



UNIVERSITÉ
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PRESS RELEASE

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Geneva partners with China for sustainable development

The University of Geneva (UNIGE) has developed a partnership with Tsinghua University in Beijing, the best university in China, aimed at offering innovative teaching programs in the sustainable development field. Students will train in Beijing and Shenzhen, close to the industries of the Chinese Silicon Valley, and also in the heart of international Geneva. Through a practical approach, students will work on solutions to specific problems raised by the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This Sino-Swiss partnership includes various programs, notably an innovative Master that will train future generations on SDG implementation as of September 2017. By sustainable development, the United Nations mean the tackling not only of environmental, but also economic, social and health challenges.

The objective is to learn how to work in multidisciplinary teams on the resolution of practical problems faced by Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), States and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). «This project aims to trigger an effort at different levels – local, regional and international – to reach the sustainable development objectives set by the United Nations», explains François Grey, Professor at UNIGE Computer science center and Head of the project in Geneva. «This collaboration with the best Chinese technological university, which also trains many national decision-makers, provides a unique opportunity to develop practical solutions to achieve the SDGs». According to Professor Lan Xue, Dean of the Tsinghua University School of Public Policy and Management, «this partnership will enable Chinese students to take advantage of the close collaborations established between UNIGE and IGOs, in order to better grasp the challenges of sustainable development on a worldwide scale. In return, Swiss students will work on practical projects involving the most high-tech industries and major social transformations in China.»

A productive Summer School

Last July and August, a first joint summer school, the ODD Summer School 2016, was organized by the Citizen Cyberlab – a joint project of UNIGE, CERN and UNITAR – and the Tsinghua University Lifelong Learning Lab (TULLL) in order to encourage the entrepreneurial creativity of Chinese, Swiss and other European students' teams. The 40 participants met with IGO representatives in Geneva, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who asked them to provide solutions to practical issues. After a few weeks in Geneva working in multidisciplinary teams, the students travelled to Beijing and Shenzhen to pursue their



A team of students at the Shenzhen Open Innovation Lab during the ODD Summer School 2016. In front of them, an atomic microscope built with 3D printers and components found in the huge Shenzhen electronic market. The microscope they developed is affordable for a Chinese school and can be used to study polluting nanometric particles, thereby raising awareness of Chinese younger generations about sustainable development issues.

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ideas with the support of the dynamic Chinese production infrastructure. One team notably developed a mobile app to gather information on the interactions between humans and animals in South Asian marketplaces. This crowdsourcing method, also called citizen science, will enable researchers at WHO and UNIGE Global Health Institute to run simulations of the transmission of diseases from animals to humans, such as avian flu.

SDGs from every angle

The most promising projects developed by Master's students or Summer School participants will be supported by an 'accelerator' program that will facilitate the creation of start-ups. A continued education program will also be set up to provide all the tools necessary for the implementation of sustainable development policies in a city, a region, a company or an organisation.

Prestigious research scholarships will be awarded every year in order to encourage scientific mobility between China and Switzerland.

Finally, various events will be organised, such as hackathons or a biennial conference, the 'Geneva Trialogue on Knowledge and the SDGs', that aims at encouraging interactions between the academic world, the IOs and the industries around SDGs. The first triologue will take place on 15th November at Campus Biotech, in the presence of the Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Michael Møller.

UNIGE is very active in the sustainable development field and this partnership with Tsinghua University completes a whole series of projects launched by the alma mater. For more information on UNIGE's commitment to sustainable development, please visit www.unige.ch/durable.

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