

Intervista

Utente medio rappresentativo internazionale:

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Interviewer:

Hi, thanks a lot for your time. We're students from Politecnico di Milano working on a project to improve how Erasmus students are welcomed and integrated. This interview focuses on the experiences of students who didn't take part in the Buddy Programme, to understand what could make such a service more appealing or useful. Is it okay if we start?

Interviewee:

Yeah, sure!

Interviewer:

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

Interviewee:

I'm from Malaysia, and I'll probably stay here for three or four years. I'm studying architecture, so it's a pretty long program. I arrived last year, and I'm slowly getting used to life here — it's very different from home, but in a good way.

Interviewer:

How was your arrival in Milan? Did you feel supported, or mostly on your own?

Interviewee:

Everyone here has been really kind. From the moment I arrived, people were very helpful — even strangers gave me directions when I got lost! But I did find it hard to deal with the bureaucracy. There are a lot of documents, websites, and offices to

visit, and sometimes it's not clear what to do first. I often wished there was a step-by-step guide or someone who could just explain everything in a simpler way.

Interviewer:

Have you ever heard of the Buddy Programme at Politecnico di Milano?

Interviewee:

No, not really.

Interviewer:

Okay, so basically it's a program where you're matched with a local student who helps you integrate better. Based on this description, do you think such a program would have been useful for you?

Interviewee:

Yeah, definitely. I think it would have made a big difference, especially in the beginning. Even just having someone to ask small questions — like where to buy a SIM card or how to use the metro — would have saved me a lot of time and stress.

Interviewer:

What were your biggest challenges when you first arrived in Milan? For example, bureaucracy, housing, orientation, making friends, language barriers, etc.?

Interviewee:

Honestly, a bit of everything. I mean, I'm from Asia, and everything is so different here — the culture, the pace of life, even the way people interact. But I think the hardest part was dealing with practical things like getting my metro card. The app and website are quite confusing, and most of the information was in Italian. Also, finding accommodation was a challenge — prices are high, and I didn't know which neighborhoods were safe or close to campus.

Interviewer:

How did you get to know people or build your social circle?

Interviewee:

At first, it was quite lonely. But then I started going to events organized by the university and some student associations. That helped a lot. I met people at workshops, cultural nights, and even during group projects. I think once you take the first step and go out, people are very friendly — but you have to be proactive.

Interviewer:

Would you have liked to have a local student as a point of reference?

Interviewee:

Yes, definitely. Having a local student as a reference would have been so helpful. It's not just about practical stuff — they could also show how daily life works here, like how people spend their weekends, or where students usually hang out. It's a way to understand the real local lifestyle instead of just what you see as a tourist.

Interviewer:

What kind of help or activities would you like to share with a local buddy? What kinds of things would you like to do together?

Interviewee:

Maybe visiting museums, exploring small cafés, or doing some fun cultural activities. I'd love to discover local traditions — like food markets or art exhibitions. We could also have small group events, maybe with other international students, so it's easier to make friends. And the buddy could help me discover the best places that aren't too touristy, where locals actually go.

Interviewer:

In general, do you feel local students are open and welcoming towards international ones?

Interviewee:

Yes, I think so. The Italian students I've met are really nice — sometimes a bit shy at first, but once you start talking, they're very warm and helpful. I love Italian culture, and I feel people are genuinely curious about others, even if the language barrier can make things a bit slow at the beginning.

Interviewer:

In our surveys, many Erasmus students said they'd like to meet their buddy once a week, while local students prefer once a month. What do you think about this? How important is meeting frequency to build a real friendship or feel truly welcomed?

Interviewee:

I understand that local students are busy, but I think meeting once a week — at least for the first few months — would be ideal. It takes time to build a real friendship, and if you only meet once a month, it feels more like a formal thing than an actual connection. Later on, maybe once every two weeks would be fine.

Interviewer:

What types of activities or events would help you feel more included in university life or in the city?

Interviewee:

Group activities for sure — things that don't feel too formal. Maybe cooking classes where everyone brings something from their country, or sports like volleyball or badminton. Also creative things like pottery or painting classes, because you can talk and relax at the same time. I think activities that mix culture and fun are the best way to connect people.

Interviewer:

Would you prefer this kind of service to be managed through an app, a website, or organized directly by the university?

Interviewee:

An app would be perfect. It would be easier to find everything in one place — events, people, messages, maybe even a chat or a map. I often lose track of information that comes by email or through different platforms, so having one dedicated app would be much better.

Interviewer:

What would motivate you to take part in such a program in the future?

Interviewee:

If I moved somewhere completely new and didn't know anyone, I would definitely join. But even here, I think I'd join just to meet more people and learn things from a local perspective. It's not only about help — it's also about sharing cultures and making real connections.