

Reportage

Successful pilot project in Shanghai

China works in a very different way to Switzerland. This is the very reason it is exciting for mobility projects. 27 ICT apprentices from the cantons of Lucerne, Zug, Schaffhausen and Zurich travelled to Shanghai for three project weeks. They were able to do this thanks to Movetia's 2018–20 international pilot programme. This is aimed at Swiss educational institutions that want to try out innovative partnerships and new ideas for mobility beyond Europe.

It is not just 9,000 km and a 12-hour flight that separate Zurich from the Chinese metropolis of Shanghai: 27 apprentices from Switzerland immersed themselves in what is a completely different world in every respect. "Movetia was impressed by the innovative structure of the pilot project for the Shanghai ICT project weeks, which is run by the office for secondary school and vocational education of the canton of Zurich. The participants were able to spend time in local companies where they worked in teams of 3 to 7 apprentices on different IT projects and came into direct contact with

customers", says Christophe Bettin, head of the department for vocational education at Movetia, in explaining the concept. In short, they had to find their way in an unfamiliar, dynamic, English-speaking environment and demonstrate a great deal of flexibility. Thanks to these experiences, the apprentices were able to expand their skills in various fields and at the same time prove themselves in an intercultural setting.

"The participants were able to spend time in local companies where they worked in teams on different IT projects."



The Chinese city with a population of millions drew the participants under its spell as soon as they arrived.

Due to the cross-cantonal cooperation and inclusion of several vocational schools, the Shanghai ICT project weeks offer several advantages at the same time: different key areas can be tried out, resources can be pooled, and skills can be continuously built up. “This structure is innovative and creates synergies between the various participants in vocational education. This makes the project long-term, and it can be extended to other schools and occupational fields”, says Christophe Bettin.

The first impression

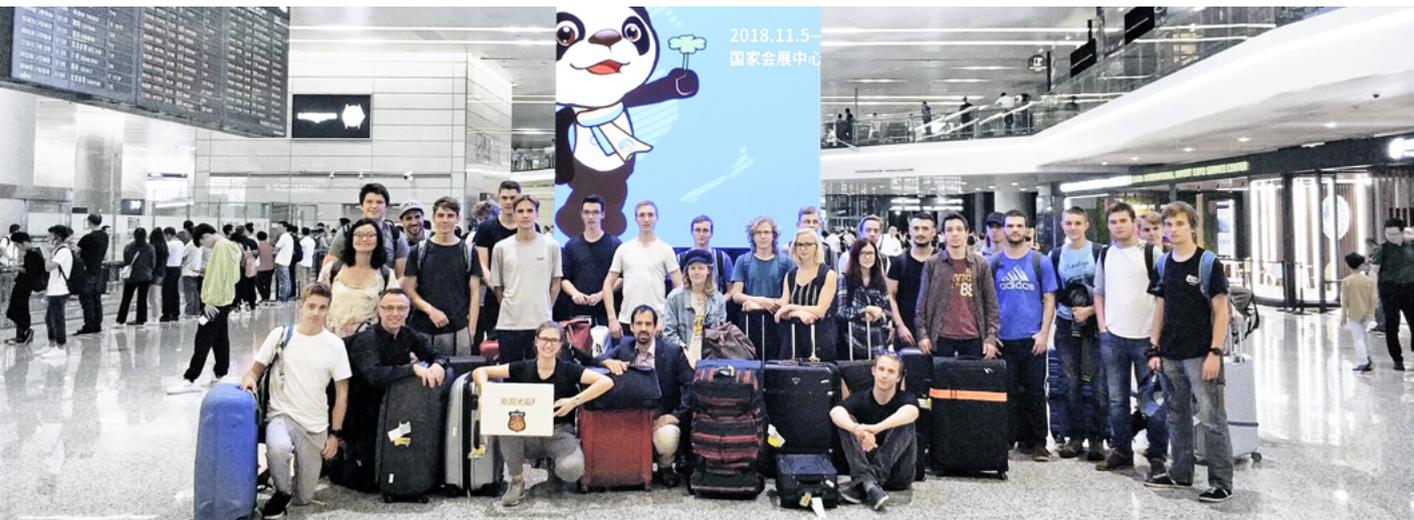
The three apprentices Cyrill Näf, Antoine Gähwiler and Thomas Gassmann were bold enough to take part in the Shanghai adventure, and they reported on their experiences. “There was so much more of everything everywhere. More people, more traffic, more bikes and more shops”, explains Antoine Gähwiler, and he adds that China differs very greatly from Switzerland in terms of language and culture, but also when it comes to matters such as politics and economics. The three apprentices experienced a culture shock as soon as the aircraft landed, or as Cyrill Näf so aptly describes it, the “control mania”, which accompanied them constantly over the three weeks. After their passports were scanned, their digital fingerprints taken, the mountain of paperwork dealt with, and the security checks completed, the Chinese city with a population of millions drew the three boys under its spell.

A vibrant metropolis of technology

The China adventure is especially fascinating for ICT apprentices. “China is years ahead of the rest of the world in many areas of IT. A long period of being cut off from Western apps and websites has led to this, and a completely individual, independent and innovative IT industry has grown out of these circumstances”, explains Thomas Gassmann. It is possible to pay via a smartphone app instead of cash everywhere. “The Swiss could learn a great deal from China”, says Antoine Gähwiler. The project weeks required some adaptability, states Cyrill Näf, “we were faced with completely new ways of working.”



Apprentices, here with clients, experienced the reality of working in the Chinese culture.



Farewell at the airport: Back in Switzerland the host companies are also able to gain from the new experiences of their apprentice.

Back in Switzerland with new skills and inspiration

This different working culture enabled the apprentices to acquire a number of new professional skills and self-competences. It is for this very reason that the project offers a high added value for the Swiss

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trainee specialists, who will have to increasingly cooperate with international players in the future. Antoine Gähwiler is convinced that “as an exporting nation, it is certain that Switzerland will have a lot more to do with China and Chinese partners in the future”. Back in Switzerland, the project participants shared their experiences with their host company, who was also able to gain from this: the apprentices are motivated, skilled and bubbling over with ideas.

Swiss teaching can only benefit

Beat Gauderon, director of bildxzug, a teaching institution with more than 140 apprentices, has long understood that his company can only benefit from mobility projects. He encourages his apprentices to take up stays abroad. He emphasises that “cooperation with specialists from other parts of the world, learning a new language in an unfamiliar environment, as well as getting to know another culture, are valuable elements in the whole training of apprentices”. The apprentices return from their stay more independent and self-confident and bring fresh ideas with them. This is also an advantage for their colleagues in Switzerland.

Further information: movetia.ch/en/ipp

About the project: successful thanks to its innovative structure

The structure of this project is innovative, long-term, creates synergies between the various parties in vocational education, and can be expanded out to others. Apprentices experienced the reality of working in the Chinese culture and gained insight into a parallel IT world. On the one hand, a very great power of innovation can be felt in Shanghai (China is one of the most innovative markets in the field of IT). On the other hand, an insight into the world of IT that is censored by the government is an experience that is scarcely to be found elsewhere. China has its own applications, comparable with Google and Microsoft: YouTube = Youku; Amazon = Tmall.com; Facebook = weibo etc. The IT language is consequently also totally individual.

27 participants (4 female and 23 male), 5 vocational schools, 4 cantons, 17 apprentices of IT for the Swiss Certificate of Competence, and 10 apprentices of electronics for the Swiss Certificate of Competence, all over a period of 3 weeks. Two examples of projects:

- Interactive fitness app (company: Overhead Fitness): development of an interactive fitness program to follow the movement of the user and enable interaction between the user and their smartphone on a large screen.
- Super nanny IoT workspace monitoring (company: Agora Space): implementation of an Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring system to ensure a positive working environment in terms of Internet speed, room temperature and air quality.

Movetia and the international pilot programme

Institutions for vocational education can prepare their apprentices, graduates, those responsible for vocational education, or teaching staff for international (working) life. Those taking part in the mobility programme get to know the work and education culture in other countries and develop a way to a successful partnership beyond the cultural differences. Besides language skills and project-related knowledge, they can also extend their understanding of the other country. This leads to lasting relationships between the students from Switzerland and foreign employers – opening the door to further cooperation.