Uni Passau / French Embassy in Germany
Tuesday 29 June 2021

On June 29, the Faculty of Computer Science of the University of Passau was receiving the visit of three members of the French Embassy in Berlin: Mr Pascal Revel, Scientific Advisor and Head of Research Department at the French Embassy along with two of his colleagues, Mr Hervé Martin, Scientific Attaché, and Mrs Agathe Guillot, Scientific Officer.

It was a rather special event for the team of Prof. Kosch, who received for one of the first time in 2021 guests face to face, allowing a relaxed and informal atmosphere which is so difficult to get with online events. Thus one could see the French Embassy members exchanging casually with PhD students of the faculty over a coffee.

After a brief welcome by Tobias Kaiser, Dean of the Faculty of Computer Science, and Christina Hansen, vice-president for international relations, participants introduced themselves shortly and took place around the table to start discovering the international dimension of the University of Passau.

Indeed Barbara Zacharias, Head of the international office at Passau University, began with a general presentation with interesting numbers about international students in Passau, France being one of the first European partnerships behind the neighbour-country Austria. With 80% of international students in Master programs, members of the French Embassy could notice that the faculty of Computer Science highly participates to this multiculturalism.

Participants had then the occasion to exchange on the different projects led for the international strategy on AI and Big Data, above all the European and the French-German cooperation, for which Mrs Axelle Cheney is in charge. Mr Revel and his colleagues were introduced to IRIXYS, the International Research and Innovation Centre on Digital Intelligent Systems gathering academics and researchers from Germany, France and Italy, which organizes regular international young scientists' workshops.

They were of course particularly interested in the strong links that the faculty of Computer Sciences maintains with France, especially with INSA Lyon. This Ingénieur-school in the south of France indeed participates in a lot of important projects led by the team of Prof. Kosch such as Double Master and "cotutelle" programs or "Fit Europe", an innovative project gathering universities academics, students and business partners to discuss societal and economic challenges raised by digitalisation. But other French partnerships were of course mentioned with ENSIIE Paris-Evry, the University of Pau and the n°1 in the Shanghai ranking in mathematics Ecole Normale Supérieure Paris-Saclay with whom the University of Passau organizes every year the French-German Summerschool on AI with Industry.

Professor Harald Kosch and Professor Michael Granitzer then took the floor to present the fourth coming "Bavarian-French AI challenge" which is a big project of the faculty that will be coming soon.

Finally in the afternoon, PhD students of the faculty of Computer Science being part of the "cotutelle" program with INSA Lyon could introduce their work to the Embassy members, which led to an exchange not only on technical issues but also on the personal path of each student. As a conclusion of this day, Mr Pascal Revel affirmed being impressed by the work and projects of the

faculty of Computer Science of Passau and especially its multicultural dimension: "It is nice to see such a living bilateral international cooperation with France on the side of the University of Passau (…) such an experience is unique: an example to be followed by other German universities".