



Università  
della  
Svizzera  
italiana

# THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS NEWSLETTER “COME AND GO”

N.19 – 12.2017

## 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!

## IN BOCCA AL LUPO\* OR HOW TO MANAGE THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE

Switzerland has four national languages: German is the most widely spoken (63,5%), followed by French (22,5%), Italian (8,1%) and Romansh, an ancient Latin-based language spoken by just 0,5% of the population. According to the European Commission, Italian is the fourth most commonly used language in the EU.

Being USI the only university of Italian language and culture in the Swiss academic landscape, since 2006 it is particularly committed in the organization of free of charge Italian language courses. Knowledge of the Italian language in our region can in fact provide many chances both in personal and professional lives. Not only it can make it easier to communicate in shops and restaurants or with colleagues and organizations, but also it may increase job opportunities.

The Italian language programme is designed for USI students and USI professionals at all levels who want to develop and improve their practical Italian skills. Courses are mapped to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). More specifically, throughout each semester USI offers an Italian language study programme organized in twelve modules: four intensive two-week courses prior to the semester start at Absolute Beginner (A1), Beginner (A1-A2), Elementary (A2), and Intermediate level (B1) and nine semestral courses from level A1 until level C1.

The objective is to give participants the opportunity to acquire as much knowledge of the language as possible in a corresponding amount of time. A language is however not only a set of sounds and meanings, but also of encounters with other peers. We therefore encourage our students to communicate by organizing different group activities both inside and outside the classroom.

The USI Italian language programme aims to encourage the integration of our national and international students in the Italian speaking region, not only by learning and improving the language but also by getting to know our canton and our culture. Prior to the semester start we therefore welcome our students by offering an extra-curricular timetable including a guided city tour, an Italian film viewing, a guided visit of an exhibition in the Cultural centre LAC Lugano Arte e Cultura, and last but not least an aperitif by the sandy beach of the Lugano Lido.



Students learning Italian at the Lugano Campus.



Boryana Stratieva, from Bulgaria (above) and Rana Arafat, from Aegypt (below): two of the 600 participants of the USI Italian language courses.



The appreciation for this approach is well demonstrated by the large number of participants. Each year about 600 students enroll and 400 obtain the certificate of attendance (awarded with an attendance of at least 75% of the course and the participation in the final test).

“I always thought it is very useful to know the language that people speak around you and I decided to attend the Italian courses at USI even before I arrived in Lugano. I like the language a lot and I thought it’s a great opportunity offered by the University. I wanted to learn Italian so that I can speak to people freely (not only in Ticino, but in Italy as well) and to have more opportunities when looking for a job.”

These are **Boryana**’s words, 26 years old, from Bulgaria, currently Master student and intern at USI. Together with **Rana**, an Aegyptian PhD student in Media and Journalism at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, she is a very active participant of these courses. They both accepted to explain why they decided to attend the courses and which are the aspects they appreciate the most.

**Rana**: “I do appreciate everything about this course as we don’t only study from the main assigned book, we also receive handouts, training tests and other materials from the lecturer which gives us a better chance for doing more exercises and training that enhances our understanding of the language.” **Boryana** is so enthusiast about the courses that she even “would also appreciate a class that is more intensive during the semester - a class that has more lectures or covers more material.”

In fact, Italian is not as easy to learn as it could seem. **Rana** admits that sometimes she finds it challenging, especially when it comes to the speaking: “unfortunately, I still encounter some difficulties as I am not confident enough to start speaking Italian with people and I am still a little bit afraid to open conversations in Italian. Also, I have some pronunciation mistakes that I am trying to overcome by practice.”

In order to overcome these difficulties a lot of extra activities are organized, “that still can be a great exercise from learning the language. For example - going to the theatre or watching a movie in Italian.”(**Boryana**) Personally, “I also appreciate how the amazing instructor, Ms. Susanne Stigen Pescia, tries all the time to link the language with cultural and social aspects to introduce us about aspects related to the history, customs and traditions of the Italian part of Switzerland and different parts of Italy.”

(**Rana**)

For further information please see <http://www.italiancourse.usi.ch/>.

\*In bocca al lupo literally means “in the mouth of the wolf”. It is the Italian way of wishing you luck, and that is by inviting you to get eaten by a wolf, to which the other person must respond ‘Crepi il lupo’ (‘The wolf shall die’).

## DISCOVER TICINO: MENDRISIO AND THE ACADEMY OF ARCHITECTURE

On December 14, we had the pleasure to invite exchange students currently hosted at USI, USI students who are going on exchange next spring semester, Swiss Scholarship holders at USI, and SUPSI (University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland) exchange students to ice skating in the earth of Mendrisio enjoying a sparkling and warm (except the temperature) atmosphere.

Piazzale alla Valle in Mendrisio, and the squares of some other cities in Ticino transform themselves over the Christmas time into enchanting meeting places hosting ice skating rinks as well as markets, events, food and music.

As Mendrisio is also a place full of traditions we could not miss the opportunity to write this article.



Our exchange students performing ice-skating at Piazzale alla Valle rink.



The Academy of Architecture campus in Mendrisio.



The “trasparenti” (translucent paintings on canvas) are hang along the streets during Easter Week. (courtesy of [www.processionimendrisio.ch](http://www.processionimendrisio.ch))

One of the five faculties of USI, Academy of Architecture, is located in Mendrisio. It is a truly international school where students from around the world meet and come together to understand the finest contemporary architecture, represented by the faculty members teaching there. Architecture enables to be creative but at the same time asks to be realistic. Studying architecture means bringing history and contemporary life closer to its spatial constitution, on all levels: the product, the home, the neighbourhood, the city, the region, and the territory. The architect’s profession thus deals with the problems of reality by designing its new physical forms, from individuals’ dwelling spaces to the collective dimensions of housing. But architects are not only called on to solve the functional needs of the world we live in: their role is increasingly to confer perceptual value, formal significance and aesthetic quality on our spatial universes. To do this, the architects trained in Mendrisio acquire the technical skills related to their profession, but also study the human sciences and philosophy, history of art and ecology. Because the architect is now required to be the meeting point for various forms of spatial quality: functional, aesthetic, ecological and territorial. At the Academy, students pass half of their time in courses on theory and history, and the other half in the design studios, where they design by hand or laptop, building models and working out solutions with their fellow students and in close contact with their teachers. During their five-year educational course, students will have opportunities to meet teachers from very different architectural cultures and countries, creating a scenario with an international scope, in order to gain full awareness of the very different situations that they will be confronted with when they enter the profession. The campus of the Academy of Architecture is in the heart of the small town of Mendrisio, divided between ancient buildings of historic value and new buildings. In 1996, when the Academy was founded, the town of Mendrisio set aside a number of buildings – Villa Argentina, Palazzo Turconi – and built Palazzo Canavée and the Library to complete and facilitate the nascent campus. To this was added the Casa dell’Accademia, which accommodates 70 students each year.

The fact that the Academy of Architecture is in Mendrisio is not by chance. The region has an outstanding tradition of cultural openness. Numerous artists, active in Switzerland and abroad, that contributed to developing local and international culture are Mendrisio-natives: the architects Francesco Borromini and Mario Botta, the sculptor Vincenzo Vela, the poet Francesco Chiesa, and many others. Mendrisio is today a town of 12,000 inhabitants, but originally contained within its defensive walls and surrounded by countryside. The historical center, also called Magnifico Borgo, has medieval origin. Its main features are palaces, churches, alleys and courtyards which remained quite untouched by modernity. Since the past, another characteristic of Mendrisio is being a commercial centre. The old centre abounds in boutiques and small shops, whereas major department stores were created in the last decades. There are three important events taking place each year in the city. In the historic centre, on Thursday and Friday before Easter, historic religious processions with over 200 actors in roman costumes and exhibition of the trasparenti take place; a tradition dating from the end of the 16th century. The same location is animated by the Sagra dell’uva at the end of September, emphasizing the region’s wine growing vocation. Finally, in the beginning of November, the most ancient country fair of Ticino’s agricultural sector takes place in the San Martino district.

Maybe, it is during one of these fairs in the World War I period, that the “larpa iudre” was born. “Larpa iudre” (literally “speak in reverse”) is an encrypted dialect typical of the Mendrisiotto region that was used by cattle dealers to communicate without being understood by foreigners, thus securing the best deals. Today this peculiar jargon is still alive but has merely a recreational function since it is spoken within small circles of friends.

Enjoy a visit to Ndrisiome (Mendrisio in “larpa iudre”)!

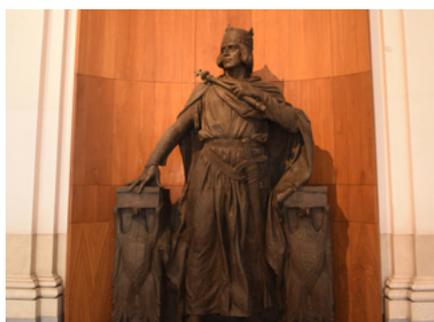
## DISCOVER A PARTNER UNIVERSITY: UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES FEDERICO II

The main goal of this section is to help students to get inspired for their exchange through the portraits of our partner universities.

In the month of November, Arianna Imberti Dosi had the chance to visit Naples and to meet with the Head of the International Relations office of the University of Naples Federico II, Ms. Fernanda Nicotera.

University of Naples Federico II was established in 1224 through an Imperial Charter by Federico II Hohenstaufen, the King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor. It was the first publicly funded university in Europe. In recognition of its founder, the university was named Federico II in 1987.

Nowadays the university offers courses in essentially all academic disciplines, leading to one hundred fifty-five graduate level degrees. Research facilities provide support to all these courses. Students are given the opportunity to pursue intellectual development as well as the acquisition of professional skills. Current student enrollment nears 86,000 and the academic personnel, at this time, is 2,532.



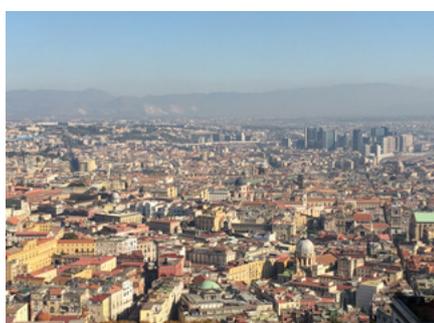
Federico II statue at the main entrance of University of Naples.

The venue of the university has changed many times, over the many centuries of its history. Nowadays, the size of the university is such that its venues are spread throughout the city of Naples and its immediate surroundings. The three major campuses are located in the centre of town, as well as in its Northern and Western outskirts. The Senate House and the main administrative offices, along with the Department of Law and Liberal Art are in central Naples, whereas in the northwestern part of the city is the modern campus of Monte Sant'Angelo which houses, among the others, the Department of Economics and Statistics (DISES) with whom USI has a SEMP agreement (at Master level, 1 place).

The research at DISES encompasses all core areas of microeconomics, macroeconomics, finance, statistics and mathematical economics. The Department currently offers a BA and a MA in Economics, a MA in Finance, a MSc in Economics and Finance (completely held in English), and a PhD in Economics.

Naples, the third largest city in Italy (with a population of just under 1 million inhabitants), is a cosmopolitan city that presents spectacular buildings and views, including the imposing Vesuvius, churches and gardens that seem to create an open-air museum. The historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1995 and contributes to make Naples the cultural capital of southern Italy. Moreover, the city offers a great lively atmosphere and excellent gastronomy to make the most of the Mediterranean flavor.

The long tradition and the renommee of the University and the fascination of the city can offer to interested students the perfect match. Not for nothing, the well-known proverb says, "see Naples and die".



View of Naples from Vomero Hill.

## TWO EVENTS TO INFORM STUDENTS ON EX- CHANGE PROGRAMMES

USI firmly believes in the importance of cooperation with academic institutions worldwide to encourage and increase student mobility; the International Relations and Study abroad Service is in charge of coordinating and promoting academic mobility programmes, therefore organizes two events during the autumn semester to inform USI students on the opportunities for studying abroad.



The Information session was held on October 19 in the Auditorium.



The cover of the new edition of the Study Abroad Guide.

On October 19, all USI students were invited to the Auditorium for the **Information session** to find out more about the different study abroad programmes, the admission criteria and the financial aspects.

USI students can choose their study abroad programme according to their academic curriculum as well as their personal preferences. They have three main options: the Swiss Mobility programme, the Swiss-European mobility programme, SEMP (former Erasmus), or a mobility in a European partner university; and the Extra-European exchange programme in a university with which USI has a bilateral agreement.

USI students who would like to undertake a period of mobility are granted a 50% reduction on the USI semester tuition fee and do not have to pay any tuition fee to the partner host university; furthermore, students enrolled in the Swiss European Mobility Programme are granted a SEMP studies scholarship.

Students interested in studying in a university with which USI does not have an exchange agreement can organize the exchange semester individually in the frame of the Freemover programme.

In addition, there are other kinds of mobility opportunities:

- the summer schools;
- the Eurocampus, European Masters in Intercultural Communication (EMICC), a teaching and research network of ten European universities specializing in intercultural communication and proposing an interdisciplinary study programme for one semester;
- the Intercultural Communication and Economics (ICE), a specialization for Bachelor's students in USI's faculties Communication and the Management track of Economics, which includes a semester of mobility in Helsinki Finland, at Hanken School of Economics.

Both the EMICC and the ICE programmes are granted the SEMP studies scholarship.

The Information session was also intended for USI students interested in undertaking an internship abroad, who were informed about international internship opportunities and scholarships granted by the Career Service to support their professional careers.

The brand new edition of the Study abroad guide has also been distributed. You can download the digital version [here](#).



The International Fair was held on November 16 in the Aula Magna Foyer.

The **International Fair** was held on November 16 in the Aula Magna Foyer with the aim to give USI students the opportunity to find out specific information about our partner universities and countries. Most of our partner universities were represented by exchange students currently hosted at USI in the framework of an exchange programme. Therefore, we would like to thank Giulia, Francesco Vincenzo, Maria and Francesca (from Italy), Philip, Lukas Maximilian, Jennifer, Matteo and Alexander (from Germany), Zhi and Lei (from China), Samuel (from Finland), Kristina (from Russia), Celine (from Switzerland), Petr (from Czech Republic), Rebecca and Michelle (from Singapore) and Frederica (from Portugal) for their appreciated support.

We remind interested students that the deadline to apply for an exchange is **February 19 for Lugano Campus** and **February 11 for Mendrisio Campus**. The application procedure is available [here](#).

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### IRUS at the University of Lucerne

On November 9 2017 the University of Lucerne 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 main topic of discussion was the future of SEMP (Swiss European Mobility Programme) and the association of Switzerland to Erasmus+ for the new generation programmes from 2021.

In the last few months important decisions have been taken: on August 28 the majority of the Committee for Science, Education and Culture of the Upper House (Council of States) declared itself in favour of continuation of the Interim Solution, as proposed by the Federal Council. At the same time, however, they called for full association for the new generation of programmes from 2021.

On November 27 the House of Representatives con National Council (Lower House) approved the next round of funding (CHF 114.5 million) to aid Swiss third-level students in spending study and training periods elsewhere in Europe from 2018-2020. As well as the Council of States, National Council also adopted the motion by 109 votes to 80 demanding that the government re-open talks with Brussels as soon as possible to find a permanent solution.

In parallel, at the beginning of November, both the Confederation and the cantons adopted a common strategy on exchanges and mobility. The aim is to reinforce exchange and mobility programmes both from a qualitative and quantitative standpoint. The exchange and mobility strategy is intended to achieve greater recognition and support for exchange and mobility programmes so as to increase participation levels. To this end, existing exchange and mobility programmes will be expanded and developed further.



The new building of the University of Lucerne.



### Staff mobility training

Staff mobility training is a great way for its participants to enhance their skills and for the institution to gain a cost-effective means of 'internationalisation at home'. On our website: <https://www.usi.ch/it/bacheca-mobilita> the USI staff community can find the offers of our partner universities. The SEMP programme provides both organisational and financial assistance for this purpose. Please contact us at the International Relations Service when you start making your plans so we can assist you.

### ThinkSwiss Summer Schools: Call for Proposals

ThinkSwiss is a scholarship program managed by the Office of Science, Technology, and Higher Education (OSTHE) at the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C. It is a joint program of the Embassies of Switzerland in the United States and in Canada and of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). The ThinkSwiss program provides financial assistance to summer schools at Swiss universities which allows them to allocate travel grants to participants from Canada and the United States. For 2018, the OSTHE again launches an open, competitive application process to select the 2018 summer schools. Those with the most convincing application will receive ThinkSwiss travel grants that allow them to support summer school applicants from U.S. and/or Canadian universities. The new application deadline is January 15th, 2018. To learn more about the ThinkSwiss Program please visit the [website](#).



## swissuniversities Development and Cooperation Network (SUDAC)

The swissuniversities Development and Cooperation Network (SUDAC) programme seeks targeted support for collaboration between the various types of Swiss higher education institutions and their partners from the Global South in order to achieve an excellent standard of education, research and innovation on global challenges.

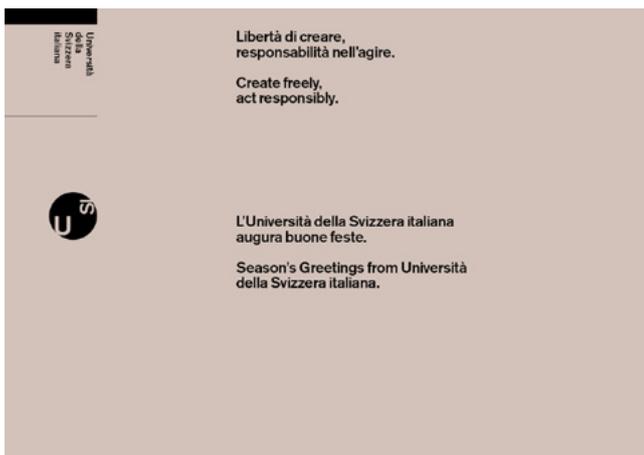
To achieve its aims, the SUDAC programme will promote the development of 'Consortia for Education and Research (COFER)' that are oriented towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the U.N. Agenda 2030. The 2nd SUDAC Call is now open until February 28, 2018.

More information available at [swissuniversities website](http://swissuniversities.ch)

## SEASON'S GREETINGS

The International Relations and Study abroad service will be closed for the Christmas holidays from 30.12.2017 to 8.01.2018. It is always possible to contact us by email to [relint@usi.ch](mailto:relint@usi.ch).

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



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