

Press release

8 January 2020

Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes
Instituts thématiques interdisciplinaires – ITI

Consolidating interdisciplinary education at the University of Strasbourg

The University of Strasbourg has announced the 15 winners of the development programme for *Instituts thématiques interdisciplinaires* (Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes - ITIs) of research and teaching. By creating these ITIs, the University of Strasbourg, in partnership with the CNRS and the Inserm, is consolidating its long-term policy in favour of interdisciplinarity and of strengthening the connection between teaching and research.

On Tuesday 7 January 2020, Michel Deneken, the president of the University of Strasbourg, revealed the identity of the winning *Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes* (ITI), in the presence of Antoine Petit, chief executive officer of the CNRS, and Gilles Bloch, chief executive officer of the Inserm.

The 15 projects below have been certified as *Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes*:

- ***Certification for a period of 8 years (2021-2028)***

CSC - Interdisciplinary Institute for Chemistry of Complex Systems

G-Eau-Te - Interdisciplinary Institute for Geosciences for Energy System Transition: Exploiting Deep Groundwater

Health Tech - Interdisciplinary Institute for Information Sciences and Technology for Healthcare

HiSAAR - Interdisciplinary Institute for History, Sociology, Archaeology and Anthropology of Religions

IMCBio - Interdisciplinary Institute for Integrative Molecular and Cellular Biology

IMS - The Strasbourg Interdisciplinary Drug Discovery and Development Institute

IRMIA++ - Interdisciplinary Institute for Research in Mathematics, Interactions and Applications

LETHICA - Interdisciplinary Institute for Ethics, Literature and Arts

MAKERs - Interdisciplinary Institute for MAKing European Society

QMat - Interdisciplinary Institute for Quantum Science and Nanomaterials

TRANSPLANTE NG - Strasbourg Interdisciplinary Institute for Precision Medicine

- ***Certification for a 4-year trial period (2021-2024):***

GRIAMI - Interdisciplinary Institute for the Musical and Inter-artistic Act

HiFunMat - Interdisciplinary Institute for Hierarchical and Functional Materials

InBio - Interdisciplinary Institute for Integrative Biopharmaceutical and Biomedical Research

NeuroStra - Interdisciplinary Institute for the Nervous System Facing Environmental Issues: from adaptation to pathologies

Furthermore, special support will be given for a 4-year period to the two projects below to support the structuring process:

ILC: University of Strasbourg Research Federation "Institute of Language and Communication"

ISY: University of Strasbourg Research Federation "Institute for Sustainability - Interdisciplinary Research, Education and Transfer for Sustainable Socio-Ecosystems"

Process of the creation of the ITIs

The University of Strasbourg's development programme for the Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes of research and teaching, which was launched in January 2019, is part of the *Initiative d'excellence* (Excellence Initiative) co-sponsored by the University of Strasbourg, the CNRS and the Inserm. By creating the ITIs, the University of Strasbourg wishes to highlight the major thematic fields for which Strasbourg's research is renowned, as well as the course programmes associated with them.

The Laboratories of Excellence (LabEx), winners of the first call for projects of the *Investissements d'avenir* (Future Investments) Programme (PIA), the success in IdEx in 2012 then in the PIA call for projects named "*écoles universitaires de recherche*" (EUR) in late 2017, helped to foster internal cooperation between the various disciplines and to forge new links between teaching and research.

The goal of the ITIs is to bring together various stakeholders with complementary disciplinary skills around a single theme, in order to tackle new challenges together. The combination of Master's and doctoral teaching with this research will make it possible to prepare future generations to address major issues through an interdisciplinary approach. Nearly 1 600 registered researchers and teacher-researchers out of the 2 000 members of research units are enrolled in the ITIs.

The ITI concept

The Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes are programmes that cut across research units, departments and doctoral schools. The ITI concept includes:

- very competitive research programmes;
- Master's and doctoral teaching linked to this research;
- interdisciplinarity;
- international appeal and cooperation, strong link to Eucor - The European Campus;
- links to the socio-economic and socio-cultural worlds.

Long-term funding

ITI funding is for 4 or 8 years over the 2021-2028 period. The estimated budget is around EUR13 million per year. This comes from IdEx credits and includes already acquired EUR funding. Additional funding is being sought through the participation of the supervising establishments in the PIA call for projects to support the strengthening of the link between teaching and research in IdEx and ISite sites. This call for projects, named SFRI (*Structuration de la formation par la recherche dans les initiatives d'excellence* - Structuring Teaching via Research in Excellence Initiatives) was opened in autumn 2019 and will close on 10 March 2020.

After the recommendations of the international experts who assessed the projects have been taken into account and after funding has been allocated, 2020 will be the year of the administrative and operational setting up of the ITIs. The institutes will officially begin to operate from January 2021.

Criteria for assessing the ITIs

The main criteria for assessing the ITIs are:

- the originality, pertinence and quality of the research programme and the added value of its interdisciplinarity
- the originality and pertinence of the teaching programme, pedagogical innovation in its connection to research and the added value of its interdisciplinarity
- the quality and reputation of the consortium and of the project leaders
- international recognition and appeal
- openness to the socio-economic and socio-cultural worlds
- quality of governance

Assessment and selection process

The applications, based on international standards (context and situation, research project, teaching project, links between teaching and research, innovation and dissemination, structural effects, national and international positioning and governance), were assessed by a committee composed of around fifty international scientific experts.

A committee of 7 international rapporteurs classified the projects and made recommendations to the supervising establishments:

- Prof. Michael Hengartner, University of Zurich, president of the committee,
- Prof. Britta Eickholt, Charité Berlin,
- Prof. Hajo Freund, Max-Planck Institute Berlin,
- Prof. Frank Miedema, University of Utrecht,
- Prof. Grace Neville, University of Cork,
- Prof. Andrée Sursock, Senior Advisor at the European University Association (EUA),
- Prof. Horst Vogel, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne.

The decision-making body, under the leadership of the President of the University of Strasbourg and including the partner establishments, CNRS and Inserm, selected the winning projects on 7 January 2020.

A monitoring committee for the Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes will be set up. It will ensure that the projects are properly implemented and achieve their goals during the 8 years of funding.

More about the University of Strasbourg

A major university of national, European and international repute, with some 52,000 students, top-level teaching and research programmes, the University of Strasbourg is a multidisciplinary university and one of only 4 sites in France awarded a long-term Excellence Initiative (IdEx). Since 2011, the Future Investments Programme (PIA) has made it possible to support numerous projects contributing to the consolidation of the excellence of research carried out on the Strasbourg site. The 16 Laboratories of Excellence, the 11 *Équipements d'Excellence* (Facilities of Excellence), and of course, the long-term Excellence Initiative jointly obtained by the University of Strasbourg and its partners, the CNRS and Inserm in 2016, constitute distinct groups with specific objectives and scopes that contribute to the recognition of the site and to the gradual development of major thematic research programmes. Undergraduate teaching has not been left behind either with the *Nouveau cursus universitaire* (New University Programme - NCU) for Bachelor's degrees.

This structuring has recently been strengthened by the *Écoles universitaires de recherche* (University Schools of Research - EUR1) call for projects, which enabled different communities to come together while consolidating the link between teaching and research at Master's and doctorate levels, which is one of the main strategic development objectives of the University of Strasbourg.

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