

Intervista

Lead user internazionale: Mahdi

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Interviewer:

Hi, thanks a lot for taking part. We're a group of students from Politecnico di Milano working on a Human–Computer Interaction project about welcoming and integrating Erasmus students. This interview aims to understand your experience with the Buddy Programme and how it could be improved. Is it okay if we start?

Interviewee:

Yes, sure.

Interviewer:

Where are you from, and how long have you been — or will you stay — at Politecnico di Milano?

Interviewee:

I'm from Iran. I came here about two or three years ago to study for my Master's degree. Now I'm working on my thesis — it's almost finished, and I'm preparing to graduate soon. It's been a really interesting experience overall.

Interviewer:

How did you first hear about the Buddy Programme?

Interviewee:

When I was admitted to the university, I received an email about the Buddy Programme. It seemed like a good opportunity to get some help and meet new people, so I decided to apply.

Interviewer:

Why did you decide to join it?

Interviewee:

I thought it was a really nice idea, because local students can show you around the city and help you understand how things work here. It makes it easier to adjust to a new environment and feel part of the community more quickly.

Interviewer:

Was it easy to register and get matched with a local buddy?

Interviewee:

Yes, the process was quite simple. I received an email with my buddy's contact information, then I wrote to her, and she sent me her WhatsApp number. We started chatting, and everything went smoothly.

Interviewer:

Did you get in touch before or after arriving in Italy?

Interviewee:

Both, actually. We exchanged a few messages before I arrived, and once I got here, we started planning when and where to meet. It helped me feel a bit more prepared before arriving.

Interviewer:

Can you describe how you and your buddy met, and what kind of activities you did together?

Interviewee:

We first met for a coffee and immediately got along well. We became friends quite naturally. She showed me around the city, helped me discover some nice places, and we went out for pizza together. She also introduced me to some Italian pastries and sweets, which was really nice. We met several times and always had a good time.

Interviewer:

How often did you meet, and did that frequency feel right for you?

Interviewee:

At first we didn't meet very often, because she was busy with exams and her schedule was full. Later, when things calmed down for both of us, we started meeting more regularly — about once a month. That felt okay, but we both would have liked to meet more often if possible.

Interviewer:

What did you enjoy the most about your experience with your buddy?

Interviewee:

What I enjoyed the most was the time we spent together and the friendship that developed. It was nice to have someone I could talk to and share experiences with, especially as a foreign student.

Interviewer:

Were your expectations met when you joined the programme?

Interviewee:

Yes, absolutely. I joined mainly to meet someone who could help me adapt, and in the end, we became very good friends. It turned out even better than I expected.

Interviewer:

Did you feel your buddy truly helped and supported you?

Interviewee:

Yes, definitely. She was supportive from the very beginning and always willing to help whenever I needed something.

Interviewer:

Did the university follow up or support your Buddy Programme experience in any way — for example, through events or communication?

Interviewee:

Not really, at least not much. I didn't notice many follow-ups or events organized directly by the university after the initial contact.

Interviewer:

What do you think works well in the current Buddy Programme at Politecnico?

Interviewee:

The idea itself is great. The best part is having someone who already knows how things work at the university and in the city. It's really helpful when you're new and don't know anyone yet. It gives you a point of reference and makes the first months a lot easier. Overall, it's a very positive initiative.

Interviewer:

What would you improve?

Interviewee:

Maybe the university could organize more events where buddies can meet and do things together — for example, group meetups, small trips, or social activities. That would help people connect more easily, not only with their buddy but also with other international and local students.

Interviewer:

What kind of events do you have in mind?

Interviewee:

Things like aperitivos, bowling nights, or other informal gatherings organized by the university. Simple social activities that make it easier for everyone to meet and talk.

Interviewer:

Have you heard of other Erasmus students who didn't have a positive experience with the Buddy Programme?

Interviewee:

Yes, a few. Some of my friends said their buddy never took the initiative to contact them, so they weren't really in touch.

Interviewer:

Why do you think that happens?

Interviewee:

Maybe they just didn't get along well, or the buddy wasn't very proactive or didn't have enough time. It depends a lot on the person.

Interviewer:

Would you like your relationship with your buddy to continue beyond the first weeks?

Interviewee:

Yes, of course. It would be nice to keep in touch even after the first period, especially when a real friendship has formed.

Interviewer:

If you could change one thing in the Buddy Programme, what would it be?

Interviewee:

Probably the timing and scheduling of university events. For example, some Buddy events were organized during exam periods or at the same time as mandatory seminars, which made it difficult to participate. Adjusting the schedule would make things easier for everyone.

Interviewer:

Do you think an app or website could help manage the programme better?

Interviewee:

Yes, I think that would be very useful. It could make it easier to find all the information in one place, choose or contact buddies, and join group activities. It would simplify communication and help the programme run more smoothly.