

Education and research

Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)

From the beginning, education was presented as a central pillar. The first reports of March 2022 spoke of grants for some 500 students.¹ In March 2026 the city and Tether reported that university courses on blockchain technology and decentralized finance had been developed with universities in the region and with international partners, among them the Politecnico di Torino and National Taiwan University.² The memorandum of 2026 adds "digital literacy" formats with names such as the "Lugano Digital Survival Kit", a "Platform Literacy Guide" and a "Digital Pact" and commits the parties to respect the autonomy of academic institutions in any research cooperation.³

The research environment in which these programmes operate, the Università della Svizzera italiana with its Faculty of Economics and its Institute of Finance, the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), the Dalle Molle Institute for Artificial Intelligence and the Swiss National Supercomputing Centre, is described in Chapter I.III. Plan B has added events, courses and some scholarships to that environment without creating a research institution of its own. The foundation's own presentation mentions that Lugano hosts three universities and refers to IDSIA and CSCS, but it names no formal cooperation agreement with USI or SUPSI, so that the extent of their institutional involvement cannot be established from the programme materials.⁴

1 PoW.space and the statue of Satoshi Nakamoto

In November 2024 a physical hub for the programme opened in the centre of Lugano. PoW.space, whose name alludes to the proof-of-work consensus mechanism of bitcoin, occupies a renovated historic building in the Contrada di Sassello and offers coworking space for companies and start-ups active in Bitcoin and peer-to-peer technologies.⁵ According to the

city and Tether, more than 100 fintech and blockchain companies had settled in Lugano by March 2026.⁶ The figure is not broken down by size, licence or number of employees, and it is not clear how many of these companies have substantial operations in the city and how many are small entities or branches. A register-based count would be needed to assess the real economic weight.

The most photographed symbol of the programme is a statue of Satoshi Nakamoto, the pseudonymous author of the bitcoin white paper of 2008. The work of the artist Valentina Picozzi was unveiled in October 2024 in the Parco Ciani near the mouth of the Cassarate river.⁷ It is conceived as the first of 21 installations around the world dedicated to the values of bitcoin, and further statues by the same artist stand in El Zonte in El Salvador and in Tokyo.⁸ In the early hours of 2 August 2025 a group of young people removed the statue from its pedestal and threw it into the lake. Divers of the Lugano section of the Swiss Lifesaving Society recovered it the following morning, broken into several pieces. The police commander confirmed that the act had been recorded by surveillance cameras.⁹ A petition asked the city to support the restoration and to find a safer location. The statue was repaired with the Japanese *kintsugi* technique, which joins broken pieces with visible gold seams, and was reinstalled on 24 October 2025. On 19 April 2026 it was found badly damaged for a second time. Denis Roio commented that defacing works of art impoverishes the city and that ideas are debated while vandalism harms everyone.¹⁰

In figures. Plan B after four years, as reported by its promoters: - Launch: 3 March 2022; renewal of the memorandum: 3 March 2026, for four years.¹¹ - Merchants enabled to accept LVGA, bitcoin and USDT: more than 400 (March 2026).¹² - Users of the MyLugano loyalty circuit: more than 30,000 (November 2023).¹³ - Fintech and blockchain companies established in Lugano: more than 100 (March 2026).¹⁴ - Digital bonds issued during Phase I: five.¹⁵ - Participants at the Plan B Forum 2025: about 4,000 from sixty countries.¹⁶ - Tether's contribution to Phase II: CHF 5 million, mainly in kind, over 2026–2030.¹⁷ - Payment conditions for city invoices: 1 per cent fee, T+1, no general maximum, contact required above CHF 1.5 million.¹⁸

2 Notes

1. Allen, "Death, taxes and crypto" (above). ↩
2. laRegione, "Lugano, il Plan B entra nella seconda fase" (above); "Lugano's Plan B", Tio.ch (above). ↩
3. Memorandum of Understanding ... Phase II (above). ↩

4. Plan B Foundation, "Chi siamo" (above) (Lugano "hosts three universities"; references to IDSIA and CSCS; no cooperation with USI or SUPSI mentioned). ↩
5. "Lugano's Plan B ", sponsored content, Tio.ch, 6 March 2026 (above).
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6. Ibid.; laRegione, "Lugano, il Plan B entra nella seconda fase" (above) (about 100 start-ups). ↩
7. "La statua di Satoshi Nakamoto ripescata dal lago", RSI, August 2025, <https://www.rsi.ch/info/ticino-grigioni-e-insubria/La-statua-di-Satoshi-Nakamoto-riescata-dal-lago--3016806.html>. ↩
8. RSI, "Vandalizzata ancora la statua di Nakamoto" (above) (first of 21 installations); "Bitcoin, a Lugano recuperata in fondo al lago la statua di Satoshi Nakamoto", Milano Finanza, 4 August 2025, <https://www.milanofinanza.it/news/bitcoin-a-lugano-recuperata-in-fondo-al-lago-la-statua-di-satoshi-nakamoto-202508040934256192> (El Zonte and Tokyo). ↩
9. RSI, "La statua di Satoshi Nakamoto ripescata dal lago" (above) (statement of police commander Roberto Torrente). ↩
10. RSI, "Vandalizzata ancora la statua di Nakamoto" (above); on the petition, Milano Finanza (above). ↩
11. Plan B Foundation, "Chi siamo" (above). ↩
12. laRegione, "Lugano, il Plan B entra nella seconda fase" (above). ↩
13. laRegione, "L'app Mylugano si rinnova" (above). ↩
14. "Lugano's Plan B ", Tio.ch (above). ↩
15. Ibid. ↩
16. Ibid. ↩
17. Memorandum of Understanding ... Phase II (above). ↩
18. City of Lugano, "Pay with crypto" (above). ↩

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