



## PRESS RELEASE

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# UNIGE redefines the framework of its international collaborations

Strategic partnerships are giving way to broader international alliances and networks. The Rectorate is launching a call in response to the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Following a broad consultation based on the recommendations of its Scientific Committee, the University of Geneva (UNIGE) strongly reaffirms its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression. In its [position paper](#) on the role of the university in public debate, UNIGE defines the scope and limits of its institutional restraint regarding cantonal, national, and international political issues. It expresses deep concern about the [humanitarian situation in Gaza](#), calling on all parties—particularly the Israeli government—to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, and to ensure the population's access to food and healthcare. UNIGE is also abandoning the concept of “strategic partnerships,” which no longer align with its institutional priorities, either in terms of geography or substance.

With over 400 partner institutions across nearly 70 countries, UNIGE benefits from a robust global network. These partnerships enhance the quality of teaching and research, foster academic mobility, and enable the University to contribute to major international initiatives addressing global challenges. Collaborations take the form of bilateral agreements or are embedded within networks and alliances—such as 4EU+, which is chaired this year by UNIGE.

As part of a global and long-term reflection on strengthening its international network, UNIGE has decided to move away from the notion of ‘strategic partnership’, which no longer meets the needs of its faculties or interfaculty centres. Five of the seven existing international strategic partnerships are currently inactive or have expired (Exeter, Keio, Princeton, Renmin, and Sydney), while the two remaining ones—Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Yonsei—have recently been discontinued.

UNIGE is also continuing its efforts to ensure transparency and ethical oversight of its international collaborations. Following the launch in summer 2024 of a webpage compiling all available resources on the topic, the University has consolidated and formalised all ethical obligations related to research, along with the corresponding procedures. This marks a first step toward the implementation of an ethical self-assessment questionnaire, which will be mandatory for all research projects starting in autumn 2025.

## The University's role in public debate

In May 2024, the Rectorate commissioned a Scientific Committee to draft a report on the role of universities in public debate. Its recommendations were submitted to a consultation process involving UNIGE's representative bodies, the Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee, the Strategic Orientation Council, and the faculties. The process also took into account the views expressed by members of the academic community.

The Rectorate has decided to adopt the experts' main conclusion regarding institutional reserve, while moderating its scope. Convinced that the engagement of members of the university community enriches democratic debate and contributes to its vitality, the Rectorate affirms that the University must remain a space where ideas can be freely debated, in accordance with its [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#). To safeguard this rigorous and pluralistic framework for dialogue, the University itself must refrain from taking sides in the debates that take place within it.

This institutional reserve is not an obstacle but an essential condition for freedom of expression. The Rectorate may exceptionally depart from this principle when the institution's fundamental missions—teaching, research, and service to the community—are directly affected. In very rare cases, on purely political matters, it may also choose to call for respect of the values that guide the institution and are reflected in its actions and in the work of its researchers.

## Strong support for research

Aiming to attract top talent, address the major challenges of our time, and elevate Geneva's standing as a leading scientific hub, UNIGE launched its new [Chairs of Excellence](#) programme this spring. Backed by substantial financial support—CHF 10 million starting in 2025—from the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, this initiative will strengthen key research areas while fostering an environment conducive to innovation. Genomics, neuroscience, physics, mathematics, and even the study of life in the Universe are the pillars of this first phase, with the potential to expand into other disciplines as opportunities arise.

UNIGE can also rely on the [Fondation pour l'Université de Genève](#), established in March 2025, to enhance its impact in research, teaching, and community service. The Hans Wilsdorf Foundation has already pledged substantial support to help accompany the University's development in fulfilling its missions and to fund ambitious projects beyond the scope of its regular budget. The foundation will also benefit from philanthropic contributions from other sources.

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## Call from the University of Geneva regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza

Upholding the values expressed in its Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, and embracing through its missions the values that human rights represent for society and, more broadly, for humanity, the University of Geneva wishes to express its indignation at the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has deeply moved its community through the emotion and suffering it provokes.

Once again, it calls on all parties—and today especially on the Israeli government—to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, which form part of the values the University upholds in its actions and in the work carried out by its researchers.

The University of Geneva urges that international organisations and NGOs be allowed to carry out their work without hindrance, and that the victims of the conflict be granted unrestricted access to food and healthcare, in order to preserve the lives of the people of Gaza, the hostages, and others present in the territory.

Building on its declaration of 20 May 2024, the University pledges to further expand its support for existing programmes benefiting students and researchers at universities in Gaza—thus fulfilling its civic mission by offering assistance both locally and within its own community.

*The Rectorate of the University of Geneva  
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