

Uzbekistan and Italy broaden horizons of educational cooperation



Tashkent, Uzbekistan (UzDaily.com) — On 29 May, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held talks in Samarkand with Prime Minister of the Italian Republic Giorgia Meloni during her official visit to Uzbekistan.

The meeting marked a new chapter in the development of Uzbek-Italian relations, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening multifaceted ties. In addition to political and economic discussions, the two sides paid special attention to deepening cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian spheres.

A particular emphasis was placed on expanding educational collaboration. The two leaders endorsed plans to open a branch of the University of Tuscia in Uzbekistan and to launch dual-degree programs in partnership with top Italian universities — the University of Pisa, the University of Trento, Roma Tre University, and Ca' Foscari University.

The selection of these institutions aligns closely with Uzbekistan's national priorities.

For example, the University of Pisa offers access to cutting-edge engineering practices, essential for the country's industrial modernization. The University of Trento's focus on innovation is directly aligned with the objectives of the "Digital Uzbekistan 2030" agenda. Roma Tre, founded with the concept of "a young university for the youth," is especially relevant for Uzbekistan — a country with a median age of just 27.

In addition to their rich academic heritage and global recognition, these Italian institutions offer another significant advantage: consistent rankings among the world's top universities. This ensures the quality and global relevance of their academic programs. More importantly, their unique areas of specialization complement Uzbekistan's education system, laying a solid foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation

and the practical transfer of knowledge.

The success of this partnership is already evident. Prestigious Italian institutions such as the Turin Polytechnic University (operating in Uzbekistan since 2009), the University of Pisa (since 2022), and the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli (since 2024) have established branches in the country.

A major milestone in bilateral educational relations was the first-ever Uzbekistan-Italy Rectors' Forum held in 2024, which brought together representatives from 68 universities — 45 from Uzbekistan and 23 from Italy. The scale of participation underscored a strong mutual interest in enhancing academic cooperation.

This productive dialogue continued during a rectors' roundtable in Samarkand in April, where specific initiatives to expand partnerships were agreed upon.

Equally important is the development of human capital — a top priority for Uzbekistan amid rapid demographic growth. In this context, one of the key outcomes of the visit was the signing of the first bilateral agreement between Uzbekistan and Italy on labor migration and mobility.

This agreement is aimed at establishing a structured framework for cooperation that safeguards the rights of labor migrants and creates legal channels for employment. It represents a strategic step that not only opens new opportunities for humanitarian and labor exchange but also contributes to building sustainable mobility mechanisms and improving the population's well-being.

Cultural exchange also featured prominently in the talks. The two sides agreed to hold Italian Culture Days in Uzbekistan — a natural continuation of agreements signed in 2023, including memorandums between Uzbekistan's Agency for Cultural Heritage and the Italian Trade Agency on restoration, between the Foundation for the Development of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan and Italy's Ministry of Culture, and an intergovernmental agreement on cultural exchange through 2026.

Uzbek-Italian cultural diplomacy has already been brought to life through a number of high-profile events in 2024. These include the exhibition "Uzbekistan: Avant-Garde in the Desert" held in Florence and at Ca' Foscari University in Venice; the "Days of Culture of Uzbekistan and Its Friends" festival hosted in Alexander Museum Palace and Monte Porzio in May; and performances featuring artists from the Alisher Navoi State Academic Bolshoi Theatre in Rome, Milan, and Viareggio in December.

Italy's traditional participation in the international music festival Sharq Taronalari in Samarkand also highlights the sustained nature of the cultural dialogue between the two countries.

In the realm of cinema, special mention should be made of the success of the Uzbek film "Tahir and Zuhra" at the Asiatica Film Festival in Rome in 2018, where it received a special diploma for its contribution to world cinema. Since 2021, Uzbekistan's pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Art and Architecture has captured the interest of the Italian public.

The latest pavilion, titled "Radiance as Matter," is curated by Italian architect Giacomo Cantoni.

Overall, Prime Minister Meloni's visit clearly demonstrated the mutual interest of Uzbekistan and Italy in deepening their multifaceted cultural and humanitarian cooperation. The agreements reached in science, education, culture, and labor mobility signify a transition to a qualitatively new level of bilateral relations.

This comprehensive approach not only lays the groundwork for long-term partnership but also opens the door to new joint initiatives.

Kamila Sobirova

Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the
Republic of Uzbekistan