



IT University Travel Report

Host University: Politecnico di Milano

Study Programme at IT University: MSc Computer Science

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange

Courses studied abroad: Advanced Computer Architecture, Computing Infrastructures, Internet of Things, Business Information Systems 1 & 2, Design of Hardware Accelerators

Exchange Period: Spring 2022

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here: neni@itu.dk

Your stay abroad

What was it like to study at Politecnico di Milano (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

Academic stuff: In general, studying at university in Italy is very different from what we are used to at ITU - or at least on the technical programmes. At Politecnico di Milano (PoliMi), studying computer science/engineering more closely resembles studying for a degree in law or business in the sense that the courses are very focused on studying in the traditional sense. This meant; literally no project work, no assignments, homework, whatsoever and **no** programming/practical work.

Instead, what you are left with is nothing but the slides uploaded by the teachers for you to mindlessly study and memorize for pointless exams that only test your memorization skills and nothing else.

While the academic level is fairly high (some courses allow for project work as the exam, tailoring your study in the course towards more advanced topics), this didn't quite fit with being there on an exchange. However, it is a great initiative for those who want to go further in the fields of the different courses.

While the courses I chose resemble (or are supposed to) the most technical courses at the university, don't be fooled. I have added some links further below where you can see what the material of the courses and exams are, which should give a good idea of what the courses are like.

Regardless of choosing courses of either 5 or 10 ECTS, the overall workload will more or less be the same.

Practical/Social stuff: The school is huge and has two main campuses, Leonardo and Bovisa. The majority, if not all, of the relevant courses for ITU students are taught at the Leonardo campus, much closer to the city and much more vibrant than the Bovisa campus.

I chose to find a room to stay in very close to the Leonardo campus which was super great since there are lots of things going on, on the campus, all the time. Fridays were my favorite as there would always be a party in front of the main building there! Also, I lived close to the green metro line which was very nice to get around with. The metro system in Milan is great.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I wanted to go abroad as I knew the 2nd semester of the CS masters is 30 ECTS of electives. I checked a bunch of ITUs partner universities for courses I found interesting and PoliMi seemed to have the most interesting courses for me - I was interested in learning more about the lower abstraction levels of programming and computers which I definitely got to learn about! Albeit, not exactly in the way I had expected to.

Also, I wanted to try the experience of going to a larger university with multiple faculties and meeting people from all walks of life. Given the size of the university, I definitely met a lot of interesting people and enjoyed the take-aways from attending a large university.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

Personally, I learnt how it was to work and study with people coming from a (computer) engineering background which was very interesting. Given my interests and future studies, it was definitely fruitful to experience the engineering-take on CS.

This, however, also means that you should be aware of the differences between ITU and PoliMi, since it is an **engineering** university. Even though courses might have the same names, course contents, etc. they **will** be different since we have distinct views on computer science.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay

PoliMi offers housing for incoming exchange students at the beginning of the semester. However, the date they publish the offers is very close (1-2 weeks) before the semester starts and I had heard from friends at DTU that the student housing gets filled up in minutes. While these rooms are very affordable, I didn't want to run the risk of not having a place to stay so I found a private room in a 2-person apartment which I was very satisfied with.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

I used Spotahome to find the apartment I ended up staying in. If using websites like that one, be aware of the following:

- Administration fee: The landlord/apartment administrator might attach a hefty administration fee of several hundreds euros as a price to move in. It should be stated on the websites.
- Period of stay: Some owners want to rent their rooms out for at least 6 months (which was the case for me). If you plan on staying for less than 6 months, they might ask you for a higher rent per month of around 80€
- Move-in/move-out periods: Again, some owners prefer that people stay in the apartments for the full duration of the semester which means that they only allow you to move in in august/february and only allow you to move out in july/january. And if you do move in on, for instance, the 15th of august they'll want you to pay the rent for the full month of august.

I believe the above is a result of the high influx of exchange students to Milan so don't be surprised if you end up paying more for a room there than for a private room/1-room apartment in Copenhagen.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

The section above should answer that question pretty well.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

My biggest expense, by far, was the accomodation. When looking for a place to stay I found apartments of upwards of 14 rooms with a single kitchen to share for around 500-600€/month. I ended up in a two-room apartment close to the university for 700€/month + 70€/month in utilities.

I got an Italian SIM as well through Vodafone which was around 15€/month. Others recommend going for Iliad instead.

Eating out is not as expensive as in Denmark - go for the aperitivo offers, they're great. Grocery shopping is about as expensive as in Denmark though.

Alcohol and drinks are not terribly expensive either at places like Alimentaris (Kiosk-like shops?). Of course, the wine is great (even the ones for a few euros)

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

Yes I applied to a few but didn't receive anything since I was too late with my applications, sadly.

I recommend checking out Nordea fonden and Københavns Kommune if you live in København.

Recommendations for other students

Going on exchange is a great experience and you take valuable experiences and lessons with you home when you leave. I'd say that how CS is approached from an engineering angle was very interesting to learn about. The friends, connections and trips you make throughout your stay will definitely make the whole experience much more enjoyable.

Make use of the [ESN network](#) as well, it is a very established community within the school and it has many events and trips throughout the semester. Be (very) quick to get a spot on the trips as they are quickly filled up. Do however be aware of the nature of the trips since some of them can be a bit.. on a budget (bus from Milan to Puglia, 7AM to 7AM trip with no overnight stay, etc.)

Useful links and tips:

The course catalogue: <https://www4.ceda.polimi.it/manifesti/manifesti/controller/ManifestoPublic.do>

Student-driven site with links to all the Telegram groups for the courses you might want to take: <https://polinetwork.org/en/> In the groups you can find documents with previous exam assignments along with notes for the courses.

Course reviews (within the above site): <https://polinetwork.org/en/guides/info/corsiLM.html>
Very useful information for when you are deciding which courses you want to take.

Lecture slides and exam sets for the Advanced Computer Architecture course: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5egek4m0blts9pl/AADeI74jVefC9qy5GzjW3PjMa?dl=0> These should give you a good indication of what kind of material you can expect to interact with in the courses.