

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name****Year and semester for exchange**

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Exchange university

Politecnico Di Milano

Degree programme

Systems, Control and Robotics

Politecnico di Milano

Before departure

Ever since I started my studies I wanted to experience going on exchange to a different university and living in a different city. Knowing that KTH offers many different destinations to go to I didn't miss a chance to apply. My first choice was Barcelona but since PoliMi is one of the best universities in Europe and considering that I was always interested in the Italian culture, that became my first choice. The application process was long and included a lot of forms and papers, but I got all the help I needed from the exchange coordinators in my department. Since I was going for only one semester and Polimi offers all their courses in English, no language courses were required for my application.

Upon arrival

I arrived about 10 days earlier to set a foot in the city and explore a little bit before the semester started. No introduction courses were offered by the university however the Erasmus student network had multiple introduction events for us to meet other students and go around the city and the campus.

Financials

The main source of income for me was CSN and I didn't apply to any scholarships from KTH, However Erasmus offered a scholarship that was paid under two occasions, once upon arriving in Milano and the remaining upon home arrival. The living expenses in general were very similar to Sweden, although transportation and partying were less costly. Worth to mention that accommodation was quite more expensive but also very hard to find in Milan.

Accommodation

Me and my 2 friends managed to find an apartment through Airbnb that we shared among us. Polim's own accommodation was very limited and very hard to obtain, most exchange students in the spring semester didn't manage to obtain a place through them. The apartment we found was about 40 minutes far from the campus, but it was in great condition and in comparison to other students it didn't cost us as much (we used most of our luck in that!)

University and studies

As mentioned before PoliMi is one of the biggest universities in Europe and they offer a very big and diverse selection of courses that cover multiple topics. Almost all the course in master's level are offered in English. However, I would suggest checking their course offerings earlier on so that you know exactly which course are offered in spring and which in fall semester, because you might not find all the courses that you like to be given at your exchange semester. Most of the courses there consist of 5 or 6 credits, so be prepared to study about 5~6 courses per semester, but do not worry because all

the courses last throughout the whole semester. Worth to mention that the study week is fixed, meaning that a specific lecture is given at the same day and hour every week.

Courses

I picked up 5 courses during my exchange semester that totalled up to 30 credits and I ended up finishing 25 credits. Although it might sound reasonable, but it was a bit too much work for some courses and it is recommended to choose your courses carefully if you are planning on finishing them all and have some time to explore the country and do other activities.

I studied the course Natural language processing (5 credits) where we got to learn about text data and apply some machine learning algorithms to train models on given data. The course was very fun and useful and included both practical and theoretical parts that completed each other.

My second course was Philosophical Issues of Computer Science (5 credits) and there we learnt about philosophical and ethical issues within computer science and specially machine learning and AI. The course was very interesting specially that it is very relevant right now and it offered multiple different views on the issues that we might face in the future due to the explosion of machine learning.

My third course was Machine Learning (5 credits) and this course was very dense and had a very large number of lectures and assignments which multiple people complained about it not being matching the number of credits it offers. Nonetheless the course was very useful and will enrich you with mathematical theory about machine learning but be prepared for a very big workload (Not uncommon with any machine learning course).

Fourth course was High-tech Entrepreneurship (5 credits) where we got the chance to form a group and start our own high-tech business idea in a multidisciplinary engineering team. This was one of my favourite courses as I got to team up with some locals from Polimi which later became close friends. Also, the course had a very useful structure to help us with understanding how start-ups function and how different stakeholders play different roles to help you boost your company.

Last course was Leadership and Innovation (10 credits) and this was my least favourite course. The workload in this course was not as hard as the rest, but on the other hand it was full of very obvious and non-useful information that at the end of the course no one thought was adding any value to their education. It is worth mentioning that I chose this course due to it being one of the few courses with 10 credits.

City and country

Italians and their culture and cities were my favourite thing about my exchange experience. People are very warm, friendly and welcoming and I had an easy time meeting fun and interesting people that I spend a lot of time and created many memories with throughout the semester. I found the Italian culture to be very similar to the culture in my home country (Syria), I did not face any cultural shocks at all, I was rather happy and appreciating to the whole experience.



Figure 1 The beautiful city of Genova



Figure 2 The greatest team in the world

Leisure and social activities

I spent most of my spare time visiting Italian cities, museums and churches. Every city had its own unique identity and special architecture, landscape, culture and food and everywhere we went we managed to have very different yet beautiful experiences. Most of our connection with other students was through ESN where they offered multiple trips, activities and some casual meet-ups. Polimi also offers multiple student organizations and activities for those who are interested in a more school-oriented club.



Figure 3 A trip to Sardinia with ESN

Sustainability

Since the acceptance letter arrived very late, we had a very short time to search for accommodation and book a plane ticket to travel to Milano so we didn't have the possibility to travel sustainably (adding to that the high costs of train traveling from Stockholm to Milan). On the other hand I travelled back by trains and crossed multiple cities on my way back home which was both more entertaining but also more environmentally responsible. The costs were still higher than an airplane ticket but the experience was worth it nonetheless

Other recommendations and observations

My biggest tip would be to plan early on where you want to travel whether it is Polimi or any other university. Never hesitate to apply for exchange, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity and the memories and friends you make throughout the trip are unforgettable. You will definitely come back with many different values and you will learn so much both academically but also about yourself and other people and cultures.