



XL-CHEM News

GSR XL-Chem bi-annual newsletter

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The management team of the XL-Chem Graduate School of Research (GSR) is pleased to present in this newsletter **the actions that have been carried out this semester, following the welcoming of the second XL-Chem Master's and PhD promotions in September 2021.**

COMMUNICATION

A **new website** has been created, allowing an effective and detailed presentation of the project and the offered opportunities to students and potential partners (<https://www.eur-xl-chem.com/fr/>). The site is available in French and English versions.

In order to improve the effective communication strategy of the XL-Chem project, both nationally and internationally, **a communication working student will join the team** from the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year.

The XL-Chem team participated in the **Gaudeamus exhibition in Brno, Czech Republic from November 23rd to 26th, 2021**. This is one of the main exhibitions for higher education in the Czech Republic. The representatives of the XL-Chem project met the scientific attaché of the French Embassy and discussed about higher education in the Czech Republic, the recognized institutions in the chemistry sector and the possible partnerships within the framework of the XL-Chem project.

In parallel, an exchange took place in January 2022 with the scientific attaché of the **French Embassy in Poland**, with the same objective: to know the functioning of higher education in Poland, the forces present in the field of chemistry and the possibilities of collaborations. The project will be promoted by the French Embassy in Poland on the Campus France website for the XL-Chem 2022/2023 registration campaign. Another exchange with the same objective took place between the French Graduate School of Research (GSR) network and the **French Embassy in the United States** in October 2021.

EVENTS

The first **GSR "back-to-school event" was held on September 15th, 2021**. The objective was to present the GSR to engineer, bachelor, master's and PhD students. The event was held at the MoHo, in Caen in a friendly atmosphere with the project team, the students, the mentors and the thesis directors.

The **Spring School 2022 edition is scheduled for April, 1st 2022**.

GOVERNANCE

International Scientific Advisory Board

The **second Scientific Advisory Board meeting** took place on **December 2nd, 2021** (by

videoconference). The objectives were to validate the process and results of the external evaluations of the second international PhD projects co-financing call. This Advisory Board was composed of **5 experts**, selected for their experience and achievements in the fields of research, education, international and socio-economic relationship:

- Dr. Ivan HUC (Maximilian Ludwig Universität München)
- Pr. Anne MILET (Université Grenoble-Alpes)
- Dr. Yves QUENEAU (INSA Lyon)
- Pr. Annie-Claude GAUMONT (Labex Synorg)
- Dr. Jonathan CLAYDEN (Bristol University)

9 PhD projects were evaluated by 5 external referees and then submitted to the Scientific Advisory Board. **7 projects were selected** to be submitted to the RIN Label XL-Chem 2022 project, and 2 others will be submitted, once the reviewers' remarks taken into account, to the Normandy Region's RIN Doctorant 50% 2022 call for proposals.

Executive Committee

The **GSR executive committee met in two sessions** on October 12th and 19th 2021, by videoconference. This committee is composed of representatives of the sub-committees, the heads of the chemistry courses of the Norman universities, the director of the doctoral school EDNC, the research unit directors, the deans of the training and research units, the directors of studies of the engineering schools and the directors of the LabEx SynOrg and the Carnot I2C. This first meeting of the executive committee focused on an overall assessment of the first year of the project and then on discussions about the 2021/2022 academic year, in particular on the areas of improvement of the Master's program, the creation of a unique chemistry degree in Normandy, and on communication about the project to make it more attractive internationally.

Concurrently, the **project management team meets once a month** to further elaborate the project within the scope of the four thematic sub-committees (teaching, research, development, communication).

XL-CHEM RELATED RESEARCH

The **RIN Label XL-Chem project, submitted in 2020** to the Normandy Regional Council, **includes 6 PhD thesis projects**. All of them **started between October and December 2020**. The students will join very soon the lab of the partner country for the second part of their thesis.

The **RIN Label XL-Chem 2021 project, submitted in 2021** to the Normandy Regional Council, initially included **7 PhD projects** for co-financing.

Following the submission and update of the RIN Label 2020 budget, 3 theses starting in 2021 were included in the RIN Label 2020 funding. On the other hand, **two of the 2021 submitted theses could not be completed due to a lack of candidates**. These theses were supposed to be co-financed by the Universities of Southampton (England) and Brown (USA).

The RIN Label XL-Chem 2020 now counts 7 theses, in partnership with: The Universities of Le Havre Normandie, Macquarie (Sydney - Australia), Munich and Münster

(Germany), Montreal (Canada) and Copenhagen (Denmark) for the thesis starting in 2020, Haifa (Israel), São Paulo (Brazil) and Montréal (Canada) for the thesis starting in 2021.

The RIN Label XL-Chem 2021 now counts two theses with Thessaloniki (Greece) / Targu Mures (Romania) and Liège (Belgium). An amendment will allow to regularize the budget following the non-completion of the two theses with Southampton (England) and Brown (USA).

A new **RIN Label XL-Chem 2022** project should be submitted at the beginning of this year, with the objective of co-financing the 7 PhD theses selected by the International Board in partnership with: Leuven (Belgium), London (England), this last thesis being co-financed by the University of Le Havre Normandy, Zurich (Switzerland), Montreal (Canada) for two theses, Florence (Italy) and Ghent (Belgium).

TRAINING

Professor Alexandre GAGNON from the University of Quebec in Montreal gave lectures to the Master students, between October 25th and 29th, 2021 on the introduction to epigenetics from the point of view of medicinal chemistry, and on the development of inhibitors of biological targets involved in gene expression. His travel and lectures were fully funded by the XL-Chem program.

Professor Peter KARUSO from Macquarie University (Sydney, Australia) gave a 4-hour lecture on November 17 and 18, 2021 to the Masters students, by videoconference due to the COVID crisis, on the following subjects: prebiotic chemistry and the organic chemistry of primary metabolism / fatty acid and polyketide biosynthesis and biominetic synthesis.

Professor Michael HIPPLER from the University of Münster (Germany) intervened on December 15, 16 and 17, 2021 with the Master students and the Norman scientific community to give 4 hours of lectures on the following subjects: proteomic analysis and photosynthesis.

A **double degree agreement** for a Master's degree in chemistry between the **University of Florence (Italy)** and the **University of Rouen Normandy** has been finalized. It has been validated by various stakeholders in order to be implemented at the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year. The official signature took place on December 3rd, 2021 in Florence. This double degree has received the support of the Franco-Italian University, via a grant to cover the stay of 4 Norman students in Tuscany and 4 Florentine students in Normandy per year over a period of three years. A double Master 2 degree has also been validated for the students of the XL-Chem course, between INSA Rouen Normandy and the University of Rouen-Normandy.

MASTERS XL-CHEM

The **second promotion of XL-Chem Masters student started in September 2021**. The XL-Chem course was open to **10 M1 students**, who were able to choose the courses they wished to follow from the portfolio of courses offered by the Normandy institutions, according to their professional project. Each student has also integrated a laboratory and are involved, with their mentor, in an international research project throughout their Master's year, in the framework of self-guided formation. Students are involved in research projects in partnership with institutions in Japan, the United States, Hungary, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, England and Poland.

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The "Analysis and Spectroscopy" curriculum was opened for the year 2021/2023 to **6 students in work-study program**. The other students are involved in a **mentoring project** throughout the year and will also complete an internship.

The class of M1 2020/2021 has started its **Master 2** and has been completed by 5 students, including 4 from INSA Rouen Normandie. Thus, the class counts **13 students**. The students will do their second semester **internship abroad** (Sweden, Greece, Germany, Canada, Denmark, Belgium) or in **industry**.

CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT

The Consortium Agreement of the XL-Chem project has been negotiated between Normandie University, its member institutions and the CNRS. It was **signed in May 2021**. This agreement sets out the terms of organisation and governance of the project between the various stakeholders.

An **amendment** is currently being negotiated to specify the terms and conditions for **joint carrying of degrees and the involvement of research organizations in training**.

XL-CHEM PROJECT BUDGET

The XL-Chem GSR is financed by the **ANR – French National Research Agency (4.1 M€)** over the duration of the project from 2019 to 2028. A first co-financing was obtained from the Normandy Region via the **RIN Label XI-Chem 2020 project (968.6 K€)** for the first three years of the educational programme (October 2020 - December 2023), including co-financing for communication, excellency allowances for Master students, international courses and lectures and 7 PhD thesis. An amendment is currently underway to revise the allocated budget downwards following the lack of co-financing for two PhD projects. The **second RIN Label XI-Chem 2021** project (October 2022 – December 2024) financed by the Normandy Region has brought a new co-financing, covering the financing of 4 PhD projects for a total amount of **212K€**. The **RIN Label XI-Chem 2022**, if funded, should co-finance 7 theses as well as part of the internship grants associated with the double degree with the University of Florence in Italy.

