



## PRESS RELEASE

Geneva | 28 February 2023

### War in Ukraine: 100 academics welcomed

One year after the beginning of the conflict, many students and researchers have joined the UNIGE thanks to the Horizon Académique programme.

**On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, bringing to an abrupt halt the studies or research of many people working in Ukrainian universities. Thanks to the Horizon Académique programme launched, in 2016 by the University of Geneva (UNIGE), more than a hundred of them - specifically asylum seekers and refugees - have now been able to resume their studies in Geneva. The large influx of applications was absorbed thanks to close collaboration with the Rectorate and the various university departments. The programme has also been able to count on an important surge of solidarity within the institution. In 2023, Horizon Académique will continue its mission and develop new projects, including a childcare facility for the children of its beneficiaries, of all nationalities.**

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. One year later, while the war is still raging, the UNIGE has taken stock of the situation: thanks to its [Horizon Académique](#) programme, it has welcomed more than 140 Ukrainian students and 11 researchers who were affected by the conflict and hold an S permit. They were able to benefit from the four dimensions of this integration programme, which is unique in Switzerland: access to courses in the various faculties of the UNIGE and other higher education institutions in Geneva; the possibility of obtaining ECTS credits; French lessons adapted to the university level; personal guidance and student mentoring. This programme, which lasts an average of two years, will open up study opportunities at the UNIGE, the HES-SO Geneva and the Geneva Graduate Institute. It may also lead to another more suitable professional orientation.

“The first applications from Ukrainian students and researchers reached us at the end of February 2022, just a few days after the war began. We therefore had to react very quickly,” recalls Mathieu Crettenand, Integration Delegate and Horizon Académique programme manager. “The requests were then constant until September. Today, even if their number has decreased, they are still pouring in.” At the beginning of the summer, more than 300 applications were received at the UNIGE, 140 were accepted. Intensive French courses were then offered to those selected. Then, after an evaluation process, about 100 of them joined Horizon Académique in September.

#### At maximum capacity

“It would have been possible to accommodate twice as many students from these territories, but a capacity of 100 places was the right balance between the academic needs of this population and the logistical capacities of the UNIGE,” explains Mathieu Crettenand.



© UNIGE

Mathieu Crettenand, Integration Delegate and Horizon Académique programme manager.

High resolution pictures

A certain volatility was noted as several beneficiaries returned to Ukraine during the year. “These people were very quickly replaced by others. As a result, our capacity remained under pressure throughout the year.”

### **About Horizon Académique**

*The Horizon Académique programme was set up by the UNIGE in partnership with the Integration Office of the Canton of Geneva (BIE), several private foundations and the umbrella organisation of the UNIGE student associations, the CUAÉ.*

*It is based on inter-institutional collaboration with the HES-SO Geneva and the IHEID, as well as with the institutions responsible for asylum and migration in the canton of Geneva. It is intended for people in the asylum field (S, N, F or B or F-refugee permits) and for B family reunion permits. It is also open to Swiss nationals returning from abroad. The programme was awarded the UNIGE Medal for Innovation in 2022.*

## contact

### **Mathieu Crettenand**

Delegate for Integration

Horizon Académique  
programme manager

+41 22 379 11 13

Mathieu.Crettenand@unige.ch

As for the researchers, the majority of the eleven scientists welcomed joined the Faculty of Science, forming pairs with researchers already working at the UNIGE. Seven of them benefited from grants created in 2022 to support their activities. The grants, worth 50,000 francs each, were financed by private foundations and the university's General Fund. Renewals with a call for applications are planned for 2023. “Each application is treated separately, in order to define the best hosting solution. The files are submitted for approval to a special delegation of the strategic committee in charge of the issue of researchers in exile. A financial contribution is requested from the host entity,” explains Mathieu Crettenand.

### **The university community in solidarity**

The Horizon Académique team (20 people) was able to absorb this influx of requests with the support of the Rectorate, the Faculties and the university services. These exchanges led to the easing of certain administrative procedures, such as the abolition of the registration fee for candidates for matriculation and the extension of the registration deadlines. Horizon Académique was also able to count on a significant solidarity movement within the university. “Whether it is the professors who have mobilised to make accommodation available, the students who have committed themselves to mentoring, or the staff who have lent us a hand with various tasks, I would like to sincerely thank the entire university community for its exemplary mobilisation”, declares Yves Flückiger, Rector of the UNIGE.

Horizon Académique will continue its development in 2023. A childcare facility for the children of students and researchers in the programme will open in August. The team will also work to ensure the sustainability of the funding of the research grants and to open them to other nationalities. It will seek new partners and financial support. “We will strive to continue to develop all our activities in order to be able to respond to needs, in accordance with our public service mission,” concludes Mathieu Crettenand.

In 2022, Horizon Académique welcomed 435 participants (277 in 2021) from 53 different countries, of which a majority were women (55%). The median age was 34 years. For 2023, the number of beneficiaries is estimated at 460.

## **UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE** **Communication Department**

24 rue du Général-Dufour  
CH-1211 Geneva 4

Tel. +41 22 379 77 17

media@unige.ch

www.unige.ch