



Dear Members of the University

New affiliation and new (old) identification

We are pleased to share the following news with you. In November 2022, we moved from the Vice President's Office for People and Culture to the Vice President's Office for Research. In May 2023, the President's Board decided to change the name of the unit National and International Cooperation back to the International Office (IO), as it was originally called. Vice President Prof. Dr. Torsten Schwede took the lead in finalizing the internationalization strategy that was recommended by the evaluators in the 2022 accreditation report. We are happy to support this process with our utmost efforts.

We wish everyone a rejuvenating summer vacation and energy for the next semester,

Hedwig J. Kaiser
Head International Office

www.unibas.ch/intoffice

This newsletter is aimed at all university members; in order to reach as many as possible, we publish it largely in English.

NEWS

International Relations

AIT Swiss–African Science and Business Innovators Program (AIT SASBI)

Visit by South African and Rwandan research-based start-ups to Switzerland

The 2023 edition of the *Swiss–African Science and Business Innovators Program* was wrapped up with a common meal in the innovation and business district of Hardbrücke near Zurich.



Coordinated by the International Office and its International Relations unit, this program invites science-based startup companies from universities in South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana for a week of exchange with peers and entrepreneurship coordinators in Switzerland. Financed by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation SERI within the larger context of the Academia–Industry Training program with countries outside Europe and cofinanced by the program-partner countries, this year's Swiss Residency Week took place on 18–23 June.



The start-up founders, the program coordinators, and a liaison person of the Rwandan Embassy in Switzerland had the opportunity to dive deep into the research, IP, and innovation landscape of Switzerland through visits to the Universities of Applied Sciences in Brugg and Rapperswil, an innovation day organized by the Innovation Office of the University of Basel, a workshop with the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IGE) and the African desk of a Bern-based law firm, and through presenting their business models to research units at the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (EMPA) as well as to energy- and construction-material labs at FH Ost.

At the same time, this visit gave Swiss stakeholders an opportunity to see the dynamic and thriving innovation being driven by young African researchers. For more information about the start-ups, please visit the sareco.org program website.

Contact: Erich.Thaler@unibas.ch

Link: www.sareco.org

Welcome & Euraxess Center / Student Exchange

Working with an interculturally sharpened gaze: Comparing systems & cultures of higher education

In March, a three-hour continuing education course on Religion at the Workplace was held for the first time. In this course organized by the International Office, Maria Wedekind, an intercultural trainer and PhD student in religious studies at the University of Basel, introduced admin, tech, and lab staff to the religious diversity around Basel and at the university. The analysis of religiously connoted examples from everyday life at the university showed how exciting and also sensitive this topic is. The participants unanimously asked for more such courses!

In April/May, the continuing-education course *Everyday Situations of Intercultural*

Communication in Higher Education was held for the second time. The booked-out course gathered together seventeen admin, tech, and lab staff members and was led by the intercultural trainers Andrea Delpho, MA, and Dr. Tanja Popović. It resulted in many insights and lively discussions, including numerous ideas of how to transfer them to everyday working life (see the word cloud). The course takes place every spring semester and counts toward a further intercultural opportunity at the International Office, the new *Certificate in Intercultural Competence*.

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Link: <https://www.unibas.ch/intoffice> (German Version)



Welcome & Euraxess Center / Student Exchange

Working Euraxess Switzerland - now on Instagram

Check out our feed to learn more about events, funding options, jobs, and careers!



Student Exchange

Swiss program for Erasmus+: Higher education

At the beginning of June 2023, the Federal Council began deliberations regarding the Dispatch on the Promotion of Education, Research and Innovation 2025–2028 (ERI Dispatch). The planned expenditures amount to CHF 29.7 billion. The deliberations will run until mid-September 2023. At the end of February 2024, the Federal Assembly will decide on the content and financing.

The financing of the Swiss European Mobility Program (the substitute for Erasmus+) depends in particular on the outcome. Increased funding is crucial to the future of international cooperation and mobility. How much funding is allocated and how it is distributed is of central importance for student mobility at the University of Basel, because the final amount available will decide whether European student mobility can be funded and whether students can have at least one exchange or mobility experience in the course of their education.

Increasing demand for exchanges, mobility, and cooperations and a lack of financial resources

Despite a slight slump in numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic, the demand for exchanges and mobility has increased steadily in recent years. Estimates indicate that the demand will continue to grow significantly in the years to come. The Confederation should take this increasing demand into account and increase the financial resources in their strategy. Since 2022, the demand has exceeded the available funds. This trend was confirmed in the beginning of 2023, as requests for mobility and cooperations were already almost double the budget. In addition, Swiss participation in European university alliances

(University of Basel and EPICUR) is also financed from the same budget.

Contact: Gérald Zimmermann, mobility@unibas.ch

Link SEMP: <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-95543.html>

Student Exchange

Annual general meeting of the Utrecht Network in Thessaloniki, Greece



The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, member of the Utrecht Network and of EPICUR

From April 26 to April 28, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki hosted the annual general meeting of the *Utrecht Network (UN)*, a European network with thirty members in twenty-four countries. The University of Basel is a long-standing member of this network.

After years of somewhat reduced activities due to the pandemic, it was good to meet old and new colleagues and friends once again in person to exchange expertise and discuss new trends and topics in international collaboration and partnerships.

The meeting began with a workshop held by our partner networks MAUI (USA), AEN (Australia), and REARI-RJ (Brazil). As one of the topics, we learned about the higher-education system in Brazil and the strong focus on internationalizing higher-education institutions through national and regional initiatives in the last fifteen years.

Furthermore, the participants exchanged their newest experiences with various EUIs (European University Initiatives) that some UN Universities are members of. The heads of all the UN task forces gave reports on their activities and presented their working plans for the next year. The topics of the task forces ranged from classical student and staff mobility to newer subjects like responsible internationalization, refugees, and sustainability in student exchange. Members also discussed new and hot topics in international education, like Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and Blended Intensive Programs (BIP).

We had the opportunity to see the vast campus of Aristotle University (over 80,000 students) and learned about the fascinating multilayered history of Thessaloniki and Macedonia.

The meeting was rounded out nicely with a trip to the amazing Meteora Monasteries, a UNESCO cultural heritage site since 1989.

Many thanks to our wonderful colleagues from Aristotle University for hosting us! We are looking forward to next year's general meeting of the Utrecht Network at the European University Cyprus.

Link Utrecht Network: <https://www.utrecht-network.org/>

Contact: Andrea Delpho, mobility@unibas.ch

Student Exchange

Student Exchange goes USA: International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on demand



Georgetown University, Washington, DC



Meridian House, Washington, DC

From June 3 to June 13, right after the yearly *International Education Conference NAFSA* in Washington, DC, I was part of a delegation of six Swiss higher-education institutions and the University of Liechtenstein participating in the *IVLP Program* for international student mobility and external-relations experts in higher education. *IVLP* stands for *International Visitor Leadership Program*, which is a long-standing program organized and financed by the US Department of State through the Meridian International Center in Washington, DC. The project idea for our tour had been initiated by the US Embassy in Bern, which also organized some pre-departure events for our group. The *IVLP* program started in Washington, DC, at the beautiful location of the Meridian Center, with introductions and a lecture on US constitutional history and federalism by Edward Rhodes, a professor of US history at George Mason University in Virginia. This was followed by a guided historical tour of the National Mall and its monuments.



Martin Luther King Memorial, Washington, DC

Fourteen universities and colleges in the DC area, Michigan, and central Florida in ten days

We visited a wide range of institutions: from large comprehensive state universities like Michigan State University in East Lansing and the University of Central Florida in Orlando, to land-grant universities like the University of Maryland, private universities like George Washington University and Georgetown in DC, private liberal-arts schools like Rollins College in Winter Springs, FL, Valencia Community College in Orlando, the urban campus of Wayne State University in Detroit, and the very specialized Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, which it is located in Daytona Beach on the Florida coast in proximity to the NASA space-operations launching site at Cape Canaveral.



University of Maryland



Rollins College, Florida: With a pool and a private lake



Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, Florida

Many colleagues, mainly from international and global-education offices, told us about their institutions, internationalization strategies, study-abroad programs, and international aspirations and gave us tours of their very different campuses and premises. We learned about their successes and challenges and gained new and deeper insights into the US higher-education landscape, networked with our peers, and fostered new connections. The program was rounded out with cultural and regional activities, like visits to several fantastic DC museums, a Detroit Tigers baseball game (they lost to Arizona), a tour of the Kennedy Space Center, and a very quick dip in the ocean in Florida. The whole *IVLP* tailor-made program was extremely well organized thanks to the fabulous team at Meridian and our local program coordinators in Michigan and Florida. We certainly learned a lot and were taken care of very generously. Many thanks to all the *IVLP* staff involved, the host institutions, the team at the US Embassy in Bern, and the US Department of State for their generosity.

Contact: Andrea Delpho, mobility@unibas.ch

Links: <https://www.state.gov/dipnote-u-s-department-of-state-official-blog/international-visitor-leadership-program-builds-connections-with-u-s-communities/> ; <https://exchanges.state.gov/> ; <https://ch.usembassy.gov/education-culture/>

A view from outside

Through the eyes of a student: A sneak peak into the International Office

Melina, during your preliminary internship before starting your studies in psychology, you worked, among other places, for many months in different sections of the International Office. What did you learn there as a future student?

I learned that international offices at institutions of higher education are helpful contact points and hubs for international concerns and exchanges. To illustrate what I mean, let me begin with the question: What actually makes a country unique? This question is not that easy to answer; especially the culture of a country makes it something special. What appears normal to us in Switzerland is not that easy to understand for people who are used to a different culture. And despite that, people from Japan, Nepal, and Africa dare to set out on a stay at the University of Basel. The International Office is there to support these people and to realize collaborative projects.

As someone from the region (BL), what did you take with you from this change in

perspective? What did you find stimulating for your career path as a psychologist?

Newcomers have to deal with totally everyday situations under different conditions. In Switzerland, the trains depart punctually to the minute, and one cannot include a regular delay in one's daily routine. Many cannot imagine why 10 CHF per day is not enough for what you need to eat. For Swiss institutions and people, it is important that one arrives at a meeting punctually and that one attends when one signs up. If one fails to attend, one has to say so, and so on. Such customs, which are self-understood for people who live in Switzerland, are often unusual and foreign to people from other countries, whether they are students or researchers who will stay at the University of Basel for longer or guests or delegations that are visiting our trinational region. The changes in all parts of one's life and managing them often represent a challenge for international newcomers and guests. So it was very exciting for me to be there for Student Exchange & the Welcome and Euraxess Center's *Intercultural Workshop for Incoming Students* in November 2022 and for International Relations' preparation and organization of the *AIT SASBI annual conference* in Johannesburg. I am currently engaged with accompanying African start-ups as they learn about Swiss institutions of higher education.

What was the most exciting aspect?

The most impressive was the diversity of the thematic areas. The units of the International Office support newcomers of all kinds so that they can enjoy their stays at the University of Basel carefree. Whether it is through information about life in Switzerland, the organization of intercultural workshops, collaborative projects with other universities, advising for foreign students, or preparing conferences on other continents. All that together enables stays at the University of Basel and makes them an unforgettable experience.

Interview conducted with: Melina Godtschan, melina.godtschan@unibas.ch

About this Newsletter

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