeting will take place on May 5, 2017 in Basel.
The EMA (Erasmus Mundus students and alumni association) chooses USI for its 10th General Assembly

On November 26th and 27th, USI welcomed 200 EMA members of more than 170 nationalities, representing academia, the European Commission and other partner organisations that support international cooperation in higher education. The conference is a forum for networking, an opportunity to find collaborators and initiate projects, and to learn from one another, as well as to discuss the development of the Association itself.

The efficient organisation, the enthusiasm and the involvement of the participants and the interesting topics were the ingredients for a successful event. Along with the words of EMA’s President, Apiyo Okwiri, “the weekend was EMAzing”.

Scholars at Risk

Scholars at risk (SAR) is an international network of higher education institutions, associations and individuals acting together to protect threatened scholars, promote academic freedom, and defend everyone’s right to think by hosting threatened scholars from countries with difficult conditions and offering them temporary academic positions in order to continue their work. On November 28, as staff members of the International Relations and Study-abroad Office at USI, we joined the SAR Swiss Section first meeting in Bern. Established in 2015, SAR Swiss Section organizes activities in Switzerland to promote academic freedom and support threatened scholars. The purpose of this first meeting was to define the organization of the newly created group, the recruitment and inclusion of new members, the exchange of experiences and knowledge regarding legal matters (residence and work permits) and financial issues.

UNESCO Chair in ICT to develop and promote sustainable tourism in the World Heritage Site, Hangzhou, China, August 14th-25th 2017

The doctoral summer school is a collaborative event by Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland), Zhejiang University (Hangzhou, China) and IFITT (International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism). The theme will be The Contribution of ICTs to Sustainable Tourism for Development (ICT2ST4D).

We encourage you to take advantage of this unique collaboration with China, where you will attend one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the country. Please send a complete CV and a one-page motivation letter to: unescochair@usi.ch by April 28, 2017. For more detailed information please visit: http://www.unescochair.usi.ch/summer-school-2017.

Switzerland fully associated to Horizon 2020

On 16 December 2016 the Swiss Federal Council ratified the Protocol on the extension to Croatia of the Free Movement of Persons Agreement between the EU and Switzerland. As a consequence, the precondition for Switzerland to fully participate in the Horizon 2020 research programme has been met. The status of Switzerland for the EU Framework Programme “Horizon 2020” (2014-2020) is changed from partial to full association. From 1.1.2017 onwards researchers, host institutions and SMEs based in Switzerland will have the same rights in “Horizon 2020” as is the case for EU Member States.

This is vitally important for the quality of the research conducted in Switzerland, for the country’s reputation as a research centre and for its competitiveness.
SEASON’S GREETINGS

The International Relations and Study-abroad office will be closed for the Christmas holidays from 30.12.2016 to 9.01.2017. It is always possible to contact us by email to relint@usi.ch.

We wish all of you our warm Season’s Greetings from Università della Svizzera italiana.

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