



**UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Geneva | September 28th, 2017

# **New Centre for Philanthropy launched in Geneva**

The University of Geneva launches the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy in partnership with a handful of Geneva's major foundations.

The Centre will meet the global needs of the Geneva philanthropy sector and help building on its international reputation.

**The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy is the fruit of a solid partnership between the University of Geneva (UNIGE), Switzerland, and a sprinkling of private foundations. It aims to encourage academic training and research in the field of philanthropy, disseminating knowledge in the broader community and educating practitioners. The Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, Fondation Lombard Odier and a private Geneva-based foundation — all of which are internationally recognised — will work closely with UNIGE to build the new Centre, which will be unique in Europe.**

The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy, jointly financed by UNIGE and the partner foundations, will operate as an autonomous body with its own staff. The Centre's activities will be supervised by a strategic committee made up of representatives from the University and the foundations, and will also have a scientific committee with a strong academic focus. Professor Henry Peter from the Faculty of Law, UNIGE, who has been entrusted with heading the new Centre, explains: «This set-up means that the Centre will be in a good position to address the many challenging themes that have progressively emerged in this context. It will also guarantee the quality of the Centre's activities from an academic standpoint».

In academic terms, the questions raised by philanthropy are interdisciplinary, touching upon management, law, finance and economics in particular, although the Centre may combine these subjects with the affective sciences and ethics. Given the complex nature of the issues, there is a need for multiple solutions that will also incorporate the expertise and input of the partner foundations. Furthermore, the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy will be able to draw on UNIGE's know-how: it will act as a catalyst and assure the interdisciplinary convergences that are a prerequisite of effective, strategic philanthropy.



**LOMBARD ODIER  
FONDATION**

### **The goal: strategic philanthropy**

The philanthropy sector is evolving quickly: stakeholder profiles are becoming increasingly diversified, and it is an area that is attracting a growing number of young people and women. Moreover, networking and skills provisions are now taking their place alongside financial commitment, and philanthropy is outstripping the traditional practices often deployed by family foundations. In short, philanthropy has become a strategic tool for a wide range of companies, and is being

integrated into their development goals. Although the sector's historic roots are to be found in the English-speaking world, today philanthropy is expanding at a rapid pace — not just across Europe but also in emerging countries such as India, China and Brazil. «Recent key changes have shown that there is a need for an academic approach to strategic philanthropy alongside a more theoretical insight into the discipline, which has a real impact on development issues such as water, migration, global warming and cultural heritage,» points out Yves Flückiger, rector of the UNIGE.

### The strengths of philanthropy in and around Geneva

Geneva is one of the preferred location for setting up international foundations and vertical funds: Swiss legislation regarding private foundations is both open and business-friendly, and the region hosts various international and non-governmental organisations that are also involved in cooperation and development. The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy will help spread the influence of Geneva's philanthropic sector and the unique context in which it operates.

According to Patrick Odier, President of Fondation Lombard Odier: «Geneva has a longstanding, rich tradition of philanthropy and humanitarian work, known as the spirit of Geneva. As the world changes, philanthropy is enlarging its toolbox. The creation of the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy is a timely effort to capture this spirit and develop the knowledge and insights that will shape the practice of philanthropy and social impact well into the future. We are delighted to lend our support to this effort, serving as a Founding Partner of the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy at UNIGE.»

Ariane de Rothschild, President of the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, adds: «We have been revolutionising our network of foundations around the world over the last ten years in order to address the complex issues society is facing today. Philanthropy is a superb laboratory for finding solutions in, for example, the arts, education, entrepreneurship and health. We are absolutely convinced that it is essential to strengthen and share knowledge so that philanthropy is disseminated more widely. Creating the new Centre at UNIGE is a major breakthrough, and we look forward to playing an active part!»

Every year, 350 new charitable foundations are set up in Switzerland, giving a total that currently stands at 13,172. Geneva and French-speaking Switzerland boast a special place in the field of philanthropy: the 1723 foundations that are located in the region have a combined wealth of over 13 billion francs, 80% of which is in the hands of the 60 biggest players. (1)

The Philanthropy Centre will collaborate with other existing university Centres and will join European and international research networks.

For more information, see [unige.ch/philanthropie](http://unige.ch/philanthropie)

(1) Data from *Rapport sur les fondations en suisse 2017*, CEPS Forschung und Praxis – Volume 17

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From left to right, Yves Flückiger, Rector of the University of Geneva, Henry Peter, Director of the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy and Laetitia Gill, Executive Director.

### High definition pictures

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