

# **The internationalization of universities in Milan and Lombardy**

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# Executive summary

Various elements highlight the degree of internationalization of Lombard universities: on one hand, the presence of students who come to Italy or undertake temporary training abroad through international mobility programs; on the other hand, the enrollments of students coming from abroad who choose a Lombard university to complete (or attend part of) their tertiary education courses. Finally, there is the international network of Lombard universities, well represented by the numerous and increasingly growing agreements that promote collaboration between European and non-European universities.

Regarding temporary international mobility programs, such as Erasmus, there is a return to pre-COVID levels. **The number of students from foreign universities** in the 13 Lombard universities for the academic year 2022-23 is **9,775**, an increase of +23.5% compared to 2021-22. **Lombard students who chose to participate in a temporary international mobility program abroad are 12,559**, with an increase of +17% over 2021-22. Overall, the pool of students involved in these programs amounts to 22,334 young people (+19.7%).

Mobility between universities is facilitated by the existence of international agreements between universities: the presence of students from abroad enriches the international mindset of the university, while the experience abroad of Italian

students enhances their transversal skills that are highly sought after in the job market. In the academic year 2022-23, there are **6,777 agreements between the 13 Lombard universities and universities worldwide** (+3% compared to 2021-22).

### **International Students**

The presence of international talents in Lombard universities is now a rooted and continuously growing phenomenon. Year after year, the participation of international students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered by Lombard universities increases, also thanks to an ever richer and more articulated educational offer in English. **In the academic year 2022-23, there are 20,917 international students enrolled**, of which 90% are in first-level, second-level, or single-cycle degree courses, and the remaining 10% in doctoral programs, master's degrees, and specialization schools. The growth compared to the academic year 2021-22 is +10.4%, and **the first estimates for enrollments in 2023-24 suggest that international students will exceed 22,000 enrollments** in Lombardy.

Compared to the total number of students enrolled in the 13 Lombard universities, **nearly 21,000 international young people represent 6.7% of the overall student body**. The incidence of enrollments from students coming from abroad increases year by year (it was 6.0% in 2021-22), although this aspect is affected by the lower influx of enrolled students (in 2022-23, enrollments in Lombardy decreased by -1.3%).

Among international students, there is a slight prevalence of women, with an incidence of 53.1%. In the case of postgraduate courses, however, enrollments are more evenly distributed by gender, with 49% women compared to 51% men. A significant portion of international students choose to enroll in a degree program in the STEM field: with **44.8% of STEM enrollments**, the incidence of international students in this disciplinary area is higher than the national average (28.9%). Young people choosing a degree **in the health field represent 10.8% among international students** (compared to 12.6% of national students). The presence of numerous hospital hubs and IRCCS particularly active in research and innovation is an attractive factor for health-related degree programs.

The strong focus on Design also represents a competitive factor that attracts students from all over the world: enrollments **in the Art field account for 4.4% among international young people**, a share significantly higher than that of domestic students. Young people who choose to pursue tertiary education at a Lombard university come from all over the world, but their origins are mainly concentrated in two continents: **Asia, with 43.3% of enrollments, followed by Europe, with 37.4% of international young people**. Students from the American

and African continents are present in smaller numbers, with shares of 10.2% and 8.8%, respectively.

In the top three nationalities, there are three Asian countries: **China** (12.5% of international enrollments), **Iran** (10.6%), and **India** (8.8%), which together represent just under a third of the young people coming from abroad.

The thirteenth edition of the survey on the internationalization of universities includes a focus on enrollments in **specialization schools in the health area**. Among the seven Lombard universities that have a specialization school in this field, **the total number of enrollments is 9,361 for the academic year 2022-23, of which 1.9% are international students**. Of the total international students in these specialty schools, 61% come from a European country; moreover, considering the qualifications held, 60.8% obtained their medical degree in Italy (necessary to access the specialization school), showing continuity in the educational path within the Lombard territory.

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