



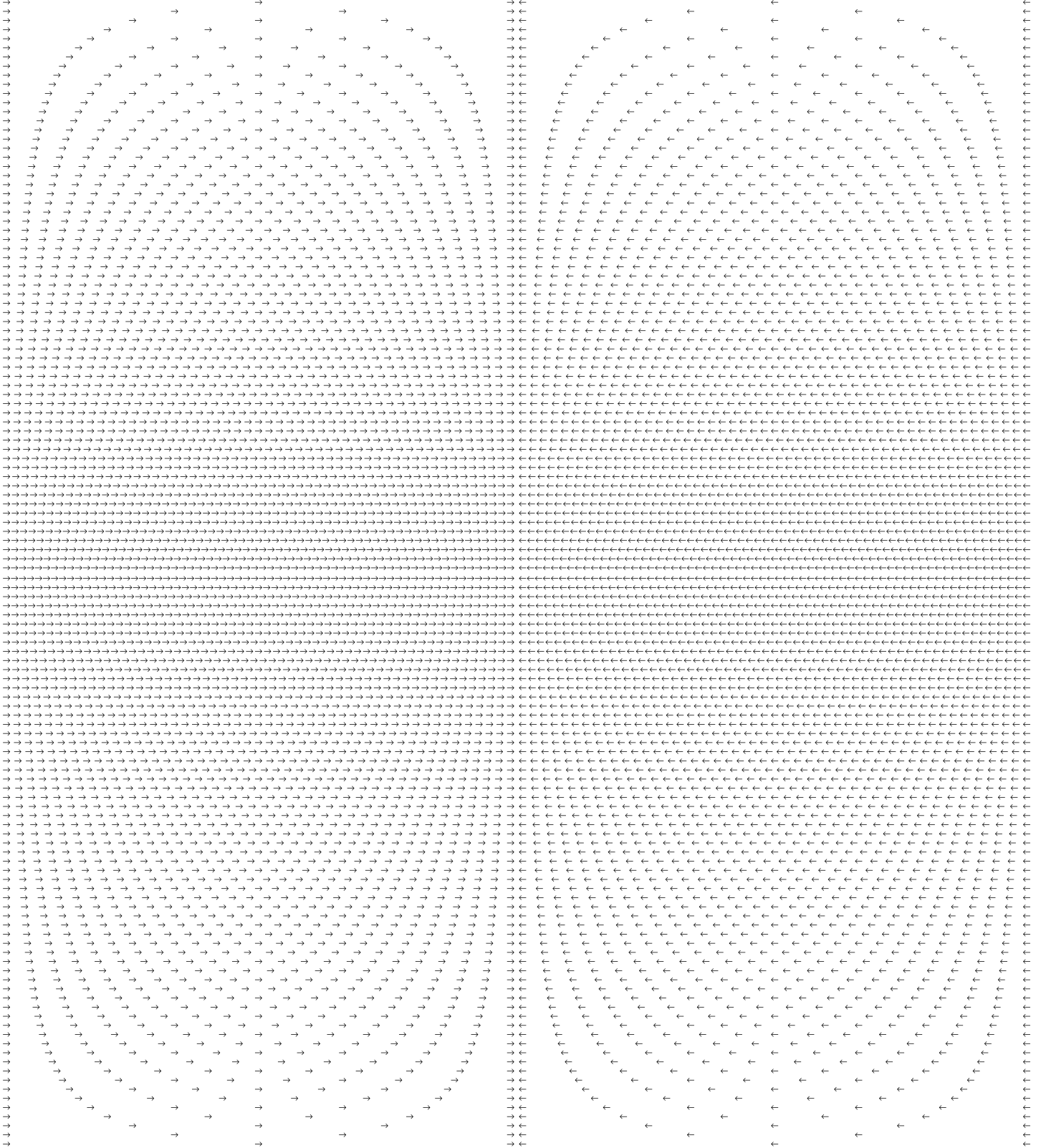
Department of Education
and Vocational Training

Board of Higher
Education

INTERNATIONAL

2025

RELATIONS



INNOVATION

&

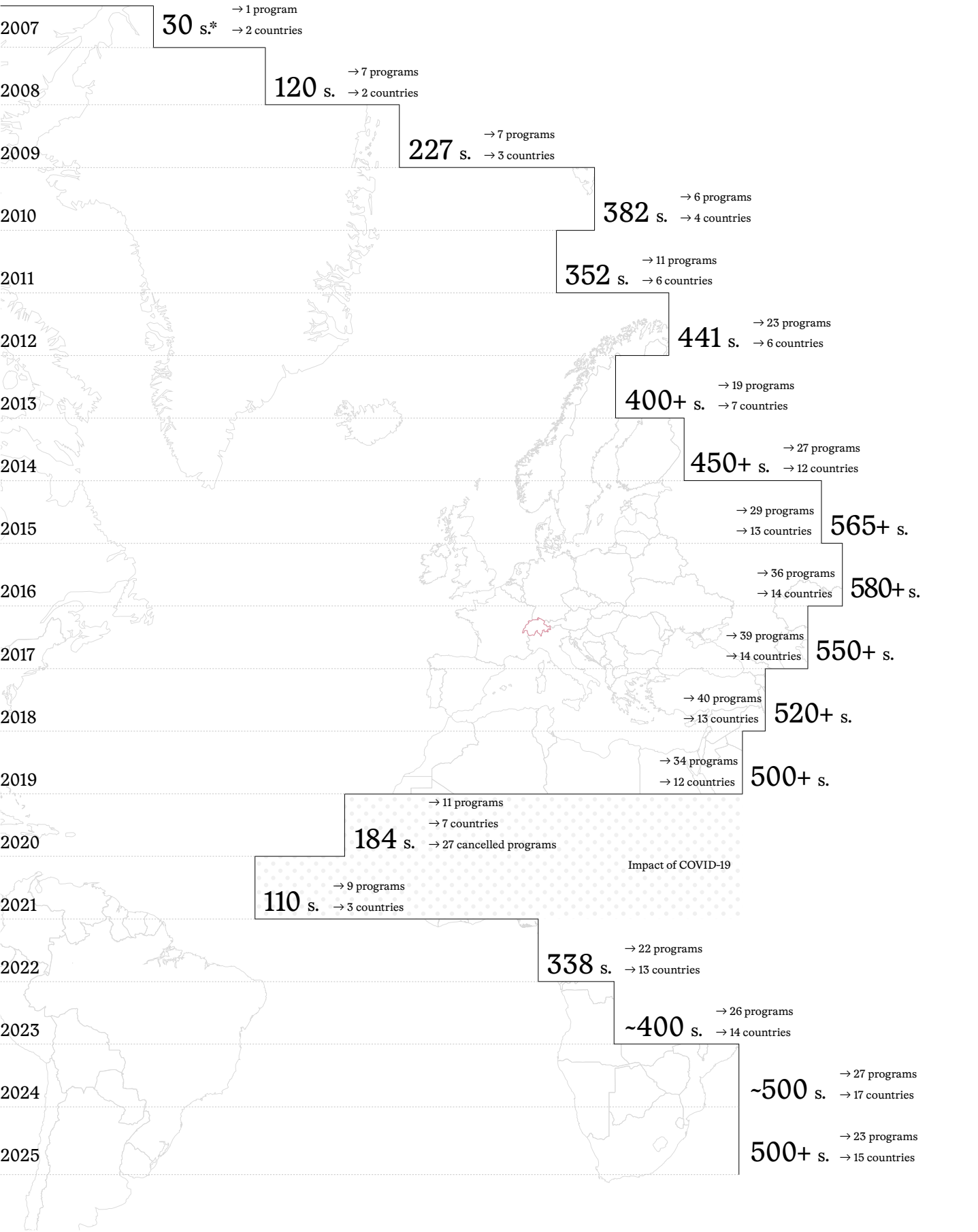
FORESIGHT

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Evolution of the Vaud Board of Higher Education (DGES)'s international mobility programs for students 2007 – 2025

*students



International Vaud outreach and student mobility programs around the world

2025 locations worldwide

→ 2025 mobility program locations
→ Swissnex locations





Vaud institutions of higher education

Unil.

EPFL

IMD

hep/ haute
école
pédagogique
vaud



SFUVET

SWISS FEDERAL UNIVERSITY
FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING

*Swiss excellence in vocational
education and training*

éc a l

**HE^{VD}
IG**

HESAV
Haute École
de Santé – Vaud

HEMU
HAUTE ÉCOLE DE MUSIQUE
VAUD VALAIS FRIBOURG

**HE
TSL**

EL+
La Source.
Institut et Haute
Ecole de la Santé

✂ changins

EHL

MANUFACTURE

Hes·SO



Kalaidos
Haute Ecole Spécialisée
Suisse

La Haute école en emploi.



GLION

Perspectives, connections & skills

Jérémie Leuthold, Director General of Higher Education, State of Vaud



Jérémie Leuthold,
Director General of Higher Education, State of Vaud
© Vincent Bailly

How can we prepare our young people for a world that's evolving fast and profoundly? As educators and policymakers, finding ways to answer this question is our chief responsibility.

At the Board of Higher Education (DGES), our Division of International Relations, Innovation and Foresight supports Vaud's students, researchers and academics in developing the perspectives, connections and skills to succeed and grow. We do this by building strong ties beyond our borders, fostering a culture of innovation and, increasingly, applying foresight to shape our direction.

As our world continues to evolve through technological, social and environmental change, we have a unique opportunity to prepare the next generation to embrace what lies ahead. By helping them develop innovative mindsets, adaptability and curiosity, alongside strong professional foundations, we give them the tools and confidence to thrive – and we invest in our State's future-readiness.

In this report, you will find stories that illustrate how we help build those capacities. International partnerships and mobility programs broaden horizons and intercultural understanding, and create lasting research collaborations. Innovation initiatives support new ventures and help young people develop creativity, ingenuity and interdisciplinary skills. And foresight helps ensure all of this is pointed toward what matters most: keeping Vaud's higher education ecosystem resilient and ready for what lies ahead.

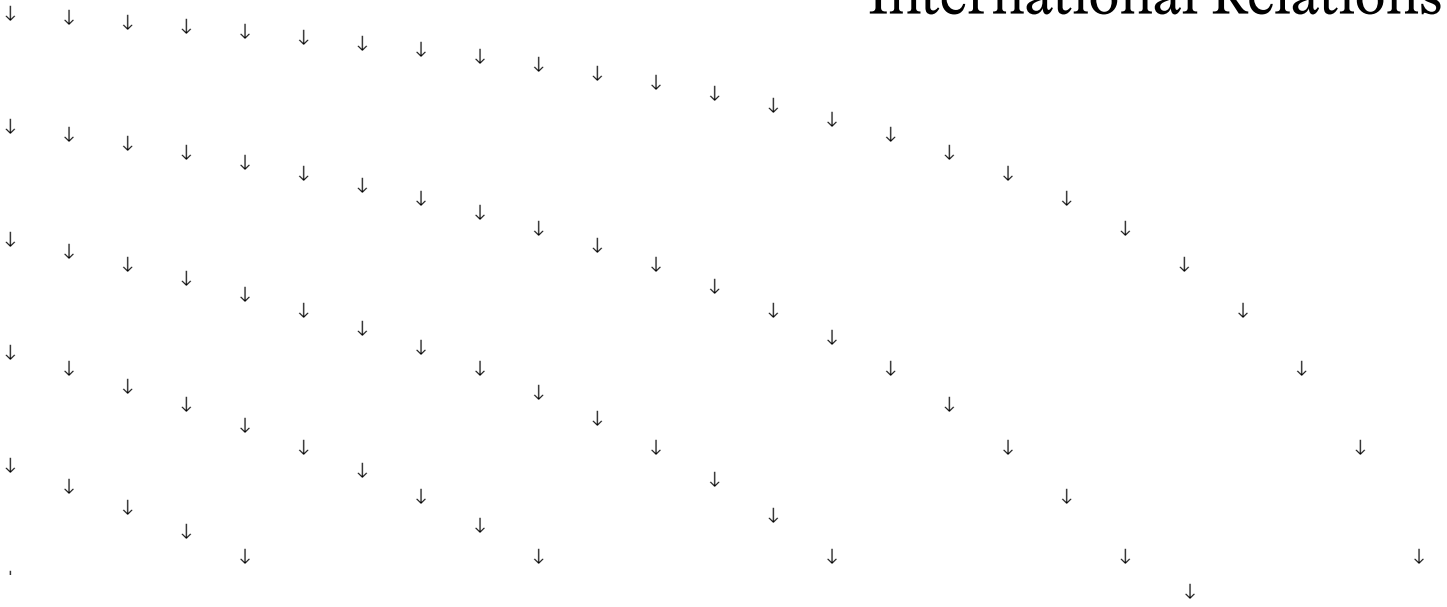
Exploratory visits to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in 2025 helped reveal the potential for new international relations in the region. Sub-Saharan Africa is growing in global influence – it is young, dynamic, and home to bold approaches to education and technology. Building partnerships there today exemplifies the forward-looking approach that shapes our work.

We are fortunate to have excellent partners in all our endeavours – our universities, academic collaborators, Swissnex, Movetia, Swiss embassies and consulates worldwide, as well as F.I.T., Innovaud and other local innovation actors. I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to all.

And to the State's youth: we are here for you as you build the skills and outlook to meet what comes next. Our mission is to walk alongside you – opening doors, encouraging your innovative spirit and helping you look ahead with clarity. We're proud to be a part of your journey.

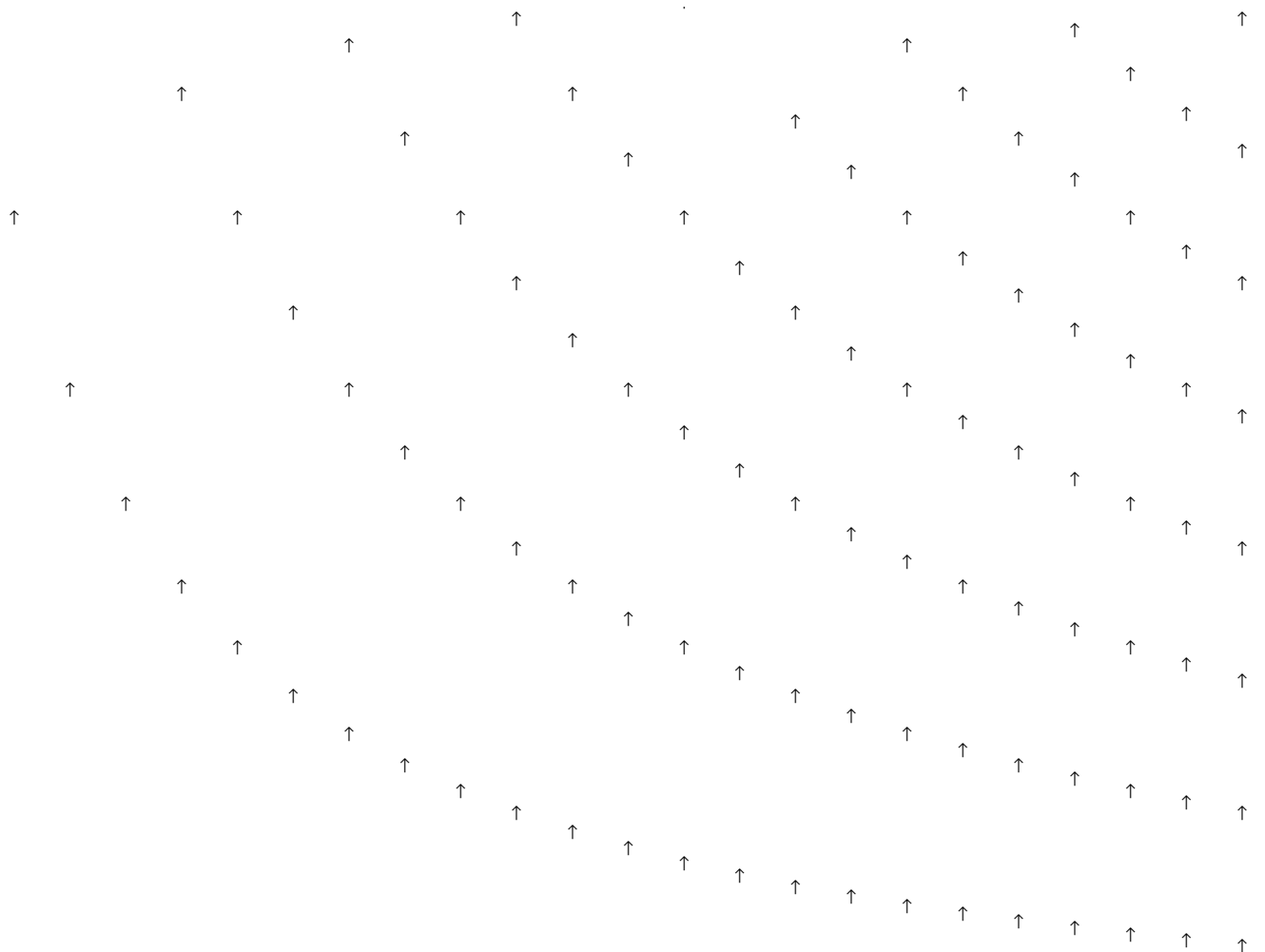
Jérémie Leuthold,
Director General of Higher Education, State of Vaud

International Relations

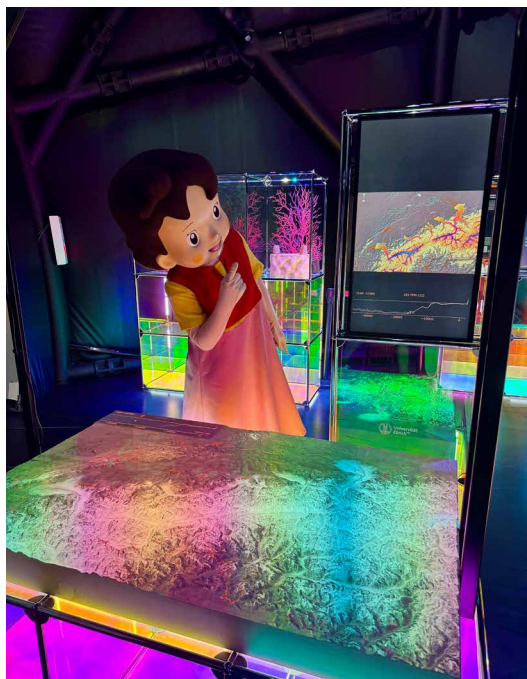


Simple exchanges can break walls down between us, for when people come together and speak to one another and share a common experience, then their common humanity is revealed.

– Barack Obama



Vaud innovation on the world stage: Expo 2025 Osaka



Switzerland had a high-profile presence at *Expo 2025* in Osaka, Japan, positioning itself as an innovative and reliable partner addressing global challenges through science, sustainability and collaboration, in line with the Expo theme, *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*. Within this national framework, the Canton of Vaud – supported by the active involvement of the DGES – made a significant and visible contribution.

“The Swiss Pavilion presented Switzerland’s strength in innovation through three thematic chapters aligned with the Expo theme: *Augmented Human, Life, and Planet*,” explains Minami Kotani, Head of Academic Relations at Swissnex in Japan and the Consulate of Switzerland in Osaka.

“One of the Vaud projects that stood out for me was *IceAgeCam*, developed by Unil and featured in the *Planet* chapter. With a 3D map, it visualized the evolution of snow, gases and so forth – the actual effect of climate change over time. I think it was very accessible and appropriate for the Swiss Pavilion, which attracted a wide audience, from small children to older visitors.”

Vaud’s academic and research ecosystem was further represented through projects led by ECAL, HEMU, Unil, CHUV and EPFL, among others. These included *Neur-Xplorer*, developed by the Centre for Psychiatric Neuroscience at CHUV-Unil; *Medicine of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, coordinated by the *Institut des Humanités en Médecine* at CHUV-Unil; and *Connected Human*, involving 16 EPFL laboratories and startups working at the intersection of robotics, neurotechnology and bioelectronics.

Two Vaud-based EPFL spinoffs, *Nagi Bioscience* and *SmartHelio*, were also featured at *Swiss-Japan Energy Days*, a two-day conference bringing together experts, researchers, startups, and policymakers from both countries to explore innovations in energy transition, decarbonization, and climate resilience.

Art and science came together at “*Folklore Fusion*”, a pre-Expo exhibition created by ECAL students using computer-generated imagery (CGI) and other interactive technologies to bring *Swijūs* characters – representing a blend of Swiss alpine myths with Japanese folklore – to life. In another cultural event, two HEMU students were selected to perform with an international European a cappella choir at Expo’s National Day Hall.*

“Being in Osaka meant we could stay closely connected to Japanese partners and help strengthen Switzerland’s presence at Expo,” says Kotani. She notes that while Expo was a special moment, it was simply part of their ongoing mission to build lasting bridges between Switzerland and Japan. Earlier in 2025, for instance, Swissnex helped connect HESAV’s physiotherapy department with Kansai Medical University. “Our collaboration with Vaud universities and the DGES is essential in supporting Vaud’s ongoing role in scientific, educational and innovation diplomacy in Japan.” •



Top: Heidi discovers the IceAgeCam, developed at Unil.
Above: A model of the Swiss Pavilion at Expo 2025.
Right: A view of the Swiss Pavilion’s Sphere 3, where innovations from Swiss universities are exhibited.

© FDFA, Presence Switzerland



*Read page 22 for more on HEMU’s participation in “Designing Voices for our Lives” at Expo.

Global partnerships, shared futures

A conversation with Denis Dafflon, Director of the University of Lausanne's International Relations Office



Denis Dafflon
Director of the University of Lausanne's International Relations Office

What is the role and vision of the International Relations Office at the University of Lausanne (Unil)?

Our core mission is to internationalize Unil – to open doors for students, researchers and staff through partnerships, mobility, joint programs and collaborative projects. We are not the only actors in Unil's internationalization, but we play a key coordinating role by developing and maintaining the frameworks that make it possible – including more than 600 agreements with almost 400 partner universities worldwide. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance the quality of research and teaching and the student experience by exposing our community to international perspectives.

What international partnerships and mobility activities were notable in 2025?

In 2025, we hosted nine international “summer university” programs in Lausanne, welcoming around 150 students from across the globe. In other programs, European cooperation was particularly prominent. Unil is the only Swiss university among 11 partners in CIVIS, our European University Alliance, developing joint teaching initiatives, new mobility formats and shared degrees. Within this context, 63 Unil students participated in Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) – courses that combine online learning and onsite work at European partner universities. We also launched the TRACEE (Transdisciplinary Studies of Climate, Environment and Energy) master's program through CIVIS, enabling students to study at three institutions and earn multiple degrees.

Unil was also active in other important international networks. At Venice International University (VIU), partner institutions send professors and students for a semester at a shared campus offering a focused setting for international and interdisciplinary exchange. The Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), which supports research collaboration and provides seed funding for early-career researchers, should also be noted. Together, these networks complement mobility and degree programs by fostering innovation, academic exchange, and long-term collaboration.

Are certain regions priorities for Unil's international engagement?

Student mobility is largely driven by student preferences. Around two-thirds of our outgoing students go to Europe, often as a first international experience. Outside Europe, Canada is by far the most popular destination, followed by Australia, Japan and South Korea.

At the institutional level, Unil does not work with strict geographic priorities. The objective is to remain globally engaged, while also supporting emerging dimensions such as CIVIS partnerships with associate universities in Africa.

What are some of the challenges in building sustainable international programs – and how do you approach them?

You cannot simply decide to launch a program and start sending students. Aligning academic content, regulations, calendars and fees across multiple universities takes months – sometimes years. International networks are key to making it possible to do that at scale.

We learned through the TRACEE experience that sustained preparatory work by all the partners was crucial. The success of TRACEE is now



Above: Students at the European Summer School of Criminology, organized by the Unil International Relations Office.

Below: A delegation from Thailand to Unil.
© Fabrice Ducrest

paving the way for future master's programs in Artificial Intelligence and in Public Health. Unil is leading discussions on these within CIVIS. Long-term groundwork is also central to Switzerland's reintegration into Erasmus – planned for 2027 – and Unil has actively begun this work.

What specific needs do international initiatives fulfil?

Many of today's challenges – in health, climate, artificial intelligence – don't stop at borders. Beyond the CIVIS initiatives mentioned, another example is a blended program exploring various aspects of sustainable, healthy food systems, created in partnership with the University of Padua and the University of Sydney. Ten of our students went to Sydney in 2025 and our turn to host is in 2026. The students learn transversal skills, how to collaborate as an international team, how to communicate – all while attacking this common challenge.

International initiatives also help advance global knowledge itself by bringing together leading researchers and educators around complex questions. This creates the conditions for new ideas to emerge at the intersection of disciplines and perspectives, accelerating innovation and strengthening the relevance of academic work for society.

Related to this, international collaboration multiplies research funding. An analysis we conducted in 2025 showed that seed funding of about CHF 110,000 – 150,000 invested across a regional network of five universities generated CHF 2.4 million in follow-on grants from sources including the SNSF and the French ANR. This may be further boosted by as much as CHF 7.1 million pending through other sources including Horizon Europe.

How does Unil's international engagement benefit the Canton of Vaud?

Unil is part of a vibrant regional ecosystem alongside EPFL, CHUV and other institutions. International engagement helps solidify Switzerland's reputation as an innovation leader globally. It also helps bring top minds to our Canton as faculty, researchers or students – around 50% of Unil's PhD candidates are international. More generally, student mobility, international conferences and research collaborations bring thousands of visitors to the region each year, benefiting the local economy and strengthening Vaud's visibility. When Unil excels internationally, it enhances the scientific, economic and societal attractiveness of the Canton of Vaud as a whole. •



Into Africa: building partnerships where history meets the future

Strategic vision has always set the DGES's international affairs apart when it comes to value-added programs in education and innovation. Under the guiding hand of Christine Gaulis, who took the helm of International Affairs, Innovation and Foresight in 2023, the DGES has begun to investigate meaningful academic relationships on the African continent.



Top: Christine Gaulis, Vaud Head of International Affairs, Innovation and Foresight, pictured with officials from the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS), Ho, Ghana.

Above: Gaulis with officials from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana.

Right: Gaulis pictured in Ghana with the HEMU Jazz Orchestra – the exploratory visit to Ghana was organized in tandem with a student mobility program. Read [page 34](#) to learn more about the students' experience.

"Africa is a collage of diverse nations, histories, languages, cultures, and development models," says Gaulis, who launched initial exploratory trips to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in 2025. "By 2050, close to half of all babies born globally are projected to be born in Sub-Saharan Africa. Building relationships now is an investment in future collaboration and better understanding of a region that's becoming increasingly connected to global conversations."

Gaulis explains that with a population skewed towards the young – median age is between 19 and 22, depending on the country – many African countries are especially nimble in adapting to new needs and technologies. "Curricula focus on the latest trends – in AI for example, Africa has leapfrogged legacy Western frameworks by building curricula directly around African datasets and real-world use-cases. Digital and physical infrastructures as well as vibrant innovation ecosystems are growing. From a foresight angle, these longer-term shifts are meaningful signals of an exciting trajectory."

Ghana: A gateway to intercontinental collaboration

The first exploratory visit took place in Ghana. "The country met my first criterion, which is that security is good – there is strong social trust," says Gaulis. "The second criterion – to find a strong educational ecosystem, where we can learn from each other – was also clearly present in Ghana. Even in remote villages, you'll find strong commitment to learning and to English proficiency. Universities are preparing to accommodate the wave of youth coming of age, not just by expanding in size, but in campus design, curricula, and research priorities."



© Ernest Reagan Ayikpah



STEM – science, technology, engineering, math – are fields that immediately stand out for potential collaboration with Ghana. While observing strong technological hubs in Accra and Kumasi, the delegation met faculty deeply committed to quality, innovation and international engagement at the *University of Ghana*, the *Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)*, the *University of Cape Coast (UCC)*, *Ashesi University* and the *University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS)*. “Alongside essential support from embassies, our cross-cultural collaborations are built on university-to-university contact,” says Gaulis. “So it is important for our faculty and theirs to have common interests and synergies.”

Emphasizing the value of encountering different approaches to common challenges, Gaulis envisions Ghana-Vaud collaborations in research, comparative studies, and student exchanges in healthcare fields, especially nursing. “Ghanaian healthcare blends cultural continuity with scientific development in a way that is both respectful and forward-thinking,” says Gaulis. “This doesn’t just mean using traditional practices alongside Western-style healthcare. They are using advanced technologies to investigate traditional methods like herbal remedies. We saw a compelling example of AI analyzing traditional dance to explain each movement’s meaning, showing how tradition can be preserved through new technology.”

Côte d’Ivoire: A complementary avenue

A second exploratory mission led Gaulis to Côte d’Ivoire – which is geographically close to Ghana but has a very different context, with its colonial roots being French rather than Anglo-Saxon.

“In Côte d’Ivoire, a good point of entry is the *Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques (CSRS)* – the Swiss Centre for Scientific Research, an internationally respected research hub that serves as a bridge between Ivorian institutions and global partners,” says Gaulis. “Many local universities already collaborate with CSRS, making it a natural, credible channel for future DGES-supported cooperation.”

Côte d’Ivoire thus provides fertile ground for research collaborations, field projects, and carefully structured academic partnerships in the future. The key will be understanding the country’s specific dynamics.

The irreplaceable value of being present

One of the clearest lessons from these early missions is that physical presence matters. Walking a campus, speaking with faculty face-to-face, meeting students and navigating local contexts – with indispensable guidance from the Swiss embassies – provide invaluable insights into the future viability of collaborations. Presence also allows for direct assessment of safety, infrastructure, and the practicalities of potential student mobility.

A first step in an exciting journey

The 2025 visits to Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire are only the beginning. Further missions – including a planned 2026 trip to Senegal – will deepen the DGES’s knowledge of Africa’s diverse academic landscapes. As in other parts of the world, the DGES is confidently building respectful, mutually enriching partnerships rooted in curiosity, listening and shared goals.

Forging alliances with parts of the globe that are shaping the future in unexpected ways is a necessity – and opportunity – in a rapidly changing world. By beginning to engage with Africa, the DGES is opening doors for Vaud institutions, students and researchers – and more broadly with future generations who will benefit from global networks built on respect, understanding and collaboration. •



Top: Gaulis with colleagues at the International University of Grand-Bassam, in Grand-Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire.

Above: Gaulis with governmental and academic officials in Côte d’Ivoire.



Nursing care in India – from pregnancy to childhood

Nursing Sciences & Midwifery

December 29, 2024 – January 18, 2025 | Coimbatore, India

“This experience in India has given me an open-mindedness that will be essential... I have learned to better understand and respect cultural diversity, which will enable me to adopt a more inclusive and tailored approach in my nursing practice.”

Institutions:

School of Health Sciences – Vaud (HESAV),
HES-SO University, Switzerland

La Source School of Nursing, HES-SO University,
Switzerland

PSG College of Nursing, India

Students:

from Vaud: 13
from partners: 7

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2
from partners: 2

Special thanks to:

PSG Hospital

The concept

Students from HESAV and La Source join peers from PSG College of Nursing in Coimbatore to explore Mother and Child Health Care in an intercultural program. Lectures, workshops, clinical visits and comparative learning help students understand the influence of cultural, demographic and socioeconomic contexts on healthcare.

In real life

At the PSG Hospital, mixed-nationality groups of students rotated through key maternal and child services such as pre- and post-natal care and labour rooms. They also visited other hospital units to gain insight into how the mother and child services fit into the broader hospital structure. The hierarchy in the medical field stood out, as did the observation that patients' socio-economic status – even in public health facilities – appeared to impact access to care.

Of context and culture

Students saw access to care challenges were addressed through strong system coordination, community centres and prevention campaigns to help bring services to more regions. Exposure to Ayurveda, meditation and yoga revealed a holistic model in which traditional and modern medicine coexist – inspiring students to consider possible applications in Switzerland.

Rooted in culture

A Pongal celebration, a lamp ceremony, temple visits and traditional dance offered rich cultural immersion in Coimbatore, while a weekend in Kerala added further insight into regional traditions. Students highlighted the warmth of local hosts and reflected on how cultural values shape healthcare in both India and Switzerland.





Gandhi and us: a model for teaching sustainability

Teacher Education

January 17 – February 1, 2025 | Prangins, Switzerland and Sevagram & Delhi, India

"The exchanges with Indian teachers were especially inspiring. Their perspective, rooted in a different educational context, introduced me to new approaches, particularly those shaped by Gandhian pedagogy. This gave me valuable insights for rethinking my role as a teacher in relation to sustainability."

Institutions:

University of Teacher Education Vaud (HEP Vaud), Switzerland

University of Delhi, India

Students:

from Vaud: 14

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 3

from partner: 3

Special thanks to:

Swiss National Museum, Château de Prangins | Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi | Anand Niketan School, Sevagram (Maharashtra) | Gandhi Sevagram Ashram | Magan Khadi (Magan Sangrahalaya Samiti) | Gram Seva Mandal | Humayun's Tomb, Delhi

The concept

Student teachers from the HEP Vaud and partners in India explore three complementary educational traditions: sustainability-focused teaching, creative approaches for teaching, and *Nai Talim*, a pedagogic philosophy designed by Gandhi to meet the needs of India's independence. Cotton serves as a shared object of study linking Swiss and Indian historical, cultural and economic perspectives.

Cotton ties from India to Switzerland

The module began in Switzerland in October 2024 at the Swiss National Museum at the Château de Prangins, with an exhibition addressing the role of Swiss economic actors in the manufacture and trade of Indian cotton, and their involvement in colonial empires, including the issue of slavery. As part of this work, they created decorated cotton sheets to be used in a teaching activity in India.

Immersion in Sevagram & Delhi

In India, students taught two structured lessons at Anand Niketan School: first, a creative activity using the sheets decorated in Prangins, and second, a comparative lesson linking Swiss and Indian perspectives. They also observed classes and engaged with teachers, families and local experts. Field visits – including Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram, Magan Khadi and a cotton spinning mill – deepened their understanding of rural education, sustainability practices and community-based learning. Five days at Mata Sundri College in Delhi enhanced the experience through lectures, intercultural teamwork and a guided visit to Humayun's Tomb.

Practical integration

After returning to Switzerland, each student produced a teaching activity or presentation, connecting the experience to their professional practice.





What it takes to make it in Silicon Valley

Industrial Engineering and Management

February 8 – 22, 2025 | San Francisco, USA

"I also really appreciated being able to conduct field research for our project; it gave a real, tangible dimension to what we'd been preparing for months, along with a very motivating sense of accomplishment."

Institutions:

School of Engineering and Management Vaud (HEIG-VD), Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 12

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

Swissnex San Francisco | MobyFly | SideLights | SunWays | Microsoft | Google | Apple | Oracle | Figma | Atmo.AI | Stanford University | Stanford d.school | Stanford Memorial Church | University of California, Berkeley | Jacobs Hall Makerspace (UC Berkeley) | Computer History Museum | BGV Ventures | Fintegrate Consulting Ltd. | Transatlantic Partners Group LLC

The concept

HEIG-VD engineering and business students sharpen their innovation and entrepreneurship skills by acting as "consultants" for three Swiss startups. After a semester of preparation in Switzerland, the course culminates in a two-week immersion in San Francisco and Silicon Valley – the ideal environment to test ideas, explore market potential and confront the realities of internationalization.

Sustainable tech ready to scale

The 2025 edition focused on startups with concrete, ready-to-test technologies for sustainability: *MobyFly* zero-emission hydrofoil ferries; *SideLights* 360° visibility lighting for cyclists; and *SunWays* removable solar panels to be installed between railway tracks.

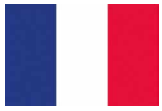
Real-world learning

In San Francisco, students deepened their research with Swissnex support: meeting potential partners, refining value propositions and presenting early findings. Working in interdisciplinary teams – an essential feature of innovation work – honed their collaboration skills and highlighted how much they could learn from one another. Visits to selected tech companies and academic institutions – the very places that helped make Silicon Valley a global innovation hotbed – immersed them in the region's trademark mindset: speed, openness and embracing risk.

Skills to launch with

Through this hands-on international experience, students gained sharper analytical skills, greater confidence and a clearer sense of how culture shapes innovation. They returned more prepared to navigate global innovation ecosystems and to help Swiss technologies find their place on the world stage.





Housing insecurity – social work in Paris

Social Work

February 9 – 14, 2025 | Paris, France

“In France, the issue of homelessness sparks debate, provoking reactions, policy initiatives, and protests. It is a major topic of discussion. In Switzerland, by contrast, it seems to be swept under the rug, as if its lack of visibility were enough to deny its existence.”

Institutions:

Haute école de travail social et de la santé
Lausanne (HETSL), Switzerland

Ecole Pratique de Service Social EPSS, France

Students:

from Vaud: 20

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

EPSS Paris, École pratique de service social | MOBIL'DOUCHE, service d'hygiène mobile à destination des SDF et des mal-logés | BASILIADE, centre d'accueil pour sans-abris à Paris | LA MIE DE PAIN, association de lutte contre la précarité | SAMU SOCIAL PARIS - PROTECTION CIVILE de Paris, Maraudes sociales | Unités locales de la CROIX-ROUGE, Maraudes sociales | Association GUSTAVO GRAND COEUR, Université Paris Est Créteil (UPEC) | Université Paris 13, Laboratoire Experice. | Université Paris 8, Laboratoire CRESPPA-GTM

The concept

This study trip offers an intensive immersion in Paris, where the reality of housing insecurity – people without stable shelter – is highly visible and addressed by a longstanding network of public services and associations. Through courses, field visits and meetings with street outreach teams, HETSL students engage with “*Accueil, Hébergement, Insertion*” (“Outreach, shelter, integration”) initiatives and explore what it means to live without stable housing, personally and socially. The week also provides a comparative lens, prompting students to reflect on how Switzerland responds to a growing issue. Students also take part in project workshops to imagine possible avenues for action and adaptation in the Swiss context.

Learning in the field

Throughout the week, students attended lectures, visited emergency, shelter and outreach services, observed professional practices, and had the option to join outreach patrols on foot or by vehicle. These encounters revealed the complexity of housing insecurity and the challenges of designing effective responses. Exchanges with French students and professionals offered a comparative perspective, highlighting differences in social policies, emergency infrastructures and cultural attitudes toward unhoused populations.

Awareness and commitment

Many students described a profound shift: discovering people they had previously “not seen,” dismantling stereotypes, and questioning their own assumptions. Exposure to diverse intervention methods, social-policy debates and lived experiences sharpened their critical thinking and introspection. Some students were even inspired to pursue this subject further through studies or future professional practice. Overall, the experience left them more aware, more committed and more attuned to the ethical and political dimensions of social work.





East meets West in Lausanne

Nursing Sciences

February 24 – March 14, 2025 | Lausanne, Switzerland

"I was able to have many experiences and discoveries. For example, I was able to find differences between the insurance systems and medical practices in Switzerland and Japan. I was also able to learn about the differences in nursing education at universities."

Institutions:

La Source School of Nursing, HES-SO University, Switzerland

Japanese Red Cross College of Nursing Tokyo
Japanese Red Cross Hiroshima College of Nursing
Japanese Red Cross Kyushu International College of Nursing

Students:

from Vaud: 3
from partners: 6

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

La Source Simulation Centre | Lausanne University Hospital (*Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois* – CHUV) | Hirslanden Clinics Cécil and BoisCerf | OSEO employment & social integration organization | Inizio specialized day centre

The concept

Aptly called *East meets West*, this program consists of exchanges that send Swiss nursing students to Japan and vice-versa in small groups, for an intense immersion developing interdisciplinary and intercultural skills as well as their professional reflexes. For this edition, six students from three Japanese Red Cross Nursing Colleges arrived in Lausanne for a three-week program on mental health nursing from a global perspective.

Focus on mental health care

Students explored mental health care models used in French-speaking Switzerland before contrasting them with practices in Japan, where longer hospital stays and medicalization are more standard. They noted the autonomy of Swiss nurses, care team interdisciplinarity, cultural diversity in care settings, and supports available for people experiencing mental-health vulnerabilities.

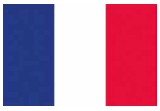
Observations on care and needs

Students participated in clinical immersions and field visits including community psychiatry services, rehabilitation workshops, OSEO, Inizio, and several CHUV units. Visits to international institutions such as the United Nations and the Red Cross Museum further connected mental health to socio-political contexts. These diverse experiences shaped understanding of multidisciplinary teamwork, holistic care approaches and community-based care in Switzerland.

Sharing the learning

Working in pairs, the students developed scientific posters, each proposing how a proven Swiss mental-health intervention – such as mobile youth outreach or suicide prevention hotlines – could be adapted for implementation in Japan, blending cultural insight with evidence-based practice.





Cross-border CRUNCH: innovating in France

Business Administration, Industrial Engineering and Management, Computer Science and Communication Systems, Electrical Engineering, Media Engineering, Energy and Environmental Engineering, Microtechnology, Industrial Systems, Civil Engineering

"I really enjoyed the opportunity to work in a different country and experience a different work culture. I also really liked the overall atmosphere within the group of Swiss students and professors."

Institutions:

School of Engineering and Management Vaud (HEIG-VD), Switzerland

Université de Technologie de Belfort Montbéliard (UTBM)

Students:

from Vaud: 21
from partner: 25

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1
from partner: 1

Special thanks to:

Archimetre Private Banking BCV | CHUV Retraites populaires | eHNV SeaNest SA | EM Path Service des *Energies d'Yverdon-les-Bains* | Groupe E SMACA SA | *Hôpital Riviera-Chablais* | Sonceboz SA | IMPACT LIVING Swiss Engineering Vaud | La Santé à Champagne Sylvac SA | My Tale Nest | Transports publics de la région lausannoise | Nestlé | Viteos | UTBM FabLabs, MakeLabs, and prototyping workshop

Photo Credit:

© Anthony Demierre

March 16 – 21, 2025 | Montbéliard, France

The concept

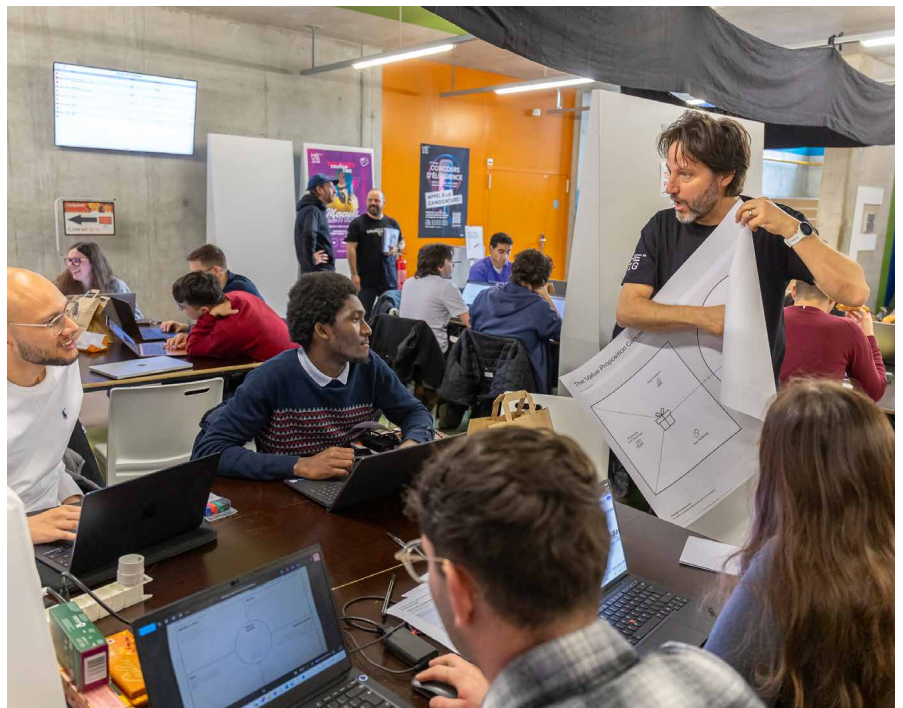
HEIG-VD students from diverse engineering and business domains teamed up with peers from UTBM in Montbéliard to tackle real innovation problems from partner organizations. They were among some 1,300 students at the CRUNCH Time innovation challenge hosted by UTBM. Over five days, each team analyzes a brief, generates solutions and produces an early prototype destined for real-world application.

From real needs to concrete prototypes

The mixed Swiss-French teams received briefs from partner organizations in sectors including energy, mobility, healthcare, finance, industrial systems and local services. Guided by design thinking, they moved quickly from understanding user needs to testing ideas through rapid iteration and simple modelling. Short feedback cycles and structured decision-making supported the transformation of initial concepts into tangible prototypes under tight time constraints.

Dynamic teamwork and applied skills

The intercultural, interdisciplinary teams combined differing technical strengths, communication styles, and levels of innovation experience. This diversity allowed them to approach challenges from multiple angles and assign roles fluidly as the project evolved – from technical exploration to concept refinement to pitching. Students strengthened key soft skills: communication, collaboration, creativity and agility. Working in an international environment required them to align working approaches, negotiate differences and adapt quickly, all while gaining practical experience with real-world professional expectations.





Reflections from Cairo: how culture shapes art

Visual Arts

April 17 – 24, 2025 | Cairo, Egypt

"Returning to Cairo to rediscover the context."

Institutions:

ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne,
Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 17

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

Nashazphone | ARD Art | CIC – Contemporary
Image Collective | Medrar | Tintera | Goethe
Institut Cairo Ägypten

The concept

Spending a week in Egypt's capital, ECAL Visual Arts students encounter creative practices formed within different social, political and historical conditions. The experience prompts reflection on their own positions and the cultural contexts from which they create.

Artistic dialogue in Cairo

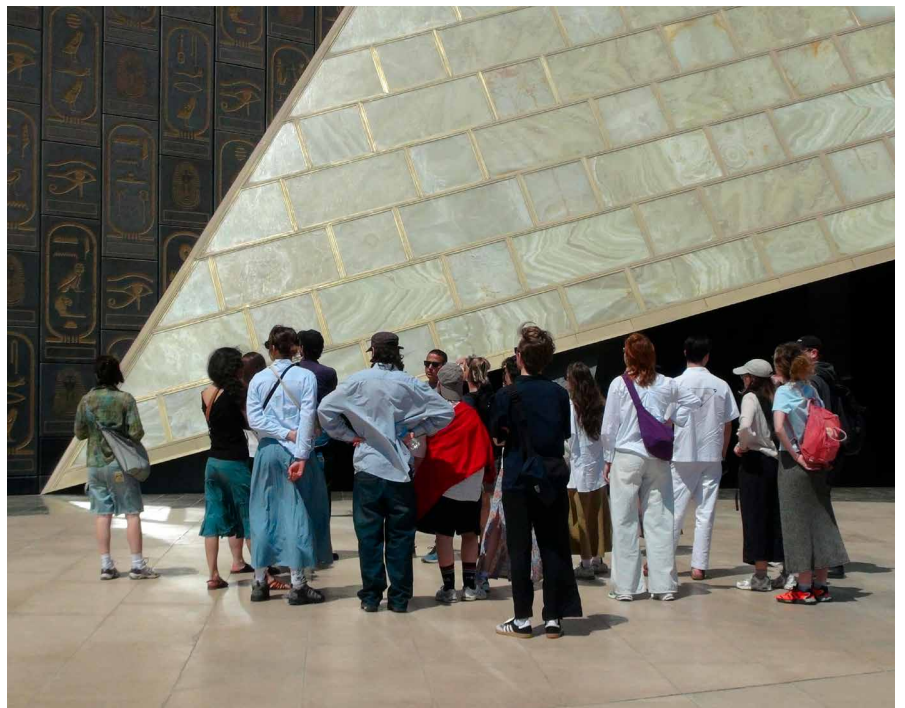
The trip centred on conversations with artists, curators and cultural workers active in Cairo's contemporary art scene. Visiting studios exposed students to diverse artistic drivers, methods and working conditions. At heritage and cultural sites including Tahrir Square, Giza, Saqqara, the Museum of Islamic Art, the Mosque of Sultan Hassan and the Grand Egyptian Museum, they deepened their understanding of the city's cultural layers and histories that continue to inform artistic expression in the city.

Experiencing artistic context

Students also engaged with Cairo's live cultural forms – including a Zār ritual, Tanoura dance and the opening of *Extended Cities*, a group visual art exhibition on displacement, memory and urban transformation. These encounters demonstrated how art circulates, adapts and asserts itself within the complexities of the contemporary Arab world, echoing discussions around post-colonial histories and representation.

Introspection

This brief visit to Cairo held a mirror to students' own cultures and how it shapes their artistic expression. This continued long after their return to ECAL, through discussion amongst the group and through art journaling – assembling images, words and impressions to nourish their ongoing practice.





Student teachers take it slow in Sweden

Teacher Education

April 20 – 25, 2025 | Linköping, Sweden

“The conversations with forestry professionals opened my eyes to the richness of outdoor education. I discovered an alternative approach to learning that is more free and more rooted in real life.”

Institutions:

University of Teacher Education Vaud (HEP
Vaud), Switzerland

Linköping University, Sweden

Students:

from Vaud: 10

from partner: 10

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1

from partner: 1

Special thanks to:

Limmernäs Outdoor Camp

The concept

Student teachers move out of the classroom to discover how integrating the natural environment into curricula can connect local schools with the region – and how this is achieved in different partner countries. The program includes preparation over a semester before an onsite trip and is paired with a reciprocal trip in a subsequent semester.

Ecosystem-based learning

In Sweden, the students immersed themselves in the paper industry, meeting stakeholders and foundations responsible for introducing environmental education into local schools. Alongside land professionals, they conducted a field investigation examining sustainable supply chains and the economics of responsible land use. This analytical work raised important questions about how education can support – and can be supported by – the surrounding industries and communities.

Slow pedagogy

A highlight for all was the stay at Limmernäs, a remote camp surrounded by Nordic forests and lakes, where the students swapped their textbooks and electronic devices for axes. They learned to chop wood, produce bitumen through wood pyrolysis, and build mechanical winches – gaining first-hand exposure to Swedish slow pedagogy. Indeed, the local educators place a focus on building firm connections with the community progressively over time. Equipped with new approaches and ideas, the Swiss students left Limmernäs, feeling inspired to do the same back home.





Designing voices for our lives at Osaka Expo 2025

Music

May 10 – 24, 2025 | Osaka, Japan

“Representing HEMU in such a prestigious project, in an event as iconic as the World Expo, was a unique and enriching experience – both in artistic and in human terms.”

Institutions:

HEMU – Haute école de musique, Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 2
from partner: 44

Professors/assistants:

from partner: 2

Special thanks to:

Mozarteum University Salzburg | Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen | Republic of Austria Pavilion, Expo 2025

The concept

An a cappella choir of 46 students from 15 European countries was assembled to perform at the 2025 World Exposition in Osaka, Japan. Organized by Mozarteum University Salzburg with support from the European Association of Conservatories (AEC), the “Designing Voices for our Lives” initiative competitively selected outstanding singers from across the AEC network, including two HEMU students.

Giving voice to hope

Reflecting the Expo’s theme – “Designing Future Society for our Lives” – the ensemble explored how the human voice can both shape and communicate visions of a better future. Their message rang clearly: collective artistry, cultural exchange and the shared act of singing can inspire a more connected and optimistic tomorrow.

Collaboration in preparation & passion

The students prepared over several months through individual practice, online sessions and detailed coordination. Once in Japan, the young singers met in person to form a vibrant multilingual choir, blending their perspectives and interpretive skills during two weeks of intensive rehearsals and preview concerts in Kobe and Matsumoto.

The world stage

The final performance on May 23 at Expo 2025’s National Day Hall ranged from contemporary works to classical repertoire, highlighting the diversity and richness of European vocal traditions. For the HEMU students, the experience enriched their vocal mastery and strengthened international networks as they proudly represented HEMU on the world stage.





The big picture: population health in Boston

Nursing Sciences

June 9 – 22, 2025 | Boston, USA

"I am very grateful because, being in the study-while-employed program, I never expected I would have such an experience one day as part of my training."

Institutions:

School of Health Sciences – Vaud (HESAV), Switzerland

La Source School of Nursing, HES-SO University, Switzerland

Connell School of Nursing, Boston College, USA
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Students:

from Vaud: 12
from partner: 12

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2
from partner: 1

Special thanks to:

Pine Street Inn

The concept

Swiss nursing students join peers from the United States and Chile to explore current topics rarely covered in the Swiss curriculum.

Politics of care

People's health depends not only on clinical care, but also on many factors in their daily lives. Political decisions about insurance, housing, education and access to treatment determine what care looks like and who receives it. Students mapped these factors across the health systems of the US, Switzerland, Chile and Australia, exploring how social structures and decisions define nurses' skills and responsibilities.

Treating communities

Lectures and discussions encouraged students to think beyond individual patient care toward the health of larger communities. A visit to Boston's biggest homeless shelter brought home the importance of understanding structural conditions for delivering effective patient care.

Seven hundred beds

Pine Street Inn, Boston's largest homeless shelter, operates almost entirely on private donations and sits in one of the city's more prosperous neighbourhoods. The scale of the shelter – which houses around 700 people each night – came as a shock to the students and highlighted the stark contrast between the wealth surrounding it and the hardship faced by its residents. Inside, they wondered how a society that creates so much affluence can also leave so many without stable housing. The staff's steady, compassionate work offered a powerful reminder of nursing's potential to support vulnerable populations.





Nursing in community: Lausanne's model

Nursing Sciences

June 24 – July 11, 2025 | Lausanne, Switzerland

"I would recommend this program to others because it gave me an opportunity to learn about different curriculum delivery systems followed by various Nursing Universities."

Institutions:

La Source School of Nursing, HES-SO University, Switzerland

School of Health Sciences – Vaud (HESAV), HES-SO University, Switzerland

PSG College of Nursing Coimbatore, India

Boston College Connell School of Nursing, USA

Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, Yong Loo

Lin School of Medicine, Singapore

Students:

from Vaud: 5

from partners: 23

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1

from partners: 2

Special thanks to:

Lausanne University Hospital (*Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois* – CHUV) | *La Source* Senior Lab | *Point d'Eau Lausanne* | *UniSanté* – *Centre de santé du campus* & *Équipe Mobile d'Urgences Sociales* (EMUS)

The concept

Students from partner nursing schools in Switzerland, India, Singapore, Hong Kong SAR (China) and the United States meet in Lausanne for this immersive program dedicated to community-based health promotion and prevention. Through workshops, lectures and field visits, participants analyze public health issues and develop nursing interventions adapted to diverse populations and contexts.

A focus on community

The program was centred on real-world issues such as adolescent health, aging, migration, addiction and chronic illness. Students examined how cultural norms and socioeconomic conditions shape care delivery, and gained a clearer understanding of how community health models in Switzerland differ from those in their own countries.

Encounters with the local health landscape

Daily activities ranged from a simulation at the teaching hospital to visits at Senior Lab, *Point d'Eau Lausanne*, and *UniSanté*. These encounters offered firsthand exposure to vulnerable groups from undocumented migrants to isolated older adults, allowing students to observe how interventions are adapted to each population and to local needs.

Collaboration across cultures

A three-day intercultural group project became a defining moment. Mixed-nationality teams designed community interventions addressing real health concerns, navigating cultural nuances and policy differences. For many, this collaborative challenge was a revelatory experience that deepened both their professional perspective and global awareness.





Physiotherapy insights from Boston's finest

Physiotherapy

June 30 – July 11, 2025 | Boston, USA

"Combining cultural discovery with an exploration of innovative physical therapy practices made this trip a very enriching experience."

Institutions:

School of Health Sciences – Vaud (HESAV),
HES-SO University, Switzerland

Bouvé College of Health Sciences, Northeastern
University, USA

Students:

from Vaud: 8
from partner: 8

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1
from partner: 1

Special thanks to:

Bay State Physical Therapy | Massachusetts
General Hospital – Sports Physical Therapy |
Spaulding Rehabilitation

The concept

The long-standing program introduces Swiss physiotherapy students to leading Boston healthcare institutions. The immersive study of US physical therapy (physiotherapy) practice includes clinical observation and visits to labs and cultural sites.

Same tools, different rules

While observing physiotherapists in hospitals, rehabilitation centers and research settings, students saw how the role of therapy shifts according to each country's healthcare system. They noted that differences in professional autonomy, reimbursement structures and organizational norms all impact how physiotherapy is practiced.

A different concept of touch

The immersion also revealed other surprising nuances, such as norms around physical touch. Even in a profession where hands are the essential tools for assessment and treatment, the use of touch is defined as much by culture as by medical indication. These activities fostered in-depth dialogue on shared clinical questions and on structural differences between American and Swiss physiotherapy and healthcare systems.

Raising the bar

Walking the campuses of Harvard and MIT added an energizing dimension to the trip – expanding the students' perspectives on their careers. Having arrived as observers of American physiotherapy, they left with sharper questions and new ambitions for their future practice.





Tradition & technique in the Caucasus: A viticultural journey

Oenology & Viticulture

July 13 – 22, 2025 | Yerevan, Armenia & Tbilisi, Georgia

"We found the traditional winemaking methods using clay vessels – Karas in Armenia and Qvevri in Georgia – particularly fascinating. Unlike in Switzerland, where white wines are usually fermented without skins, winemakers there often use whole-cluster fermentation. Encountering these ancient techniques, still actively practiced today, significantly broadened our professional perspective."

Institutions:

CHANGINS University of Viticulture and Oenology, Switzerland

Adelaide University, Australia

University of California, Davis, USA

Fresno State University, USA

Students:

from Vaud: 18

from partner: 17

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1

from partner: 2

Special thanks to:

ZYAC – Zabel Yesayan Agribusiness Campus (ICARE Foundation), Armenia | Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU) | Georgian Technical University (GTU) | Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University (TESAU) | Tbilisi Wine School Prof. Anne Godabrelidze | Kataro Winery | Areni-1

The concept

Changins students experience the unique opportunity to learn about winemaking in a region widely regarded as the world's "cradle of wine": in the Caucasus, wine is deeply woven into identity, tradition and daily life. Joining partner universities and peers from five continents, they travel to Armenia and Georgia to explore viticultural techniques in the context of culture, history and society.

6,000 years of experience

In Armenia and Georgia, students encountered winemaking traditions shaped by more than 6,000 years of history. Institutional visits introduced them to the region's archaeological heritage, ancient *qvevri* and *karas* fermentation methods, and efforts to preserve native grape varieties. Guided technical tastings, cellar visits and conversations with producers showed how tradition and modernity coexist, while a hands-on lavash bread-baking workshop highlighted the deep ties between food, land and culture. Together, these experiences offered a vivid understanding of wine as living heritage rather than a purely technical product.

From history to modern realities

Students gained insight into how geography and regional circumstances shape winemaking in the Caucasus. Visits to places such as Kataro Winery and the Areni-1 archaeological cave illustrated how heritage and history intersect with contemporary realities, including political conflict and resilience. Throughout their stay in Armenia and Georgia, the generosity of local hosts, shared tastings and exchanges with peers from around the world made the experience both professionally rich and personally memorable.





Urban efficiency shaping healthcare in Hong Kong

Nursing Sciences

July 14 – August 20, 2025 | Hong Kong SAR, China

"I was particularly struck by the various visits to health-care settings, which made me think a lot about what it really means to provide care in very different environments, and also how much we can learn from each approach."

Institutions:

La Source School of Nursing, HES-SO
University, Switzerland

Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

Students:

from Vaud: 6

from partners: 54

Special thanks to:

Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital | Lei Muk
Shue Yen Nursing Home | Tsim Tung Ambulance
Depot | Dialogue in the Dark exhibition

The concept

Nursing students from *La Source* take part in a Summer University hosted by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) School of Nursing. Swiss students join participants from mainland China, Japan and Indonesia to explore Hong Kong's healthcare system through visits and workshops. Working in intercultural teams, they present final projects comparing healthcare systems and nursing practices across countries.

Unique healthcare environments

The program offered inside views of both public and private institutions, including the Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital, Lei Muk Shue Yen Nursing Home, and the Tsim Tung Ambulance Depot. Hong Kong's dense population influences healthcare delivery – students learned how paramedics ride motorcycles to navigate congested streets, for example, and visited an emergency department located on the 42nd floor.

A flourishing innovation economy

Hong Kong's strong economy and advanced technology help shape both nursing education and care practice. The university's large campus and the care facilities visited all showed high quality infrastructure and organization.

Notes on culture

Swiss students received a warm welcome from student ambassadors, underscoring the local value of hospitality. They also observed how cultural expectations shape nursing roles and team dynamics, noting contrasts in autonomy and practice across healthcare systems. The experience further helped them recognize culture's impact on healthcare back home.

"Dialogue in the Dark"

An immersive blindness-simulation exhibition literally offered a unique perspective, challenging students' orientation and perceptions of vulnerability, and building empathy.





Mastering new materials for product design in Tokyo

Product Design

October 11 – 20, 2025 | Tokyo, Japan

"This trip completely changed the way I think about design. Being immersed in a different cultural and professional environment pushed me to question my habits and rethink how I communicate my ideas. Working with such an inspiring partner challenged us in the best possible way. Beyond the academic experience, sharing this journey with my classmates created a strong sense of collective growth. It was intense, demanding, and incredibly rewarding."

Institutions:

ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne,
Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 16

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

Swiss Embassy to Japan | Issey Miyake / Bao Bao

The concept

ECAL Master Product Design students bring their semester projects to completion, working onsite with leading designers from around the globe. The project takes prototypes to the next level and complements European design traditions with expertise from other cultural perspectives.

Inside the Bao Bao universe

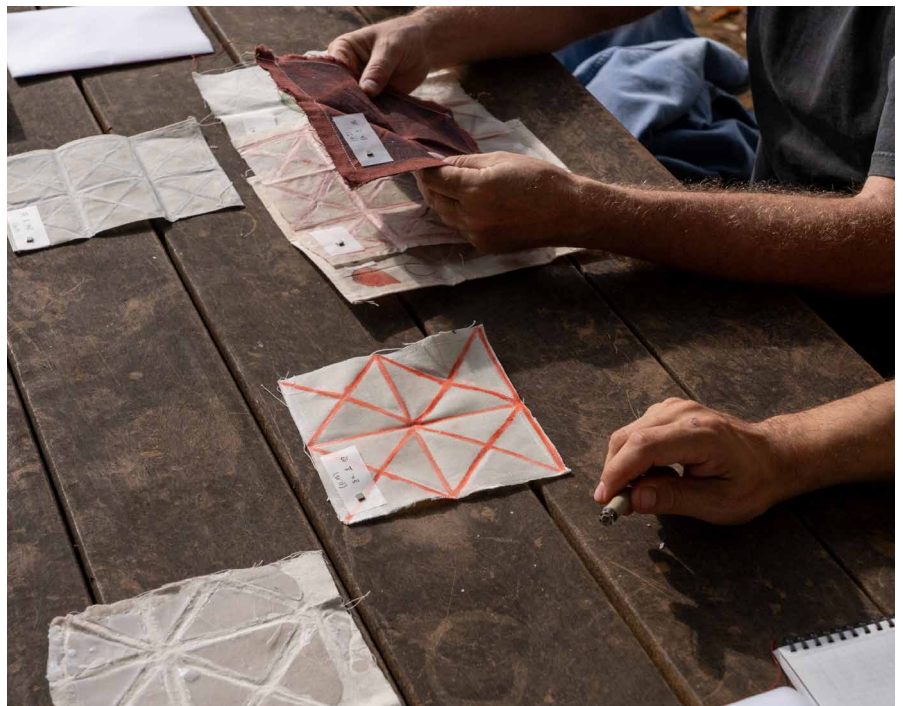
Student projects began in Lausanne with research into new materials and processes, flexible structures and triangular geometries, all aimed at finding an equilibrium between rigidity and flexibility. Then it was off to Tokyo to collaborate with Issey Miyake / Bao Bao, a studio renowned for innovations in next-generation materials. Workshops in the studio offered exploration in diverse materials and iterative prototyping experience, guided by experienced designers. Other professional visits – from specialized material suppliers to the Enoura Observatory – broadened students' references and linked their research to Japan's architectural, spatial and craft traditions.

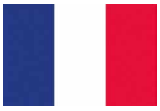
The sound of silence

In a defining moment, the group decided to present their prototypes in silence, in respect of a national holiday. The exercise strengthened clarity, autonomy and visual legibility – letting form, tension and movement speak for themselves.

Showcasing unique design

Students gained refined skills in working with diverse materials, clearer visual expression and stronger cross-cultural adaptability. Their prototypes will continue their journey in exhibitions in Milan and Tokyo in 2027, marking a significant extension of the project's impact.





Magical encounters in a Parisian oasis

Teacher Education

October 12 – 17, 2025 | Paris, France

"The exchange helped me to understand how culture can be conveyed to students in a lively and interactive way, particularly through oral communication, staging, and sensory experiences."

Institutions:

University of Teacher Education Vaud (HEP
Vaud), Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 9
from partners: 4

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2
from partners: 1

Special thanks to:

Musée Albert-Kahn | INSPÉ de l'Académie de
Versailles | Théâtre du Mouffetard | Musée du
Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac | Théâtre de la Ville
de Paris

The concept

Immersive training in cultural mediation – the art of designing encounters to make cultural institutions accessible and engaging for primary school children. As part of the "PEERS" program, this week in Paris is paired with a second week in Lausanne to take place in February 2026.

World gardens as backdrop

The Musée Albert-Kahn provided an ideal landscape for this training. Its Japanese, English and French gardens were conceived by the French philanthropist who believed that knowing other cultures fundamentally changes how people think.

Curiosity and collaboration

Working alongside mediation professionals and artist-educators, students took part in puppet workshops, storytelling sessions, museum tours, and other events. Each activity offered insights into how voice, gesture, and physical space can transform presentations into memorable experiences. Delivering sessions of their own added further lessons in listening, compromise, and collective creativity.

Bringing culture to life

The week culminated in student-led workshops for a class of 33 Parisian nine-year-olds. One pair staged a tea ceremony on the wooden pavilion of the Japanese garden. Another brought picture books to life through expressive storytelling. The students discovered how attention to place, narrative and technique can produce moments of focus even in a crowd of restless children – and open doors to worlds that often feel distant or irrelevant to young audiences.





The future classroom in Copenhagen

Teacher Education

October 20 – 25, 2025 | Copenhagen, Denmark

"The more I talk to my friends about the exchange, the more I realize how rich, stimulating, and thought-provoking the activities we did were. Even if my days as a successful soft robot engineer are still nowhere in sight, I came back to Switzerland with so many new perspectives and ideas."

Institutions:

University of Teacher Education Vaud (HEP Vaud), Switzerland

University College Copenhagen (KP), Denmark

Students:

from Vaud: 13

from partners institutions: 20

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1

from partners institutions: 2

Special thanks to:

Future Classroom Lab at University College Copenhagen | Local Copenhagen fablab | Copenhagen Contemporary | Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek | Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK) | Enigma Museum of Communication

The concept

Over the course of an academic year, students from HEP and the University College Copenhagen (KP) explore how digital tools, creative learning environments and new pedagogical scenarios shape tomorrow's classrooms, while comparing Danish and Swiss approaches. This fall 2025 onsite portion in Copenhagen is paired with a visit by Danish students to Lausanne in the following Spring.

Exploring tomorrow's classroom

HEP Vaud students were integrated into University College Copenhagen (KP)'s *Future Classroom Teacher* track, a technology-oriented specialization within the Danish teacher-education bachelor program. The track is taught at the Danish Future Classroom Lab (FCL), a space designed to experiment with learning zones, teaching scenarios, digital technologies and new forms of classroom management. Training emphasizes project-based, creative learning that reimagines how pupils engage with knowledge.

Practical co-creation

Several hands-on activities were co-designed with Danish students, such as facilitating a local fablab session for primary school students, building soft robots at Copenhagen Contemporary, and designing AI-based educational projects at the Glyptotek and the Statens Museum for Kunst. These activities highlighted the cultural influence of approaches to creativity, design thinking and interdisciplinary teaching. Evening activities organized by KP student ambassadors further enriched their cultural immersion.

Fostering student wellbeing

The emphasis placed on learner wellbeing in Danish education left a strong impression on the Swiss student teachers. They observed flexible learning environments, holistic approaches and a strong culture of equality – prompting reflection on how such structural conditions shape innovative, collaborative learning.





Occupational therapy across Europe

Occupational Therapy

October 22 – 26, 2025 | Coimbra, Portugal

“Throughout the presentations, the methodological approaches discussed provided us with useful guidance for our bachelor’s theses, offering concrete examples of how researchers design and carry out their projects, as well as the variety of tools and methods they use.”

Institutions:

Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne (HETSL), Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 6

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1

Special thanks to:

European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education (ENOTHE)

The concept

A longtime member of ENOTHE (the European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education), HETSL takes part in the network’s annual three-day conference, where occupational therapy students, educators and professionals from across Europe meet to share new ideas and strengthen international ties. For participating students, it is a valuable opportunity to present their work, practice scientific communication and gain insight into how occupational therapy (OT) education and professional realities differ across ENOTHE member institutions.

Learning with peers and professionals

Over three days in Coimbra, HETSL students joined presentations, poster sessions and hands-on workshops, gaining concrete insights into research design, intervention methods and pedagogical innovation such as the gamification of task-analysis teaching. Conversations with peers from across Europe offered fresh perspectives from different cultural influences.

Sharing innovative Swiss techniques

HETSL students’ posters on humanitarian OT, community gardening for refugees and assistive sport technologies for visually impaired athletes showcased Swiss expertise and enriched the international dialogue.

Growing as future occupational therapists

Students strengthened their confidence in English, expanded their international network and discovered new approaches that reinforce their curricula at HETSL. This experience, both human and academic, enriched their professional identity and opened new perspectives on the evolving field of occupational therapy.



ENOTHE
European Network
of Occupational Therapy
in Higher Education



Hotel Vila Galé
Coimbra, Portugal



Media & interaction design – “KIKK-ing” it in Namur

Media & Interaction Design

October 22 – 26, 2025 | Namur, Belgium

“My experience at the KIKK Festival has radically redefined my professional standards. Observing the work of leading international figures has given me a better understanding of the technical and conceptual rigour required to bring a truly cutting-edge vision to the field of interaction design.”

Institutions:

ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne,
Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 11

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

KIKK Festival

The concept

ECAL Media & Interaction Design students head to the KIKK Festival in Namur – one of Europe’s premier festivals dedicated to digital and creative cultures. By showing their projects in a public, professional environment in Namur, students experience how interactive works operate beyond the studio and encounter the realities of contemporary digital practice.

Digital culture in motion

Joining the international gathering of artists, designers and creative technologists at KIKK, ECAL students discovered a landscape where experimentation drives practice. Exhibitions, installations and talks across the city offered insight into how digital experiences are imagined, built and shared with audiences from around the world.

Immersive & experiential

ECAL students presented a curated selection of Bachelor projects: hyper-realistic CGI experiments, immersive VR pieces, puzzle-based interactive games and other works exploring perception, scale and play. Bringing these projects into direct contact with festival visitors allowed students to observe how people of different ages navigated and understood the interfaces on their own. Seeing interaction unfold without explanation or mediation revealed where their designs succeeded – and where clarity or robustness were still needed.

Motivation going forward

The festival experience gave students a motivating sense of belonging to the wider international creative community. It affirmed the relevance of their work beyond the academic setting and strengthened their drive as they move toward professional practice.





Materials & product design with the experts in Modena

Product Design

October 22 – 23, 2025 (onsite portion) | Modena, Italy

"I really appreciated Mutina's generosity, especially the fact that they gave us some ceramic tiles so we could experiment directly with the material."

Institutions:

ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne,
Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 19

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

Ceramiche Mutina S.p.A. (Mutina) | Villa Medici

The concept

A semester project enabling ECAL Master Product Design students to explore how modular ceramic elements can become structure, space and narrative within a historic site.

Material encounters in Modena

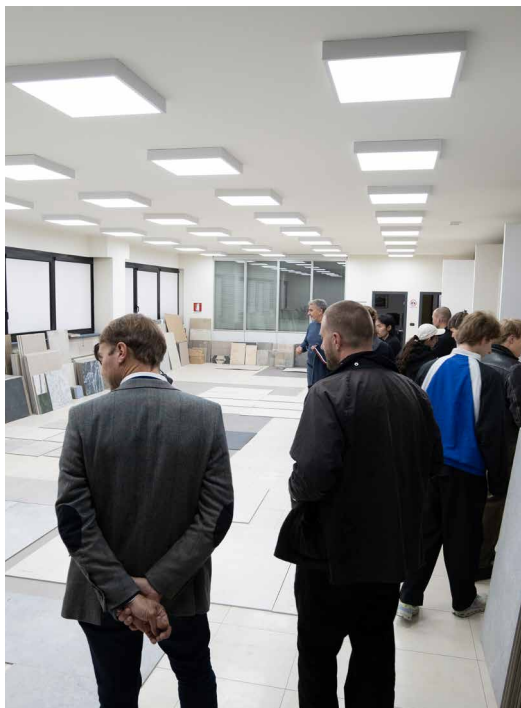
The program launched with a visit to ceramics producer Mutina in Modena. Students observed the production process – from clay to fired modules – experimented with ceramic modules and discussed design and logistical constraints with designers and technicians. They discovered that understanding ceramic materiality – its production steps, modular formats and technical limits – is essential to shaping an architectural proposal. These insights prepared students for the hands-on challenge of creating projects for the Villa Medici's Festival des Cabanes 2026 in Rome.

Shaping a proposal for Rome

Back in Lausanne, students worked in pairs to develop concepts, spatial narratives and constructible systems. They refined their ideas through regular consultations with Mutina and the Villa Medici, then presented 1:10 models, and watercolour and digital 3D renderings. This phase strengthened their ability to design at architectural scale while respecting logistics such as transport, assembly and durability.

One project to exhibit, a win for all

Working within a real-life context helped students strengthen their design skills and taught them to successfully integrate industrial constraints into a final design. The program culminated in a final presentation from which one project was selected to be built and exhibited at the Villa Medici.





The Ghana experience: Rhythm, dialogue & discovery

Music

October 28 – November 10, 2025 | Accra, Ghana

"We can return home. All my senses are full."

Institutions:

HEMU - Haute Ecole de Musique, Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 10

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 3

Special thanks to:

Embassy of Switzerland to Ghana | Ghana Jazz Foundation | +233 Jazz Bar & Grill | Alliance Française Accra | Ghana Jazz Collective | Ayekoo Drummers | Accra Jazz Academy | HEMU Jazz Orchestra | Black Box | Montreux Jazz Club Millennium | Auditorium Ansermet | Salle Ton sur Ton

To learn more about this experience, see the link below:

Le Temps: Quand des étudiants de Lausanne partent apprendre le jazz à Accra

The concept

The Ghana Experience brings HEMU students into direct collaboration with Ghanaian musicians, creating a space where jazz, traditional rhythms and intercultural dialogue meet. Students immerse themselves in Accra's musical ecosystem through master classes, ensemble work and performances. The program fosters artistic risk-taking and cultural exchange – blending musical worlds to ignite exciting creations.

A vibrant fusion of musical worlds

Over two intensive weeks, ten HEMU students worked closely with Ghanaian master musicians, absorbing new sounds that broadened their musical instincts. From highlife grooves to traditional percussion to contemporary jazz, they were freed to play without scores, trust intuition and engage in musical dialogue.

Onstage in Ghana & Switzerland

Sharing the stage with the Ghana Jazz Collective and the Ayekoo Drummers, they performed across Accra. Their artistry grew across five concerts – from a high-profile opening at the Swiss Embassy to a finale at the legendary +233 jazz club. Singing in Ga and Twi, and re-imagining Western repertoire with Ghanaian rhythms, they uncovered fresh creative possibilities and deep connection with Accra's vibrant musical community. The HEMU Jazz Orchestra and the Ayekoo Drummers later brought these sounds to Switzerland, where they played four concerts: at Black Box (Sion); Montreux Jazz Club Millennium (Crissier); Auditorium Ansermet (Geneva) and Salle Ton sur Ton (La Chaux-de-Fonds).

Transformation in music, in life

The experience helped the HEMU students hone their skills, grow their musicianship and shift their artistic centre of gravity. The journey continued in Switzerland, where they reunited onstage with the Ayekoo Drummers and the HEMU Jazz Orchestra, carrying the spirit of Accra into these performances – and those still ahead.





Teaching language in multilingual Switzerland – priceless

Teacher Education

November 6 – 11, 2025 | Thurgau, Switzerland

“This exchange gave me a better understanding of and insight into part of my country’s culture. We were made to feel very welcome, with a program that combined cultural activities with opportunities to immerse ourselves in the academic and school environment, including the chance to teach an engaging French lesson to a class – one of the highlights of our stay in Thurgau.”

Institutions:

University of Teacher Education Vaud
(HEP Vaud), Switzerland

Pädagogische Hochschule Thurgau (PHTG),
Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 5
from partners: 6

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 1
from partners: 1

Special thanks to:

Participating middle school and teachers
in Kreuzlingen

The concept

How can language teaching help bring a multilingual country closer together? This program brings students from two teacher education universities – HEP Vaud and PHTG – together to train in language teaching in both French- and German-speaking regions of Switzerland. Through co-teaching and joint workshops, they deepen their understanding of language didactics, strengthen their skills to motivate pupils, build professional networks and gain practical experience.

Learning from the pros

This segment took place in Kreuzlingen and focused on French language learning. (It is followed in Spring 2026 with a reciprocal exchange in Lausanne.) Onsite, students shadowed teachers in various classrooms to observe language-teaching techniques as well as inspiring real-life exchange projects. Conversations with these teachers further helped them refine their own ideas for effective language teaching.

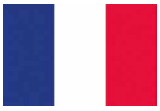
Getting practical

Small mixed teams of HEP Vaud and PHTG students prepared and delivered French lessons in a middle school class in Kreuzlingen. Other work for evaluation included a personal written report and a presentation of an exchange-program design, shared with experienced teachers through videos.

The culture of the German-speaking region

Visits to Kreuzlingen, Konstanz, Appenzell, Säntis, a Napoleonmuseum and a chocolate factory were both relaxing and useful – offering ideas for school trips in their future careers. The cultural immersion and close collaboration with German-speaking peers forged friendships and enabled students to see their own country through new eyes.





Photography through a Parisian lens

Photography

November 12 – 15, 2025 | Paris, France

“Being able to bring together the worlds of fashion and culture – which don’t always align – was a truly fascinating experience for us. We felt a great sense of freedom throughout our collaboration with Moncler, but to see our final exhibition, that was an accomplishment that made us very proud.”

Institutions:

ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne,
Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 7

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

Paris Photo | Maison Européenne de la
Photographie (MEP) | Moncler

The concept

ECAL Photography students gain new perspectives on their art in international locations. Through exhibitions, events, visits and meetings with local professionals, they explore photography and its place in culture – they then express their learning through a collection of their own photographs.

A fashion – and photography – capital

Visiting the world’s leading photography fair, *Paris Photo*, exposed students to broad global trends and contemporary practice. A guided visit to the *Maison Européenne de la Photographie’s library* – with its 36,000 books and periodicals from around the world – included a focused presentation of selected works, giving students a concrete sense of photography’s breadth and history.

Interpreting luxury

In Paris, students took on a real-world mandate: creating *Warmer Visions*, a series developed in collaboration with Moncler, an iconic outerwear and luxury lifestyle brand. The project required them to craft images that respond to the brand’s aesthetic and narrative language, challenging them to negotiate the boundary between artistic intention and applied imagemaking.

In sharp focus

The program culminated in a publication and a two-week pop-up exhibition of *Warmer Visions* at the Moncler boutique on the Champs-Élysées, giving students first-hand experience of a professional exhibition. At the vernissage, they met journalists and professionals from photography and fashion, gaining concrete feedback, advice and valuable contacts in the field.





Motion design meets type design in New York City

Media & Interaction Design

November 30 – December 8, 2025 | New York City, USA

“Working directly on an international exhibition has completely changed my vision of our responsibility as designers.”

Institutions:

ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne, Switzerland

Students:

from Vaud: 11

Professors/assistants:

from Vaud: 2

Special thanks to:

Swissnex Boston/New York | The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art | Herb Lubalin Archive (The Cooper Union) | Parsons School of Design | School of Visual Arts (SVA) | Google New York – Creative Coding team | Zach Lieberman studio | HEX House (studio/workspace) | Studios connected to the alumni network

The concept

For ECAL Bachelor Media & Interaction Design students, this program puts everything they’ve learned to the test through the real-life production of digital content for an international travelling exhibition. It sharpens their understanding of how global creative industries operate, intensified by a fast-paced, collaborative New York City workspace.

Exhibition in motion

The students worked on the digital components of *ECAL – A Typographic Atlas*, an exhibition showcasing ECAL’s excellence in type design. Applying motion design to typography in a fast production environment both honed their digital skills and broadened their knowledge of type design. Working with multiple typefaces – from experimental to functional to multiscript – grew their understanding of typography’s role in communication. Daily work sessions and regular feedback strengthened their command of type design, animation and exhibition-ready production.

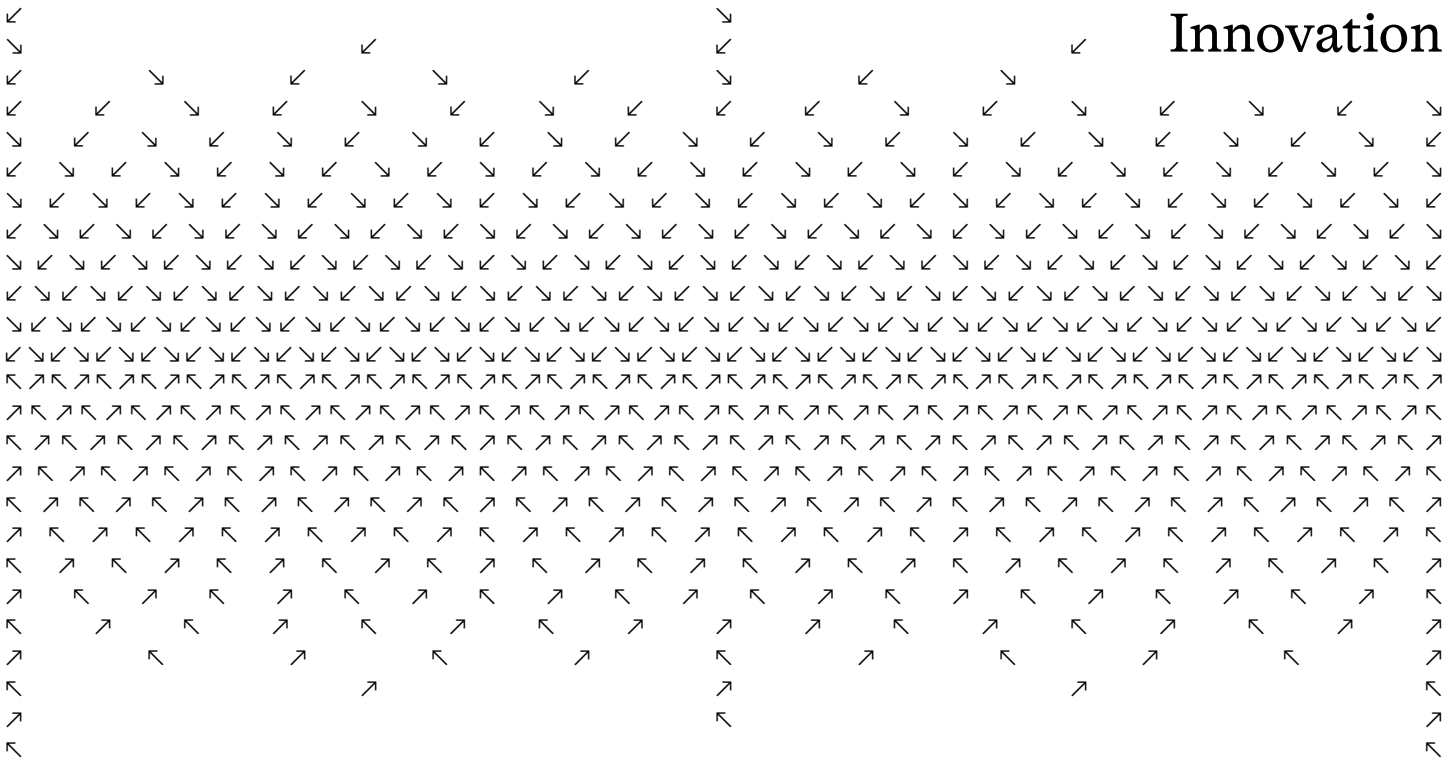
Exceptional access

The ECAL students were hosted by The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art – a renowned institution in Manhattan’s East Village. Access to the Herb Lubalin Archive deepened their understanding of typographic heritage, while numerous site visits around New York, including major organizations like Google, exposed the students to high-level professional practice across New York’s design landscape.

Motivation going forward

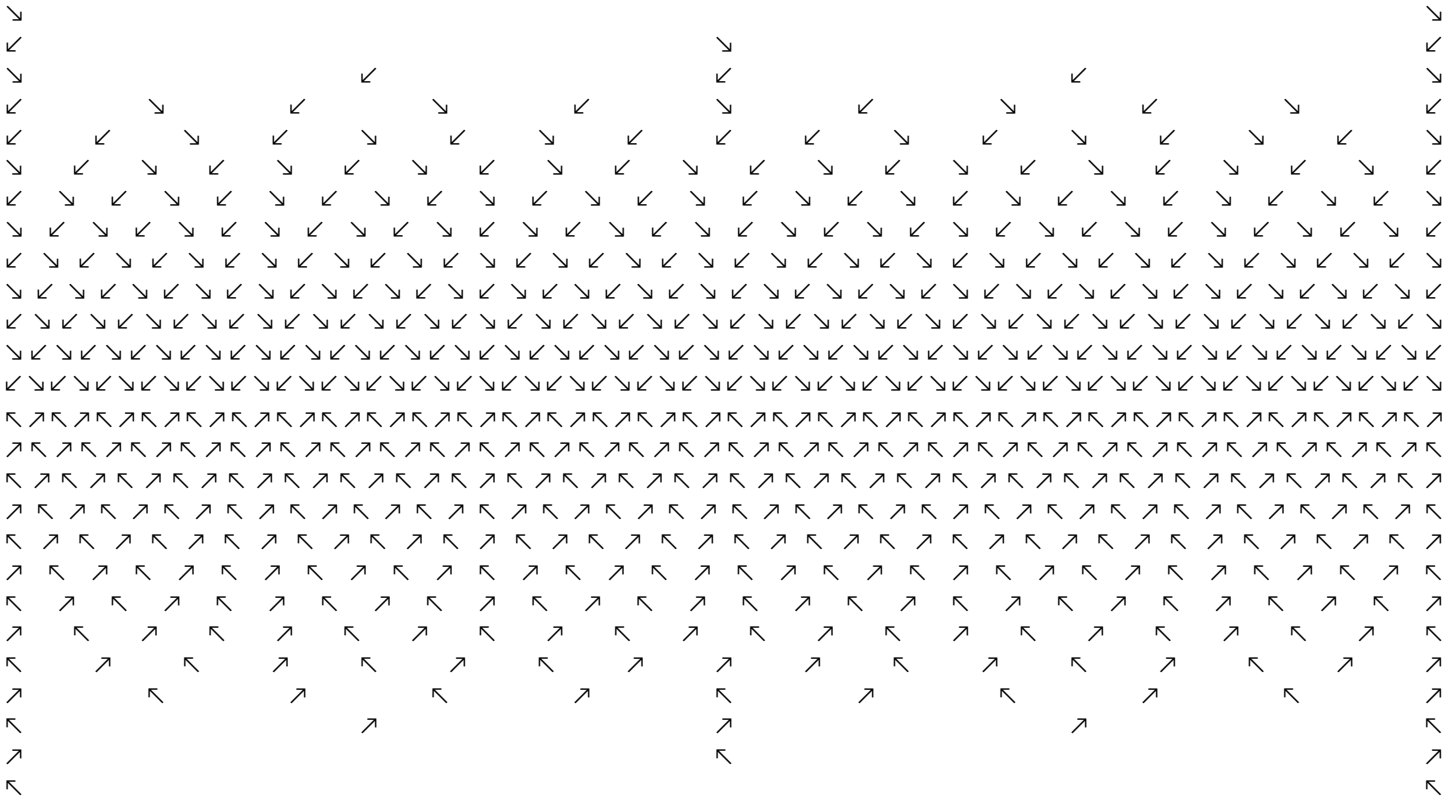
A Typographic Atlas – with the visuals animated in New York – is being shown from Turin to Tokyo. As for the students, they returned to Lausanne with stronger understanding of industry standards, more disciplined design approach and new international connections.





Innovation doesn't come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect.

– Steven Berlin Johnson



EPFL + ECAL Lab: innovation by design

Learn more

[Research projects](#)

[Publications & awards](#)

The EPFL+ECAL Lab starts technology projects where most others end: with the people who will actually use them. A leading centre for design research based in Lausanne, it brings together cognitive science, technology, artistic creativity and cultural understanding to study how people adopt and experience new technologies – and to shape innovation accordingly.

The Lab marked an important milestone in 2025: its collaboration with ECAL led to the launch of a new ECAL Master in Digital Experience Design (DXD) in September. Unique in Switzerland, this new program addresses the growing demand for designers capable of navigating hybrid fields that merge interaction design, AI, and digital ecosystems. It integrates research-driven methodologies, interdisciplinary collaboration, and hands-on experimentation to give designers the skills to create solutions centered on human needs.

The Lab's annual *Unseen Insights* event focused in 2025 on reconnecting people, the environment and data to address climate change. The event explored how design can translate complex environmental data into meaningful insights to support informed decision-making. Through MountResilience, a Horizon Europe project gathering 47 partners with a €20 million budget over five years, the Lab has strengthened the place of Vaud and Valais in European environmental innovation. At the event, the team unveiled a first prototype of the digital platform connecting citizens with real-time water management data.

At SIGGRAPH 2025 in Vancouver – the world's largest conference on computer graphics and interactive techniques – the Lab's Founding Director Nicolas Henchoz presented the *SIGGRAPH for Health* initiative. It brings together leading experts to explore how computer imaging and interaction technologies can transform healthcare, placing a human-centred approach to adoption at its core.

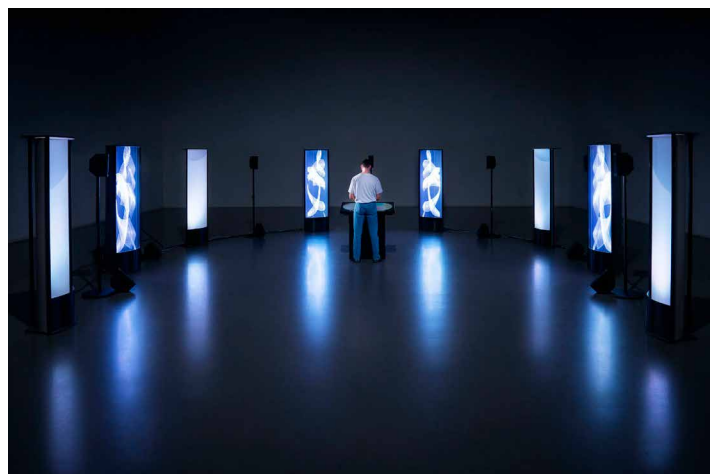
Researchers Emily Groves and Margherita Motta presented the Lab's peer-reviewed paper, "*Cultural Resonance – understanding food cultures to inform adaptive AI for healthy and sustainable eating*" at IASDR 2025 in Taipei, one of the most important global conferences in design research. The work was developed within the European SWITCH project.

Elsewhere in 2025, the *Burning Memories* event retired the Montreux Jazz Heritage Lab I immersive installation after more than 15 years – underscoring how design research can generate digital innovation with lasting impact; Poster World joined the permanent Swiss Design Collection at the *Museum für Gestaltung Zürich*; and healthcare and wellbeing research was presented at tech&fest in Grenoble and the Verbier Art Summit.

Across the EPFL+ECAL Lab's 2025 work, a consistent conviction emerges: data only delivers on its promise when people can understand, experience, and act on it. •

Below left: Praeludium, a 2025 installation that lets users experience classical music through immersive 3D sounds and visuals shaped by the composition.
© EPFL+ECAL Lab / Marvin Merkel

Below right: Évokâ, an installation created in collaboration with the Fribourg cantonal library. This mobile version lets users interact with digitized photos and documents from the library's archives.
© EPFL+ECAL Lab / Daniela & Tonatiuh



A culture of innovation

In conversation with Nathalie Nyffeler, Full Professor and Head of LA FABRIX- HEIG-VD's Innovation & Entrepreneurship Unit



Nathalie Nyffeler, Head of LA FABRIX

Q: You lead innovation and entrepreneurship at HEIG-VD. Tell me about your role and what your team does.

I see myself as a facilitator – someone who helps people move from idea to action. At LA FABRIX, our mission is to build bridges: between education and entrepreneurship, between research and companies or public institutions. We support entrepreneurial initiatives coming from students, alumni and researchers, but also work to develop a culture of innovation across the school.

Q: What does the name “LA FABRIX” signify?

Our unit was created to extend the scope of HEIG-VD's existing entrepreneurship and innovation support – I wanted a name that reflected that. Our offices are in the old Hermès factory buildings in Yverdon and there is quite a raw, industrial feeling. I thought it would be interesting to reflect this in the name: LA FABRIX is a factory for entrepreneurs, for innovators, for ideas.

Q: What is HEIG-VD's approach to innovation – and how does it differ from that of a more traditional research university?

As we are a university of applied sciences, innovation means transforming knowledge into useful solutions, often in collaboration with public and private partner organizations. Our research is concretely applied to their needs – solving an industrial challenge, improving a public service or making better use of a technology. Traditional universities do fundamental research and produce new knowledge, which is essential – our missions are different but complementary, and we often collaborate.

Interdisciplinarity is a defining feature for applied universities, enabling transversal innovation. The Senior Lab illustrates this well: it's a living lab co-founded with *La Source* nursing school and ECAL school of design. Engineering, design, health and social science combine to improve quality of life for elderly people.

Q: How do you embed innovation learning into the student experience?

We foster a culture of innovation by placing students in real situations as early and as often as possible. It's not just for future entrepreneurs – the goal is to develop creativity, adaptability, and the ability to work across disciplines. One flagship program is Innovation CRUNCH Time*, an event where students work in interdisciplinary teams over five days to solve real-world challenges.

Further examples include: *De la tech au business*, which has students explore the market potential of a technology; Business Concept, supported by Innosuisse, covers a full entrepreneurial project from value proposition to pitch; and PiBS, a four-year bachelor's with around 40% practice-based learning in a partner company.

Q: How do you support a project that might become a startup?

As a small school with about 1,500 bachelor's students, we can offer highly individualized support, focusing on quality over quantity and prioritizing interdisciplinary projects. Between 2020 and 2025, we count 14 entrepreneurial projects, of which 12 are still active and eight resulted in launched companies. This may seem like a small number, but it is a strong percentage given our size – and we are aiming for more.



Images from HEIG-VD's Innovation CRUNCH Time event.

LA FABRIK supports students and recent alumni to move from idea to applied research, to prototype, to structured entrepreneurial project. We facilitate access to funding through grants such as the HEIG-VD BOOST Grant, FIT Tech Grant, Venture Kick, First Ventures from Gebert Rûf Stiftung or Innosuisse programs.

Q: What defines a successful startup in your view?

Success is about creating value that is real and lasting. The “unicorn” model is not the most relevant for us. We look at viability after three to five years, genuine adoption, jobs created, talent retained in Vaud. Does the solution meet a concrete need? Is it adopted? Does it create jobs, impact, or contribute to the region? Some projects become startups, others strengthen existing organizations or public services.

Q: How does HEIG-VD connect to the wider innovation ecosystem in Vaud?

In the lifecycle of startups, LA FABRIK often acts as an upstream link. We help projects clarify their value proposition, their market, their team, and their business model. When a project matures beyond that, we direct them toward Y-Parc, Y-START, Innovaud, GENILEM, FIT, Venture Kick, or Innosuisse, among others.

A good example is our relationship with Y-Parc, the largest technology park in Switzerland. It's right next to our campus and considers HEIG-VD its main academic partner. We bring talent and applied research; Y-Parc offers a dense environment of companies, start-ups and investors.

Being an applied university, we – by definition – are closely connected with businesses and public institutions regionally, strengthening a virtuous cycle of innovation. The cityYLaB collaboration with the City of Yverdon, for example, brings HEIG-VD researchers and city employees together to work on projects that directly benefit the community.

Q: What are the key challenges shaping innovation today?

Artificial intelligence is clearly transforming everything – how we teach, innovate and work. Another key concern for us is the shortage of emerging talent in technical fields. The aging population is transforming needs in terms of health, mobility, housing and public services. The environmental crisis requires new approaches to energy use, circular economies, eco-design and resource management. Finally, geopolitical challenges impact questions of digital sovereignty and cybersecurity.

Underlying all of this is a deeper challenge – uncertainty. To face this, tomorrow's workforce will need agility, interdisciplinary skills and innovative mindsets. Building these capacities is exactly what LA FABRIK is designed to do.

Q: What is your ambition for LA FABRIK in the years ahead – and for HEIG-VD's place in innovation?

I would like LA FABRIK to become a reference in French-speaking Switzerland for applied innovation support. That is, every student living at least one real innovation experience, solid project support, and more diversity in who carries them forward.

Another focus is foresight. A school is a large ship, but because LA FABRIK is small and less constrained by silos, we can be the antenna – sensing weak signals, detecting emerging opportunities, making connections across the ecosystem. Bringing that capacity to the service of the school's leadership and colleagues is a role I want to keep developing.

My ambition extends beyond the school-to-startup pipeline. HEIG-VD has a role to play as a civic actor – helping companies, municipalities, public institutions and associations navigate the changes ahead. Being so rooted in this region means we understand its realities, and that's what lets us serve it well. •

*Read more about HEIG-VD's 2025 edition of Innovation CRUNCH Time on the next page.

Innovation CRUNCH Time

HEIG-VD students take on real-world challenges

Congratulations prize winners!

Team Retraites Populaires
Jury Prize

Team Heraeus
Swiss Engineering - Vaud / SE-Vaud Prize

Team International Equestrian Federation (FEI)
Audience Award

Team Smartcharger
Entrepreneurship Award from the Association
for the Development of Northern Vaud (ADNV)

Five days, 60 challenges, nearly 300 students. On Friday, March 21, 2025, Innovation CRUNCH Time wrapped up with a prize ceremony at HEIG-VD.

Multidisciplinary teams of students in Yverdon-les-Bains tackled innovation challenges submitted by companies, groups and associations with local, national and international impact – bringing the diverse perspectives of their disciplines to bear on real-world problems.

Guided by a design thinking approach, students were supported throughout by around thirty coaches drawn from HEIG-VD's teaching and research staff. HEIG-VD's MakeLab facilities were made available for prototyping. Team spirit, creativity and ingenuity came together in unique solutions across the event – with four teams earning prizes for their innovations.

Innovation CRUNCH Time is a collaboration between the School of Engineering and Management Vaud & the Université de Technologie de Belfort-Montbéliard (UTBM). •

© Anthony Demierre



Défi Source: back with more healthcare innovations

Défi Source is a hackathon-style event organized by the *Institut et Haute École de la Santé La Source*. Multi-disciplinary teams collaborate to develop innovative healthcare solutions for timely challenges. Open to anyone, participants pitch ideas, form teams and compete for prizes.

Congratulations prize winners!

AltheaVR

CSS Assurance Prize & Jury Prize by *Biopôle*

Atelier Santé

Audience Award by *La Clinique de La Source*

Formation PPPAPillons

UNIL Prize by HUB Entrepreneurship and Innovation & HEIG-VD Distinction

Healio

FIT *Fondation pour l'innovation et la technologie* Distinction & Galenica SA Distinction

Link'Care

Association des communes de Crans-Montana Prize

LittleCubes

Multiple SA Global Design Distinction & City of Lausanne Distinction

PowerDiab

Unisanté Prize

S'asseoir pour mieux (se) soigner

Associations faitières cantonales romandes des institutions psycho-médico-sociales & AVASAD Prize

Défi Source returned for its third edition in spring 2025, concluding on May 23rd with a closing ceremony at the *Institut et Haute École de la Santé La Source*. Organized by *La Source* and supported by the SILAB Innovation Laboratory and the H4 Entrepreneurial Hub, the event unfolded over three weeks – from registration to pitch day to guided work sessions to prizes.

After initial rounds, 14 projects were selected; some 190 participants were split into teams to help get these projects ready for a three-day bootcamp wherein they received specialized support from domain experts and partners – typically a CHF 10,000 value.

On the final day, teams presented their proposed solutions to an audience of professionals, institutions and partner organizations, with eight prizes and five distinctions awarded to the most promising projects. Prizes take the form of coaching, mentoring and strategic support – giving laureates the concrete backing needed to bring their solutions into real-world practice.

The winning projects addressed challenges ranging from mental health and rare diseases to care planning, childhood health education and chronic illness. As healthcare challenges grow increasingly complex, *Défi Source* continues its mission to stimulate innovations that are not only technological but also human and socially relevant, through a collaborative and transdisciplinary approach. •

Below: *Défi Source* prize winners.



Those old stories of visions and dreams guiding men
have their truth; we are saved by making the future
present to ourselves.

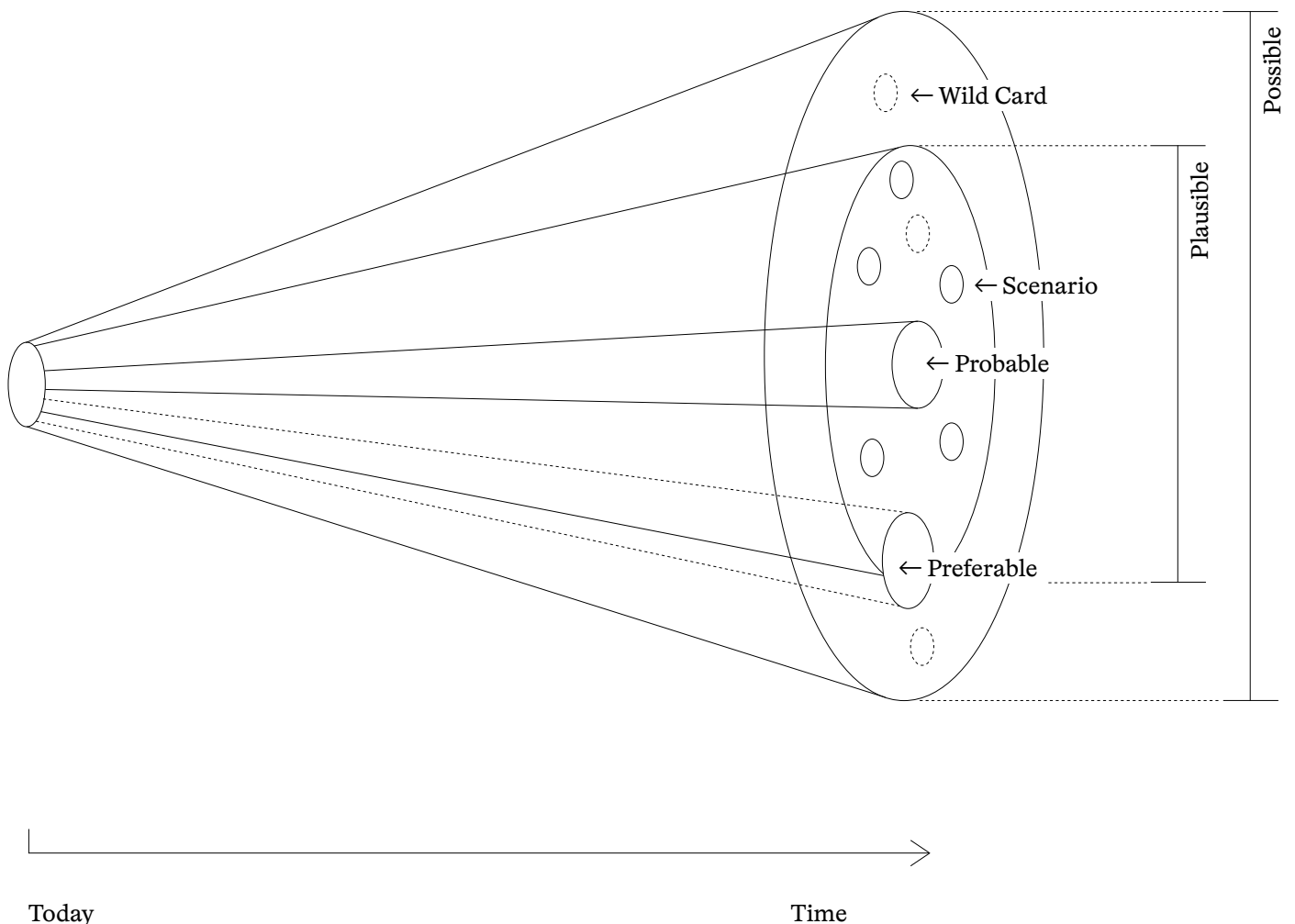
— George Eliot

What is foresight – and how does it work?

Nobody can predict the future. But what if we could better prepare for it? Foresight is an interdisciplinary science that systematically explores what futures are possible – typically taking a long view of 40 to 50 years – to make informed decisions for strategic action.

The Futures Cone

The goal of foresight is not to predict the Probable. It is to shape the Preferable.



A toolkit: 10 foresight methods worth knowing

Foresight draws on a wide range of methods that tend to move from open exploration toward structured analysis and – ultimately – toward action.



BRAINSTORMING

Creative, open discussion – no wrong answers

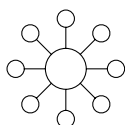
Gets diverse voices and non-linear ideas into the room. Breaks out of “how things have always been done”.



HORIZON SCANNING

Systematic search for weak signals of change

Looks across politics, technology, society, environment to catch strong or weak signals of emerging trends, and to identify that which is just noise.



PESTEL

Scans political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal forces

Structured scan across six domains for a 360° vision

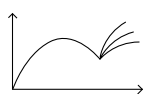
Provides a structured 360° view of the context – ensuring no major influence goes unexamined.



FUTURES WHEEL

Maps the chain reactions triggered by a single change

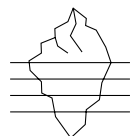
Reveals direct and indirect consequences that would otherwise be missed, preventing narrow or reactive thinking.



TREND ANALYSIS

Identifies patterns and trajectories in existing data

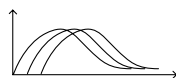
Reveals which forces are gaining or losing momentum – and where they may lead.



CAUSAL LAYERED ANALYSIS (CLA)

Analysis of the different layers of meaning – from single action to cultural myth

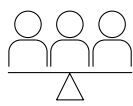
Allows exploration of the underlying narratives that influence visions of the future.



THREE HORIZONS

Mapping of short, medium and long-term futures

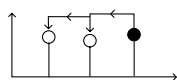
Enables simultaneous thinking across short-term needs, emerging trends and long-range transformation.



DELPHI METHOD

Iterative, anonymous expert survey

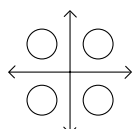
Seeks consensus through multiple rounds to gain expert judgement without the influence of opinion hierarchy.



BACKCASTING

Defines a desired future then works backwards

Identifies the milestones and strategies needed to reach a desired objective by working backwards from it.



SCENARIO PLANNING

Structured narratives presenting several plausible futures

Helps explore multiple alternative trajectories – instead of a single future – in order to better prepare for what may come.

Other tools for specific situations

Depending on the question being explored, practitioners may also draw on more targeted methods such as *cross-impact analysis* (how variables influence each other), *roadmapping* (plotting steps toward a defined goal), *agent-based modelling* (simulating how complex systems behave), and *data analytics and bibliometrics* (spotting trends at scale across datasets or research literature).

Some examples of foresight themes

Foresight can be applied to any area of life, but several emerging themes stand out for their potential to reshape societies, economies and institutions in the decades ahead.

- Robotics / IoT / Humanoids
- Predictive, personalized and preventive medicine
- AI-assisted or autonomous research
- Brain-Machine Interface (BMI)
- New energy sources: next-generation nuclear, concentrated storage, concentrated solar
- Advanced and self-repairing materials, nanotechnologies
- Space and orbital economy: orbital industries, space mining
- Personalized education, extended reality
- Democracy 2.0

Foresight in action: weak signals in education

One of foresight's most valuable contributions is the identification of weak signals – early, easy-to-miss signs that a significant shift may be underway. In *higher education*, several such signals are already visible.

- Micro-certifications and modular learning. A growing trend toward short, specialized training programs to meet the needs of professionals throughout their careers.
- AI in the classroom. AI is transforming teaching methods – especially through personalized learning paths and adaptive content.
- Decentralized education. Online platforms (e.g. MOOCs) and hybrid models are challenging traditional institutions and could increasingly become primary learning formats.
- New metrics for success. University ranking criteria are beginning to incorporate dimensions such as social impact and student wellbeing alongside academic output.
- Interdisciplinarity as the new norm. Redefining academic competencies as complex global challenges require multiple perspectives rather than siloed disciplines.

“We cannot act responsibly on futures we cannot imagine.”

- Foresight Pioneer Elise Boulding

WEF Global Foresight Network: DGES at the table



The Global Foresight Network at the summer retreat in Geneva.

© Kamal Kimaoui

The WEF Global Foresight Network convenes an international group of senior decision-makers and strategists from across government, industry, academia, and international organizations. Established by the World Economic Forum, the invitation-only network aims to turn foresight into a practical input for policy and strategy.

The Network meets twice a year – at the WEF Annual Meeting in Davos and at a dedicated summer retreat in Geneva. Swiss education is represented by Christine Gaulis, Head of International Affairs, Foresight and Innovation at the DGES, alongside Dr. Chris Luebke, Leader of the Strategic Foresight Hub at ETH Zurich (who retires in 2026).

Each gathering is co-designed by members, who bring forward questions rooted in their own professional and regional contexts. In 2025, discussions within the Global Foresight Network focused on key global challenges identified by participants, including geopolitical polarization, societal fragmentation, environmental and energy transitions, and the shift from the industrial era to the intelligence era. Gaulis noted that this is a key moment in education design, where social cohesion and core research priorities increasingly depend on adapting to financial constraints and to wideranging technological, societal, and political transformations. •

Catalyzing positive tipping points: talking futures at Davos 2025



Left to right: UNIGE Prof. Tina Ambos, EPFL President Anna Fontcuberta i Morral, UNIGE Rector Audrey Leuba and EPFL Prof. Michael Aklin.

© G. Hürlimann/EPFL

On January 21, 2025, EPFL and the University of Geneva co-hosted a round-table luncheon on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. The event was held under the umbrella of the Geneva Futures Talks, an informal dialogue series initiated in 2024 by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Futures Lab, the World Economic Forum, the Beyond Lab (formerly the SDG Lab), EPFL, and the UN Development Programme. The invitation-only event brought together leaders from academia, the private sector, public institutions, philanthropy, and international organizations.

The discussion centered on “positive tipping points” — moments where small, focused interventions trigger cascading beneficial change across complex systems. Drawing on the research expertise of Prof. Michael Aklin (EPFL’s Enterprise for Society Center), Prof. Tina Ambos and Dr. Alexandre Hedjazi (UNIGE’s Center for Innovation & Partnerships), participants examined challenges across five domains: governance, technology, education, financial inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Key voices included Ambassador Alexandra Baumann, Head of the Prosperity and Sustainability Division at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, who emphasized anticipatory diplomacy and science-policy collaboration; Bryonie Guthrie of the World Economic Forum, who stressed aligning policy, finance, and governance for systemic change; and Dr. Chantal Line Carpentier of UNCTAD, who called for moving beyond GDP-based metrics to integrate social and environmental impact as core organizational indicators. •

Exploring Futures at the Dubai Future Forum



Dubai's Museum of the Future.

© Александр Сигачёв

Dubai's Museum of the Future inspires awe – and once a year, it delivers even more. The iconic building is emptied entirely and handed over to 2,500 invitation-only foresight practitioners for the Dubai Future Forum.

“It’s a gathering of people who want to consciously look at what futures may come to be,” says Christine Gaulis, Head of International Affairs, Foresight and Innovation at the DGES. “Consciously looking ahead is what allows people – and organizations like DGES – to act today in ways that drive towards a positive future.”

The annual event, first run in 2022, spans an extraordinary range of domains from the future of health to education to security to NASA’s vision for space exploration. “It’s incredibly valuable to have world-leading specialists walking you through each theme – what the challenges are, what the trends are, what the vision is. It’s interesting also to see the contrasts: with 2,500 people from all over the world, you get perspectives from everywhere, making for more comprehensive and unified projections.”

She continues: “For me, it was especially gratifying and useful to understand Switzerland’s positioning in this. There is no theme we are not already working on. It’s not what we *want* to do – we *actually* do it.”

Among the trends that stood out: health and longevity; fully autonomous transport, including bikes that self-stabilize to prevent falls; brain-machine interfaces; and the rapid advance of humanoid robotics. “We will have humanoids at home. I’m looking forward to having my kitchen perfectly clean, the perfect dinner created,” she says unironically. She explains that this is not exaggerated – the humanoids she saw had advanced incredibly in dexterity and other capacities from what she saw just a year prior.

Another distinguishing feature of the event is the inclusion of artists alongside scientists, academics, policymakers and industry experts. Their contribution is not just entertainment or decoration – it is an integral part of the conversation.

“Artists have this amazing skill of making your imagination go further and wider,” says Gaulis. “One of the artists said to me: look at this wall – if no one had imagined it, it wouldn’t exist.” Seeing imagination as a starting point means it could have been imagined differently.

When you apply imagination to the future, what appears locked in a single trajectory becomes open to different possibilities. “That’s the way I think,” says Gaulis. “People with imagination can become experts in foresight.” •

Reading the signals, navigating the future

A short story about using foresight to shape the role of artificial intelligence in tomorrow's education. Co-authored by Sheena Kennedy and Claude AI.



Lausanne. 2042. It was graduation day for Ada. She didn't know what to expect, just that she had received the message from Professor Osei: *Meet me by the lake.*

He was already there when she arrived, standing beside a small device that looked like nothing so much as a lantern. As she approached, it opened — a cone of light that expanded and released three floating orbs. “A Foresight tradition,” Osei said, smiling. “Before we certify where you have arrived today, we look back on other ways you might have experienced your education. Four possible futures. Each one real enough to have happened.”

The first orb flickered and Ada saw a version of 2042 shaped by decades of market pressure, uncertain policy, and the optimization of everything measurable. AI tutors had proliferated, credentials had multiplied, and institutions — overwhelmed — had quietly stepped back, ceding the design of learning to platforms built for efficiency. Ada had certified across eleven platforms before she turned 22. She had learned to process the world with precision — she could analyze a painting, date it, contextualize it — but had no language for what it made her feel. Nobody had decided this future — but enough people had deferred to the machine, often enough, that it had arrived anyway. The result was a life optimized for legibility rather than meaning. The orb dimmed and dissipated.

She turned to the second orb. It showed a world where humans had remained in charge of education — ministers, institutions, teachers, parents — but where the pace of change had consistently outrun the pace of decision. By the time a curriculum was agreed upon, the landscape it was designed for had already shifted. AI had been integrated, but the mechanisms to adapt meaningfully had never quite followed. Many students used it not as a tool but as a substitute for the productive discomfort of not-yet-knowing, and the system, optimized for completion, did not discourage them. They were trying to keep up, but the world had changed faster than the institutions built to navigate it. The orb floated away over the lake.

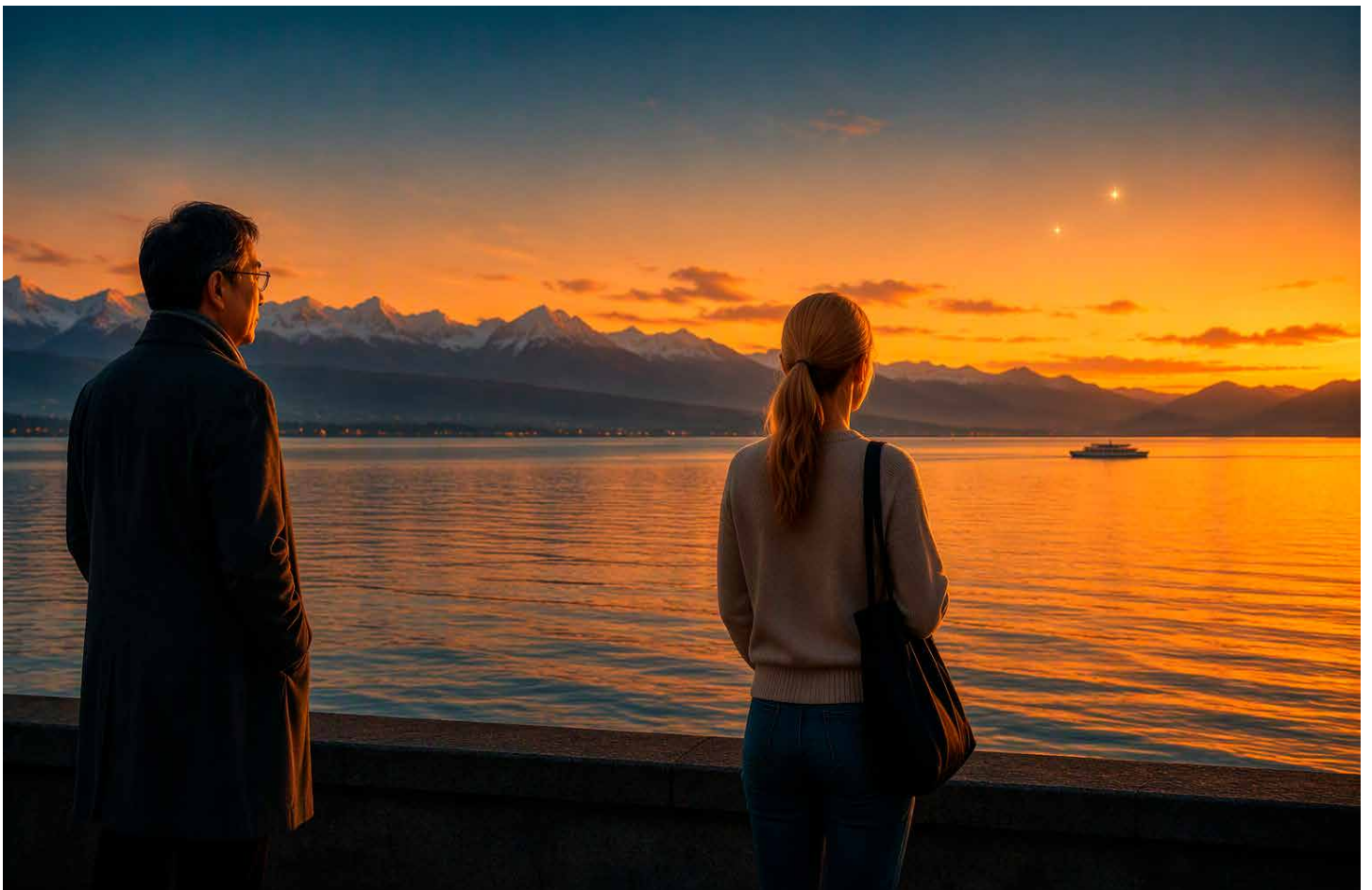
Then something shot from the cone — not an orb, but a shard of light, ragged and unformed. It streaked across the water and caught the second orb, pulling it back and transforming it into a new orb. The orb pulsed, then split into two. Inside the new orb was the same world, but the years of screen-mediated learning had left a neurological trace: a generation able to navigate information so fluently that they could analyze challenges, generate near-certain solutions and develop implementation plans rapidly. Climate change, for example, had been modeled by a young team from universities around the world. The model was clear and assured — though bureaucracies had varying capacity to integrate globally.

A third orb emerged, glowing steadily and landing gently in Ada's open hand. It showed a learning environment that was neither over-optimized nor paralyzed: Ada moving through a curriculum she had helped shape, supported by AI that adapted to her questions rather than replacing them, guided by teachers who knew when to speak and when to watch. The certifications she was assembling were hers — not assigned by a platform, not delayed by committee — built toward a life she was already beginning to imagine. Osei caught the orb in his hand. “That one,” he said, “is the one you lived.”

Ada watched a solar ferry crossing the lake, her mind turning to her namesake. Ada Lovelace had been shaped by two opposing forces — her poet father's romantic imagination and her mathematician mother's iron discipline. It was that tension that let her see, in the 1840s, what the calculating

machine could become: not just a processor of numbers but of any symbols that could be formally expressed. She wrote it down with precision — a procedure the machine had never been asked to execute, what would eventually be called an *algorithm*. The future she described would not arrive for over a century. What struck Ada now was that Osei was much like Lovelace — someone who saw change coming before the world was ready to hear it. “Yes,” said Osei, as if reading her mind. “Twenty-some years ago, my Foresight colleagues and I could see where this was heading. The work was long — evidence, frameworks, arguments, patience. And we never stop looking. The horizon is always forty years out.”

He handed Ada her set of micro-certifications. She thanked him and walked back toward the city, already thinking about what to learn next — and what kind of life to build around it. •



Images created by Copilot 365 AI

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Special thanks to the professors, students and administrators of Vaud institutions who contributed information and support necessary to the creation of this report.

