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UNIGE Creates a Chair in Behavioural Philanthropy

The new chair is unique in Europe. It promotes research and teaching in an emerging discipline at the crossroad between behavioural finance, economics, psychology and neuroscience.



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Giuseppe Ugazio, Assistant Professor of the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations Chair in Behavioral Philanthropy.

High resolution pictures

PRESS RELEASE

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The Edmond de Rothschild Foundations Chair in Behavioural Philanthropy will allow for new approaches in the field of philanthropy. It is imbedded in the strategy followed by the University of Geneva (UNIGE) and the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, both committed to promoting research and teaching in philanthropy, and is supported by the Centre for Philanthropy (GCP) at UNIGE. Assistant Professor Giuseppe Ugazio will occupy the new chair: a graduate from the University of Zurich and a Harvard University post-doctoral researcher, Professor Ugazio holds two PhDs, one in philosophy and the other one in neuro-economics. He has been appointed for his skills as an interdisciplinary researcher and for his innovative methodology in behavioural science.

“Recent developments in behavioural finance and economics have boosted philanthropy research, focusing primarily on the psychological mechanisms and contextual phenomena that govern charitable donation decision-making”, explains Rajna Gibson Brandon, founder of UNIGE’s Geneva Finance Research Institute (GFRI) and a professor of finance at the Geneva School of Economics and Management (GSEM), to which the chair is attached. “It’s an emerging discipline at the crossroads between behavioural finance, behavioural economics, psychology and neuroscience. At the moment there are only a handful of researchers in this field at international level.”

The new chair results from a public-private partnership being partly financed by the foundations of the Rothschild family in Geneva. “UNIGE’s academic excellence and versatility, together with the academic freedom enjoyed by its researchers, are essential for ensuring the quality of research, as attested by peers. And it is enhanced by the active implication of the private sector”. says Yves Flückiger, rector of UNIGE. “Professor Ugazio’s interdisciplinary approach will also help building bridges with other fields of research at UNIGE.”

“The chair has been created through a close collaboration with UNIGE and opens up new opportunities for philanthropy. It lies at the crossroads between economics and neuroscience, shedding new light on the complex human mechanisms that drive it. Backed by a rigorous and creative modus operandi, it exemplifies what philanthropy is today: a fantastic laboratory filled with inspiration, critical thinking and solutions. We are delighted that a vision like this can be personified by Professor Giuseppe Ugazio, whose academic profile is as diverse as it is impressive” says Ariane de Rothschild, President of the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations.

“What motivates someone to help others?” asks Professor Giuseppe Ugazio. “This is the question that the research of my chair in behavioural philanthropy aims to answer: specifically, what are the cognitive and neurobiological processes linked to a person’s philanthropic motivations? We want to build a theoretical framework that allows to characterize different types of philanthropists. This will provide the scientific means to build personalized strategies to help donors fulfil their philanthropic desires.”

Henry Peter, Professor at UNIGE’s Faculty of Law and Head of the GCP, adds: “The interdisciplinary approach of the new chair is a perfect illustration of the methodology adopted by the Centre: to address philanthropy from a transversal perspective, providing academic insight into rarely-explored subjects knowing that the most relevant topics today often lie at the interface between several disciplines.”

The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy, inaugurated in September 2017, was created by UNIGE in partnership with the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, the Lombard Odier Foundation and a private, Geneva-based foundation. The circle of strategic partners has subsequently been expanded to include the Swiss Life Perspectives Foundation, the Leenaards Foundation and the Pictet Group Charitable Foundation.

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