

Engage Now

26.-29. September 2024

Research and Innovation Meeting

Organisation and Participation

We want to express our gratitude for this incredible opportunity to advance our research and personal career development. We are graduate students in a group that focuses on human evolutionary ecophysiology and investigate how different environments affect human biology. Our team includes senior lecturers, PhDs, master's students and expert collaborators from the Universities of Zurich and Loughborough.

Thanks to your support, we organised an interdisciplinary research meeting in Switzerland where we brought together our multinational team to present research achievements from the past year and to develop ideas on how to translate those achievements into initiatives that directly benefit public and planetary health.

Within the scope of this meeting, we aimed to encourage discussions about next steps in our individual work, future experiment designs, and converting research into practical applications and innovations. To create a stimulating environment for such a unique round table, we conducted a 4-day workshop in the Swiss mountains that combined in-depth discussions and presentations with nature exploration sessions. Our workshop brought together people from two universities (Loughborough University, UK, and the University of Zurich) and various academic levels and disciplines.



Figure 1: Graduate student presenting her findings

Summary of Expenses

Accommodation	CHF 701
Transportation (flight, train, car)	CHF 1559.33
Food	CHF 1137.6
Overall expenses for the project	3397.93

Figure 2: Summary of Expenses



Figure 3 Impression of group discussions



Figure 6 Team building adventure



Figure 5 Innovation & application discussion



Figure 4 Nature exploration session

Review of the workshop

To update everyone on the progress of ongoing projects, students presented their latest research findings with engaging visuals and received feedback. During in-depth discussions, we reflected on experiences and challenges from various research stages—planning, data collection, processing, and analysis—highlighting both group and individual successes. A key takeaway from all three projects is the importance of building a strong team and enhancing collaboration. Ensuring that everybody is part of the project and can contribute effectively according to their unique set of strengths is one aspect of team dynamics that we want to take into account for future projects.

Further discussions about team support revealed the importance of up to date information about parallel projects and their progress. Therefore we initiated the launch of a quarterly research group newsletter for collaborators and alumni with the latest achievements and findings to encourage knowledge transfer and strengthen our support system.

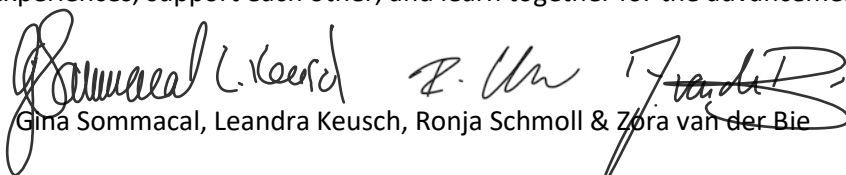
Thanks to the exchange with project managers, we were able to gain valuable insights into the importance of effective leadership. We recognized the challenge of encouraging growth by pushing individuals beyond their comfort zones whilst maintaining a balanced and supportive work environment. Looking ahead, we discussed personal and team goals for the next few months. As graduate students, our biggest challenges in the upcoming months will be to conduct experimental and statistical analyses, as well as writing our theses. Asked for support in the process of writing, senior lecturers offered to organise a writing workshop to help us develop writing strategies.

Innovation and Application

Discussing the innovation and application of human evolutionary ecophysiology we examined opportunities ranging from government initiatives to grassroots movements, highlighting the potential to create experiences, products, or initiatives throughout this spectrum. With many opportunities come many challenges and maintaining a responsible and ethical approach to innovation was recognised as shared consent. We hope that our research will provide some incentives to connect individual health to planetary health and aim to further develop these ideas.

The Value of Organising a Scientific Meeting

Organising this scientific meeting allowed us to create an event aligned with our visions and find our way into a small academic community. This scientific workshop provided us with the opportunity to present our progress and receive valuable feedback, both from peers and experienced senior scientists. The stunning natural surroundings felt like a refreshing retreat from the usual university setting, fostering creative thinking. Moreover, the workshop helped strengthen interpersonal connections among team members and project managers. Motivated by the belief that research should contribute to society and extend beyond scientific circles, this experience was particularly valuable early in our academic careers. We created a setting where people from various academic backgrounds could share experiences, support each other, and learn together for the advancement of their research and careers.


Gina Sommecal, Leandra Keusch, Ronja Schmol & Zora van der Bie