

International Activities Report 2024

SUPSI



Overview	3
Student mobility A.A. 23/24	5
Visiting mobility A.A. 23/24	8
Staff mobility	9
Relationships with partners	10
Extra activities	11
Internationality in the SUPSI departments	12
SUPSI at EAIE 2024	15
IRUAS Conference	16
New guides	17
Abbreviations	18

The international exposure of an institute of higher education is achieved through a number of initiatives that increase its competitiveness in the fields of teaching, research and services, encouraging integration with a global and multicultural perspective. The International team, consisting of the International Office itself and the departmental coordinators, acts as a nerve centre for the communication of information and exchange between the various departments and SUPSI as a whole.

The International team plays a key role in developing partnerships with domestic and international partners. Its main task is the management and coordination of internationalisation initiatives, with a focus on mobility programmes, including the Swiss solution to Erasmus+, the Swiss European Mobility Programme (SEMP).

The service is aimed at students, teachers and administrative staff who wish to undertake educational experiences outside the Canton. Meanwhile, the office provides support and guidance to international guests, making it easier for them to settle in at SUPSI.



Student mobility A.Y. 23/24

Currently, Switzerland is not yet officially a member of the European Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme. However, it is able to participate in some of the programme's initiatives as a non-member country, thanks to an alternative model known as 'the Swiss solution'. This approach makes it possible to implement Erasmus+ compatible exchange, cooperation and mobility projects that are directly financed by the Swiss government. The Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP) plays a key role in making travel easier for students at Swiss universities. The programme encourages both study and work experiences abroad for those from Switzerland and the hosting of international participants within Swiss universities.

The 2023/2024 academic year saw an increase of approx. 38% in student mobility, marking an important growth in interest in academic and professional experiences abroad. This year, no fewer than 96 incoming students chose SUPSI to enhance their studies or internships, thereby confirming the attractiveness of our institution at an international level. Even more significant was the increase in outgoing students: a total of 115 decided to try their hand at new academic and professional experiences abroad, embracing the opportunity to develop in an international environment.

These figures not only confirm the value of the mobility opportunities offered by SUPSI, but also testify to the importance of effective promotion and support strategies, which have made these experiences increasingly accessible and attractive. Such enthusiasm and growth motivate us to continue in this direction, with the aim of offering more and more students the chance to explore new academic and professional horizons. Student mobility is more than just a trip: it is an opportunity for growth, exchange and discovery that enriches the educational and personal journey of each participant.

Annual development of student mobility (including affiliated schools)



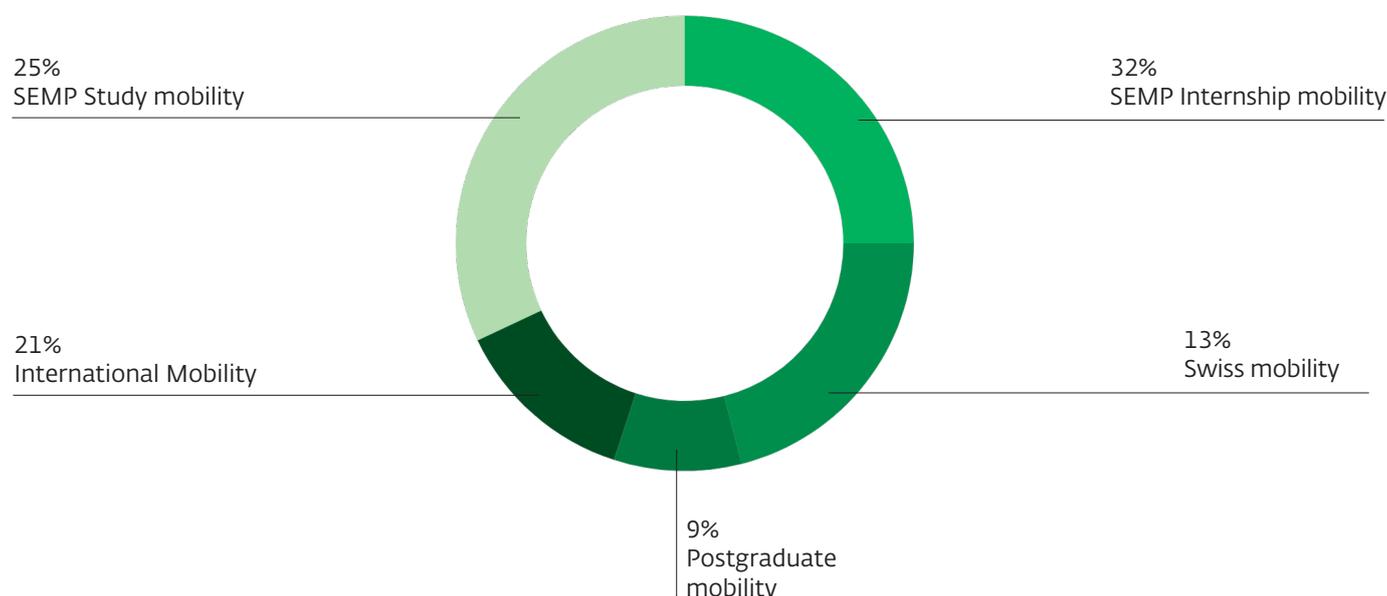
Student mobility A.Y. 23/24

Outgoing students

SUPSI's outgoing student mobility continues to be very popular, with an increasing number of students choosing to further their studies through experiences abroad. As the figures below show, the majority of mobility takes place within the framework of internship exchange programmes, a choice determined by the obligatory nature of internships in the areas of Leisure Management and Healthcare.

The most popular destinations vary according to the opportunities offered and the specific interests of the study programmes. Italy remains a favourite destination, due to its linguistic ease and cultural proximity. Meanwhile, Africa and South America attract a growing number of students as destinations for an internship, thanks to cooperation projects and strong partnerships between SUPSI and local NGOs.

Mobility by type



Mobility by department

ATD	DTI	CSI SUM	DACD
5	9	1	8
DFA/ASP	DEASS	FFHS	Landquart
7	90	2	4

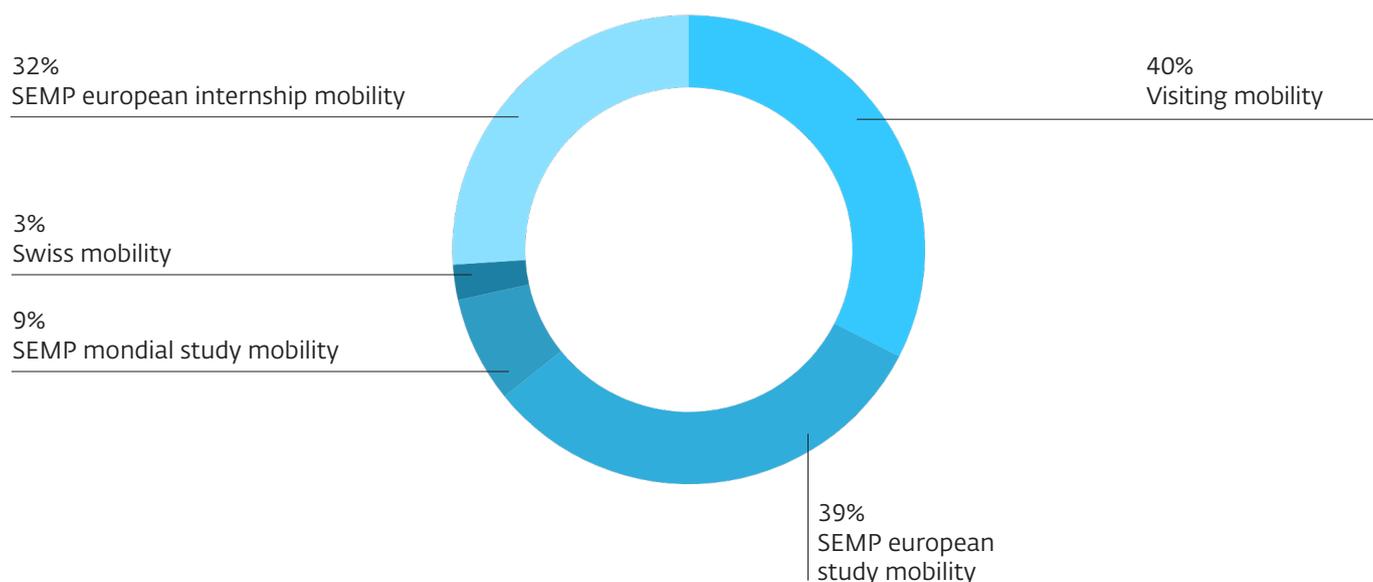
Student mobility A.Y. 23/24

Incoming students

Incoming student mobility is steadily growing, further increasing its international appeal. Students come for academic exchange programmes, integration into our courses and contributing to a multicultural educational environment. Italy is the main country of origin, thanks to the shared language and collaborations between universities. There is also interest from countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, which are showing increasing attention to the opportunities offered by SUPSI.

SEMP worldwide study mobility is complemented by the IMIAD (International Master Interior Architecture Design) programme, which every spring welcomes a select group of students from Germany, Turkey and India to the DACD Department, numbering a total of 12 students. A significant contribution comes from visiting mobility, especially in the DTI and DACD departments, typified by medium to short stays, mainly dedicated to research or observation. These figures confirm the value of international collaborations and the importance of student mobility in promoting the exchange of knowledge and skills between different cultures and academic systems.

Mobility by type



Mobility by department

ATD	DTI	CSI SUM	DACD
2	43	4	33
DFA/ASP	DEASS		
19	31		

Visiting mobility A.Y. 23/24

A successful year

Since 2023, Visiting guests at SUPSI have grown significantly, a trend that was further consolidated in 2024. This success not only reflects the increasing number of visitors, but also highlights the International team's expertise in the management of different groups of international guests. Of the visiting guests, the majority are PhD students coming from European universities. They predominantly come to SUPSI to pursue and develop their own research programmes. In 2024, we welcomed more than 50 candidates, a clear increase from the previous year's 30 or so.

The support of the mobility coordinators, with whom there is constant daily liaison to exchange information and experiences, is indispensable for these types of mobility. Managing visiting students involves a number of different challenges related to the country of origin, duration of stay, agreements to be made with partner institutions and the type of stay they will be making.

The International team accompanies visitors, especially those from non-EU countries, through the intricacies of the bureaucratic process: from applying for visas or clearances to residence permits, compulsory health cover, and the definition of cooperation and mobility agreements, all in collaboration with the departmental coordinators.

This activity allowed the International team to gain greater expertise and to further their understanding of the procedures for managing guests visiting SUPSI, resulting in the drafting of a guide, which is now being examined by the various departments for fine-tuning and approval and will be published during the course of 2025.

Origin of visiting guests



Italy	Germany	Spain
33	1	1



Iran	India	Mexico
1	1	1

Staff mobility A.Y. 23/24

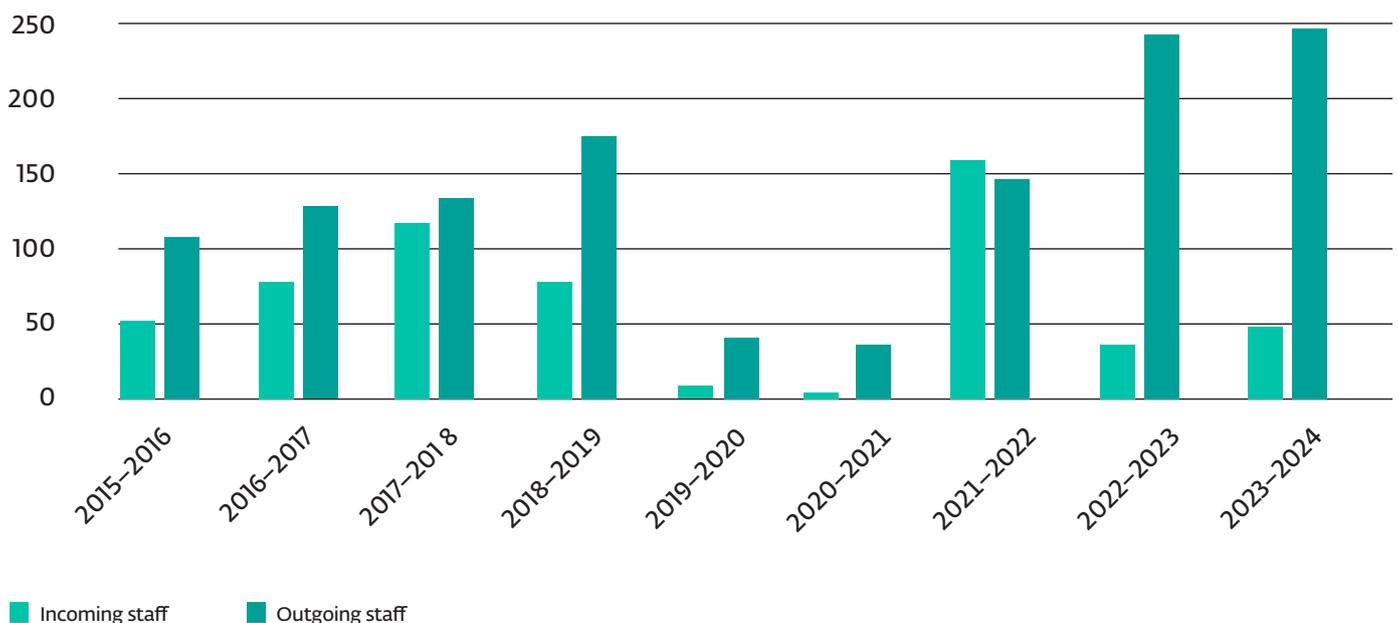
SUPSI is committed to actively promoting staff mobility through the SEMP programme, which enables them to participate in educational opportunities abroad, such as courses, seminars and observation placements. Employees with teaching assignments have also had the opportunity to teach courses abroad.

This programme offers numerous advantages, including the possibility of international networking, connecting professionals from different cultures and countries. Participants are given the opportunity to explore different working environments, broadening their understanding of professional dynamics within an international perspective. The exchange of innovative methods is a central element, encouraging the learning of new techniques and approaches. Furthermore, participation in the programme contributes to the development of intercultural skills, preparing employees to operate more effectively in global contexts. The programme not only encourages the professional growth of its participants, but also lays the foundations for future institutional collaborations, paving the way for potential long-term partnerships. For SUPSI, this initiative represents a strategic opportunity to consolidate the international network, strengthening ties with other global institutions and increasing visibility worldwide.

Furthermore, participation in the programme supports the professional development of its employees, who acquire intercultural competences that are invaluable for the institution as a whole. This contributes to making SUPSI a more attractive employer, capable of attracting international talent. The programme may also stimulate greater student mobility by providing study and exchange opportunities internationally.

In recent years, the number of employees involved in the programme has remained constant, with the majority participating in mobility for training purposes. Of these, many took the opportunity of a language study period to improve their English language skills for teaching assignments, thus contributing to the internationalisation of the institution

Annual staff mobility trends



Relationships with partners

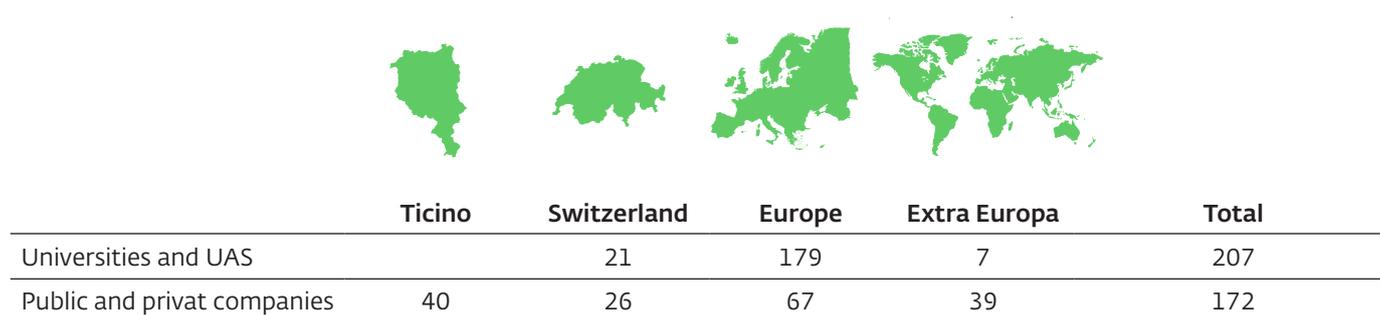
During 2024, the International team focused its main efforts not only on maintaining long-standing existing partnerships but also on expanding them by establishing new connections wherever deemed necessary to support the growth and internationalization of activities. In particular, the team worked in close collaboration with SUPSI, providing continuous and qualified support in managing educational collaborations related to exchanges and international mobility. Thanks to these efforts, the team succeeded in reaching an impressive total of 207 active collaborations, a result that reflects the commitment to consolidating and expanding the network of international relations.

Europe, especially the countries bordering Switzerland, continues to represent the vibrant core of international collaborations. Among these, Italy stands out as one of the preferred partners, due to the shared language that facilitates dialogue and mutual understanding. It is followed by countries such as Germany, France, and Austria, with which numerous mobility projects have been launched.

However, the importance of other European nations that actively contribute to the exchange network and opportunities cannot be overlooked. A notable feature of 2024 has been the initiation of several non-European collaborations, made possible by the increasing mobility of outgoing staff and the tireless efforts of the International team to foster cooperation with institutions beyond the continent. These new collaborations offer fresh growth prospects and international opportunities for both students and faculty.

In this context, the Department of Business Economics, Health and Social Care (DEASS) continues to hold a leading position, being the department with the highest number of collaborations. This achievement is mainly attributable to the many international exchange programs focused on practical training, a logical choice given the mandatory internship component in the study paths of Leisure Management and Health. Through these collaborations, students have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in international professional settings, enriching their academic journey and increasing their competitiveness in the global job market.

Active collaborations



Extra activities with students

The International team is also involved in organising social events and meetings, which are essential for encouraging integration and cultural exchange. In March, the office organised a typical Swiss dinner, offering students and visitors the opportunity to enjoy a traditional cheese fondue. Amidst the enveloping aroma and togetherness of the meal, the event gave the participants an authentic Swiss experience, strengthening the bonds between students of different nationalities.

One of the most popular events was the International Christmas Apero in December 2024, which was designed to offer international students and visitors a warm welcome in a festive atmosphere. The event transformed the friendly get-together into a real culinary journey, with tables full of specialities from different countries: from Brazilian biscuits and Lebanese hummus to Italian tiramisu and homemade pizzas. A perfect opportunity to get to know each other, share traditions and immerse themselves in the international Christmas spirit.

Through these initiatives, the International team continues to create unique opportunities for cultural exchange, enabling students to enrich their academic and personal journey with meaningful experiences and shared events.



Internationality in the SUPSI departments

DFA/ASP and the new added value of visiting PhD guests

Towards the end of 2024, DFA/ASP Locarno had the pleasure of welcoming 15 visiting PhD students from various Italian universities, further consolidating the Department's commitment to internationalisation and scientific exchange. The university of origin included the University of Foggia, the University of Turin, the University of Macerata, the University of Modena, the University of Milan - Bicocca, the Libera Università Maria SS. Assunta - LUMSA and the University of Rome Tor Vergata, as well as the University of Palermo, from which three visiting students arrived. The research projects that were developed covered a wide range of DFA/ASP topics, contributing new perspectives and methods to the academic environment. The presence of these visiting students not only promoted scientific growth, but also strengthened collaborations between the Department and other important Italian research centres.

Recently, and thanks to the valuable contribution of the DFA/ASP coordinator, the 'Welcome Coffee' initiative was introduced, an informal occasion organised on a monthly basis. This opportunity for exchange represented a valuable networking platform, encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations and providing a chance to brainstorm in a relaxed and sociable setting. The initiative received a very positive response and was particularly appreciated by the participants.

Special thanks also go to the tutors and teachers who welcomed the visiting students, accompanying them on their academic journey and actively contributing to the fulfilment of their projects. We look forward to the next visiting experiences with enthusiasm, certain that these exchange opportunities will continue to enrich the DFA/ASP and strengthen the international network.

DACD between Mendrisio and Hawassa: from idea to reality, one step at a time

Once again this year, the Wo-Co adventure, the Cooperation Workshop, came back. Created from the collaboration between SUPSI and the University of Hawassa, Wo-Co is an experience that takes students to Ethiopia for two intense weeks between January and February, after an initial preparatory period in the autumn in Mendrisio.

The project involves 12 students in the third year of the SUPSI Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and 2 students in the second year of the SUPSI Bachelor of Arts in Visual Communication, offering them a unique learning opportunity in the field. The focus of the workshop is vernacular architecture, a harmonious blend of tradition, culture, and sustainability. It represents the ingenuity of communities in adapting to their environment using locally available materials and techniques.

During their stay in Ethiopia, the participants have the opportunity to meet teachers, local experts and students from the University of Hawassa, exploring the challenges and possibilities of architecture in its African perspective. The workshop is not only an opportunity to put into practice the skills acquired during the academic course, but also an experience of personal growth, based on cultural exchange and direct collaboration with the local community.

Through this project, SUPSI continues to strengthen its commitment to international cooperation, offering its students valuable educational experiences that combine theory and practice, design and social impact. The Wo-Co represents an opportunity to develop a broader view of architecture and visual communication, highlighting the role of design and planning in building sustainable solutions for the future.

DTI and the Global Perspectives Programme: a bridge with Virginia Tech

The Virginia Tech Global Perspectives Programme (GPP) is a unique experience for graduate students that combines study both at home and abroad, preparing them to become future teachers and global citizens. Every year, the annual Global Perspectives Programme in Switzerland takes place in the spring, a tradition going back 17 years. The programme starts in Zurich and culminates in Riva San Vitale, including an annual visit to SUPSI.

In 2024, the delegation had the opportunity to visit the new SUPSI EST Campus of the Department of Innovative Technologies (DTI) as well as the Mendrisio Campus (DACD). Welcomed by the head of the International Office, Annick Catella, and the departmental coordinator, Elisabetta Caneva, at the DTI, the delegates visited various laboratories, including the Start-Up Garage, the Mini-Factory, and the Autonomous Robotics Laboratory.

The synergy between SUPSI and Penn State continues

The 'Cross-cultural collaboration project' course of the Bachelor in Computer Science consolidated its ties with Penn State University (PSU) through the fourth round of joint projects. Students from the course, with teachers Amos Brocco and Vanni Galli, visited the PSU campus to initiate projects with American students.

Besides establishing roles and activities, they participated in the academic life of PSU, enriching their professional and personal experience. Course leader Prof. Sandro Pedrazzini emphasised the uniqueness and importance of the programme for the students who participated in it: an enriching experience of intercultural collaboration, which enables them to grow and which will be useful in the working environment.

In May, a PSU delegation was welcomed to the East Campus in Viganello for the finalisation of projects. The US students explored the DTI's modern facilities and laboratories, discussing projects and challenges in the field of technology. This partnership is crucial for SUPSI, which strengthens its commitment by actively promoting cultural diversity and the exchange of knowledge between students and teachers from different academic backgrounds.

DEASS, the projects in the social work area

From April 18 to 20, the International Course Participation: Beyond Good Intentions. Inspirations, Approaches and Actions was held at the DEASS, Social Work area. The opening evening, organized by the student collective Viole Spinatte, featured the screening of the documentary *To Whom it May Concern*, followed by a debate with volunteers from the humanitarian association Aletheia RCS, co-producer of the film.

The second day began with a speech by Prof. Luca Crivelli, director of DEASS, who presented some examples of successful collaborations, emphasizing the importance of co-creation in research. Then, Prof. Alessandro Tolomelli (University of Bologna) discussed theories and models of participation, highlighting the need to create authentic spaces for dialogue and inclusion.

Michele Pizzera (ZHAW) then presented the results of two studies on youth political participation in Switzerland, analyzing ways to engage teenagers and strategies to increase their involvement in cantonal political life. Marie-Christine Ukelo M'bolomerga (HETS Fribourg) finally addressed the topic of university access for refugees, presenting two projects and sharing the testimony of two asylum-seeking students.

Workshops on case studies, intervention methodologies, and research were then held, co-organized by SUPs in Social Work in collaboration with European university partners. On the final day, participants had the opportunity to reflect on how to concretely apply the concepts learned to promote participatory and inclusive spaces. The event concluded with an engaging Forum Theatre on working with young people, performed by the theater company d!imps.

DEASS Health Area and Short-Term Mobilities	Through these international exchanges, the student has the opportunity to engage with healthcare professionals in different contexts, in various countries, and interact within a student group with peers from different countries and educational institutions. These experiences aim to foster reflective thinking among students about the awareness of intercultural and interprofessional approaches, which are fundamental dimensions in performing a caregiving profession.
ENM European mobility programme – European nursing module	The ENM network (of which DEASS has been a member for a number of years), through the cooperation of the various European partner universities, offers students from the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree course the opportunity of a two-week mobility programme with an observational internship in a healthcare facility and participation in seminars and lectures at the host university. In May and October, 13 outgoing students participated, travelling to Spain, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium. At the same time, DEASS welcomed 8 incoming students, from Spain, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark.
International and interprofessional week at FH Campus Wien	In January 2024, an intensive week-long interdisciplinary programme took place at FH Campus Wien, DEASS' long-standing student and teacher exchange partner, focusing on topics such as communication and the challenges of inclusion and diversity in the healthcare professions. This event was attended by 9 students enrolled in the third year of the degree course in nursing and physiotherapy.
COIL Caring in a global world (CAW)	<p>In the 2024/2025 autumn semester, DEASS, in cooperation with its partner universities Ecole D'Assas in Paris, Campus Teruel in Zaragoza and Campus Biomedico in Rome, offered the first COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) project, entitled Caring in a Global World (CAW). The course was attended by 61 students from different Bachelor's degrees in the healthcare field (nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry), with a fruitful collaboration from the 5 teachers from the different institutions.</p> <p>For our students, participation in this course was an opportunity for international collaboration and an enrichment of their educational background; in addition to the specialised content, the course was aimed at developing linguistic, digital, intercultural and teamworking skills. The programme was structured with synchronous lessons and asynchronous activities in multi-professional groups; the teaching language was English.</p> <p>In view of the positive feedback received from the student body, as well as the renewed willingness for cooperation from the partner universities, the course will be offered again in the BIP (Blended Intensive Programme) format, whereby a week-long presence at DEASS is planned. In addition to the partners mentioned above, there is an interest in cooperation from teachers and students from other EU universities (Germany and Kosovo) and Japan. There is great enthusiasm for innovative teaching in the curricula, as there is also keen interest on the part of the student body. An interesting proposal of Internalisation at home.</p>

SUPSI at EAIE 2024: new global perspectives and strategic partnerships

Once again in 2024, the International team participated in the annual conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), held in Toulouse, France. The event, one of the most prominent in the world of higher education, brought together thousands of professionals from all over the world, offering a unique opportunity to explore new opportunities for collaboration and strengthen international ties.

During the conference, the team had the opportunity to meet several long-standing partners, but also to open up new possibilities for collaboration with Asian institutions. This enabled the office to further the dialogue with emerging academic institutions, expanding the range of mobility opportunities for our students and strengthening SUPSI's international positioning.

Another important milestone was the renewed cooperation with universities in the Netherlands and Northern Europe, consolidating long-standing relationships and paving the way for new joint projects, in line with our vision of an increasingly global and interdisciplinary education.

Participation at the EAIE 2024 was also an opportunity to visit the INSA in Toulouse, an institute of excellence in the field of engineering and applied sciences. This meeting allowed the International team to get to know their innovative methodologies at first hand and to evaluate possible future developments, thus helping to maintain SUPSI's high educational standards. Thanks to the meetings and exchanges held during the conference, SUPSI continues to expand its academic network, offering new opportunities to its students and strengthening its role in the global higher education landscape.



IRUAS conference in Lucerne: Students' wellbeing and mental health

The IRUAS 2024 conference, organised by the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU), provided an important opportunity to explore the topic of student wellbeing and mental health, issues that are increasingly relevant for academic institutions. Through expert talks, workshops and discussions, key topics such as support strategies, resources for faculty and administrative staff and best practices adopted by different universities were explored. A particularly significant aspect of the conference was the discussion with colleagues from Swiss and international institutions.

Networking opportunities made it possible to discuss experiences, common challenges and collaboration opportunities in the field of student welfare and mental health. Participation at the conference provided valuable insights to improve student support strategies at both the academic and administrative levels. The collected information will be useful to develop new initiatives within SUPSI, contributing to a more inclusive university environment and attentive to students' mental and physical wellbeing.



New guides and aids for international communication and hospitality

During 2024, the International Office took major steps forward in improving its communication tools, with the aim of making the experience of mobility guests, students and staff even easier and more accessible. For this reason, the office, with the invaluable contribution of the Institutional Communication Service, has developed new international guides and flyers, essential tools for helping those that come to SUPSI from elsewhere across the globe. Among the main new features are three key documents and guides, designed to respond effectively to the diverse needs of our international community.

Welcome guide for International Minds

This is the welcome guide dedicated to every incoming foreign visitor joining the SUPSI community. It provides essential support for incoming students and staff, offering practical information and bureaucratic details to help them settle in quickly. Over time, the content has been updated to ensure that it is always current, while the graphics have been completely revised to align with the new SUPSI visual guidelines. The result is a genuine handbook for life in Ticino, with a wide selection of information ranging from tourist advice to administrative procedures. Browsing through it, you will also find references to the various SUPSI services, which offer further support to the international minds that choose our institution.

Guidelines for hosting guests at SUPSI.

Given the steady increase in the number of incoming guests to SUPSI, it was decided to create a clear and structured guide to define who these guests are, who the contact persons are who support them, and how their stays are managed. This tool helps to better understand the dynamics of hosting guests, facilitating internal coordination and ensuring a smoother experience for all visiting guests who become part, even temporarily, of the SUPSI community.

Eye-catching social media

To make mobility more accessible and appealing, the office revamped its social media, aligning it with SUPSI's institutional visual identity. This redesign, combined with the sharing of first-hand testimonials from mobility students, has increased interest and participation: in 2024 the office recorded a significant growth in the number of interactive followers and a sharp increase in views of our posts.

EURAXESS flyer

SUPSI has been part of the EURAXESS network since 2017 and offers support to researchers and new international staff through the Welcome Centre, located within the International Office. In line with the new SUPSI graphics, the Welcome Center flyer, distributed by Human Resources to all new international staff, has also been updated.

Study in the south of Switzerland

The new leaflet is an informational tool designed to present SUPSI to potential international partners at trade fairs and academic events. Its six pages encapsulate the essence of our institution, illustrating its identity, values and commitment to internationalisation. The leaflet provides an overview of study and collaboration opportunities, highlighting how SUPSI opens up to the world through innovative programmes, strategic partnerships and a dynamic and inclusive academic environment.

Cited abbreviations

Accademia Teatro Dimitri

ATD

Blended Intensive Program

BIP

University of Music Conservatory
of Southern Switzerland

CSI SUM

Department of Business Economics,
Health and Social Care

DEASS

Department of Education and Learning /
University of Teacher Education

DFA/ASP

Department of Innovative Technologies

DTI

Fernfachhochschule Schweiz

FFHS

International Master Interior
Architecture Design

IMIAD

International Relations - Universities
of Applied Sciences and Arts

IRUAS

Penn State University

PSU

Swiss-European Mobility Programme

SEMP

University of Applied Sciences

UAS



The University of Applied
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