



Press release  
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# HEC Paris Announces Major Gift from the ION Foundation to Fund the ION Management Science Lab, an Academic Research Lab Focusing on Mentorship's Role in Startups

HEC Paris Business School and the HEC Foundation have announced a 10 million Euro gift from ION Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Italian entrepreneur Andrea Pignataro, to establish *the ION Management Science Lab* within the Deep Tech Center at the HEC Innovation & Entrepreneurship Institute.

The Academic Research Lab will focus on mentorship's role in startups, mid-sized firms, large enterprises, universities, and NGOs while studying selection, matching, interaction methods, and incentives. It will collect and analyze data to understand mentorship's impact on performance and innovation, bridging academia, industry, and non-profits while disseminating actionable insights.

Thomas Astebro and Carlos Serrano, both Professors of Entrepreneurship at HEC Paris, will serve respectively as Executive Director and Scientific Director of the Lab.

*"I am pleased to support the creation of the ION Management Science Lab at HEC Paris, an initiative dedicated to exploring mentorship's transformative impact",* says Pignataro, founder and CEO of ION Group and ION Foundation. *"HEC Paris is a European leader in entrepreneurship consistently ranked among top business schools for innovation and entrepreneurship. Mentorship is everywhere—driving learning and growth in startups, universities, and businesses of all sizes—and its relevance only intensifies in an age of rapid AI-driven transformation. Through data-driven experimentation and theoretical modeling, we hope to foster the partnerships between academia and industry to propel innovation".*

Eloic Peyrache, Dean of HEC Paris, adds:

*"At HEC Paris, we believe that mentorship is a cornerstone for the growth of any organization. We are proud to partner with Andrea Pignataro and the ION Foundation in launching the ION Management Science Lab to advance research on the economics of mentorship. This initiative aligns with our commitment to empower individuals through cutting-edge insights that drive impactful change."*

*“The generous gift from Andrea Pignataro and ION Foundation to establish the ION Management Science Lab marks a pivotal moment, positioning HEC Paris to become a global leader in the economics of mentorship,” explains Prof. Carlos Serrano, Scientific Director of the Lab. “In an era of rapid AI-driven transformation, we will bridge practice with academic insights to unlock mentorship’s potential in fostering learning and driving growth in startups, corporations, and universities.”*

The Lab will closely collaborate with the existing ION Management Science Lab at Bocconi University in Milan, Italy and at Utah University in Salt Lake City, United States.

#### **About ION Foundation**

**ION Foundation**, an affiliate of **ION Group**, a global leader in financial technology, focuses on initiatives in education, community development, and entrepreneurship, collaborating with top academic institutions. Through its projects, the Foundation aligns with ION Group’s mission to foster innovation, support sustainable practices, and create a positive impact on society.

#### **About HEC Paris**

Founded in 1881, HEC Paris is a leading European Business School. Its ambition is to positively impact both businesses and society thanks to its three-pronged approach **“Think, Teach, Act”** and thus to contribute to a more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous world.

With 167 research professors from all around the world producing and teaching unique knowledge to **more than 4,500 students from 135 different countries**, the HEC Paris campus serves as a real laboratory for innovation and exchange which is open to the world’s diversity and challenges.

Inspired by its 5 core values -**Excellence, Curiosity, Entrepreneurial spirit, Diversity and Responsibility**- HEC Paris offers a complete range of training courses for the leaders of tomorrow: Bachelor, the Pre-Experience Program, specialized masters, MSc, the Summer School, the MBA, the Executive MBA, the TRIUM Global Executive MBA, the PhD, as well as a wide variety of programs targeted to leaders and managers.

#### **About HEC Paris’ Innovation & Entrepreneurship Institute**

HEC Paris’ Innovation & Entrepreneurship Institute supports entrepreneurs from all walks of life. Through our Incubation & Acceleration, Deep Tech, and Social Entrepreneurship centers, we help students with innovative ideas, budding startups or unicorns on the rise, accelerating SMEs, large transforming companies, and social or environmental entrepreneurs to develop effectively and with impact. Here, the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem of HEC Paris converges to allow you to Make it Happen, Make it Big.

#### **About the HEC Foundation**

Founded in 1972 and recognized as a public-interest organization, the HEC Foundation’s mission is to support the development of HEC Paris by financing strategic projects and making world-class education accessible to as many people as possible. Thanks to the support of donors, corporate sponsors, and partner foundations, the HEC Foundation plays a decisive role in advancing HEC Paris’s mission of impact for the common good, whether through research, pedagogical innovation, or programs promoting diversity and inclusion for all talents.

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