

WANT TO FEEL AT HOME WHILE STUDYING ABROAD? NEED SOME HELP WHILE STUDYING ABROAD? ASK PLATFORM3000.

In the year 2000, a group of Italians and Americans met in Florence, motivated by the volcanic Vincenzo Grasso, at that time PR manager of the disco Space Electronic, and decided to write a guide book to help foreign students discover the city, not in the role of tourists, but as native inhabitants.

This is fundamental, because a foreign student is not only a tourist, but also a temporary citizen. Even today, the majority of public and private businesses forget about this important niche, but after this guide book, things started to change...

Many ideas came from the guide, and from the ideas, was born the Group (Platform3000) which today is active in 27 countries and assists more than 70,000 American students to study abroad each year.

Interviewing the President of the Group, the American Dr. Gabriella Bakcsy, we ask her just what Platform3000 is.

"Platform3000 was born to respond in a professional manner to the daily needs of the students, of the Italian schools and of the American universities.

The first service offered was the rental of mobile phones, which in addition to offering competitive prices, based its strategy on the quality of service offered and unparalleled customer care.

In Italy, the importance of customer care in the USA has not been fully understood. We, however, are very aware of its role and have concentrated on this aspect from the very beginning.

American students are informed clients and the Student Service Administrators do everything possible every day to satisfy their requests.

For us, the work doesn't end with the acquisition of a client, but begins. For Platform3000 the real challenge is to keep the client, because we know all too well how important word of mouth is.

It is thanks to this continuous desire to offer premium quality customer care since 2003 that we are currently in the process of being granted the important recognition by the Better Business Bureau.

The student service coordinators have seen how the Platform3000 team is able to give real guarantees on the services offered and they have gradually asked us to come up with more solutions to problems study abroad students may face.

In 2004 we started the Document Assistance service which has helped thousands of American students speed up the process of obtaining the Permit of Stay, acting as mediator between the police headquarters and the students themselves.

In 2005 the Group took on one of its most ambitious challenges yet, Visa Assistance. The schools were alarmed since all the efforts to enroll a student were practically nullified when faced with the endless costs and paperwork a student had to face in order to come to Italy. Today Platform3000 is accredited in many of the North American Italian Consulates and successfully handles the paperwork for the issuance of Visas.

This is an invaluable help for both schools and their students if one considers that a student from Hawaii who enrolls in John Cabot University would have to spend approximately \$1,000 in airfare and postage, along with losing as many as three days, all to obtain a Visa.

Today, one simply needs to consult our website, compile the correct forms, and he will receive his Visa at home.

From its origins to the present, Platform3000 has grown and now boasts offices in New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Barcelona, Tokyo, Florence, and soon, Lisbon. Platform3000 handles many types of services offered to students: we speed up the process of application for the Permit of Stay; we assist in finding housing in apartments for the students; we supply telephone contracts customized to their needs, all in order to give them the sensation of receiving the same quality of services they would receive at home.

Today, the Group offers its services to more than 300 North American universities and more than 600 schools scattered around the world on four continents."



www.platform3000.com

The 59th Annual NAFSA Conference & The EDUITALIA Pavilion

The 59th Annual NAFSA Conference [NAFSA: Association of International Educators is a member organization promoting international education and providing professional development opportunities to the field, www.nafsa.org] and Expo has just concluded in Minneapolis, MN.

For EDUITALIA it has been the right international exposure, after its very first public presentation at the AIEA Gala organized in the Italian Embassy in Washington DC on February 19th, 2007.



During these past 5 days at the NAFSA Conference, Italy has been represented in one of the world's most important study abroad conference. Eduitalia sponsored a dedicated pavilion to study abroad in Italy. Its' members: many Italian language schools, private Italian universities and American universities with study abroad programs in Italy participated with their own booths within the Eduitalia



pavilion.

During the expo 15,000 copies of the Eduitalia guide book [special NAFSA2007 Edition] have been distributed to the more than 7,000 international visitors. With the Eduitalia guide book, visitors were able to find what they were searching for: a list of institutions from which students can choose their destination for a study abroad cultural experience. The guide includes many Italian language schools, private and public Italian universities and American

universities with study abroad programs in Italy. In addition, a list of program provider agencies is also included. With such great interest in the NAFSA event, even LEONARDO WORLD, an Italian satellite TV program, visited the conference. They filmed the EDUITALIA Pavilion and interviewed the expositors and members of the organization participating at the conference, including the opening plenary addressed by General Colin L. Powell

Italy welcomes foreign students with less bureaucracy and less headaches

Obtaining an Italian Visa from the Italian Consulate today has become much easier for students and universities alike.

On April 24, 2007 the Italian Government enacted a law which simplifies the previously complicated and tedious process of obtaining a student Visa for foreigners interested in studying in Italy. In doing so, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has acknowledged that foreign students are a great cultural and commercial resource which drives business and tourism throughout the entire country, and as a result, they should be offered an easier way to enter Italy for study purposes.

Simplified procedures were launched as a result of a comparative study which revealed the increasingly divergent bureaucratic procedures which were carried out by Italian Consulates in North America when granting foreign students Visas to study in Italy. At the time of the study, the Consulates had been using very divergent practices and procedures when processing Study Visa applications. More importantly, there was no continuity or universal standard adopted by the various Consulates, and the Visa law was being interpreted and applied in different ways according to the discretion of each individual office.

During a conference which took place in Rome in October 2006, entitled the "Italian in Italy Conference", the results of the comparative study were discussed. As a result of the serious bureaucratic discrepancy in carrying out such procedures, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was compelled to send out an official memo to all Italian Consulates in North America reaffirming the Italian Visa law and the standard procedures which must

be adhered to when foreign students apply for Study Visas. In the memo, Consulates were encouraged to speed up the Visa application process for North American students by reducing all unnecessary red tape and by making increased use of accredited agencies in the preparation of Visa applications.

The process for obtaining an Italian Study Permit (Permesso di Soggiorno) has been simplified in yet another way. Up until now, every foreigner studying in Italy was obliged by law to apply for a Permesso di Soggiorno at the local Questura within eight days of entry. Thanks to the new procedures students do not have to wait in long lines at the Questura anymore: they can now go to post offices and other accredited agencies in the Italian city of their Study Abroad program to obtain their Study Permit.

Several months later, the situation has greatly improved thanks to the introduction of a more simplified Visa application process. Also with the help of the many accredited agencies that guide universities and foreign students through the Visa application process in Italian Consulates abroad, North American students can now apply for their Visa online at www.platform3000.com, where they will be assisted throughout the entire application process.

If you have any questions or problems with your Visa or Permesso di Soggiorno contact EDUITALIA at info@eduitalia.org