

EDUC QUARTERLY

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DIGITALISATION

ON THE WAY TO DEPLOY
AN INNOVATIVE MODEL

MOBILITY

INTRODUCING THE
EDUC YOUNG
RESEARCHERS
PROGRAMME

EDUCATION

INITIATION TO
RESEARCH AND
CRITICAL THINKING
COURSE



Your world just got bigger.



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DEVOTED TO EUROPE



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *Prof. Dr. Florian Schweigart, Vice President International Relations & Fundraising at University of Potsdam and Vice-President of the Turkish-German University Istanbul. (Photo: Karla Fritze / University of Potsdam)*

As Vice President Florian Schweigert steps down, he rests assured that the will to deepen and strengthen the alliance day by day is alive and strong. And that the path to seamless academic interaction in freedom and dignity for the benefit of the European idea has never been clearer.

From the beginning of my career, I tried to gain as much international experience as possible during my veterinary studies. At that time, Erasmus did not exist, and you had to organise all your placements or short-term exchanges yourself with very little additional funding.

These experiences have taught me a lot about self-organisation and adapting to a new environment. As a scientist, I had my own international contacts and collaborations. These collaborations opened my eyes to the importance of working across national and mental borders for individuals and institutions.

When I took office eight years ago, I could not

have imagined that the most important part of my activities over the last five years would be devoted to Europe. At the beginning, most of the activities in my office were focused on continents other than Europe. With the EDUC Alliance, Europe came to the centre. At a time when we were being distracted by Covid-19, war or autocratic developments in every corner of the world.

Now, after five years, I have a strong feeling that EDUC is beginning to be implemented at all levels in each university and is becoming more and more an integral part of all the universities involved.

I remember discussing in my team that there are new activities related to EDUC in our university about which we had no information. This is not a problem; it is a good sign that EDUC is starting to find its place in the institutions.

EDUC promotes a melting pot of cultures, ideas and perspectives. This integration allows for a rich educational experience where students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds can engage, learn from each other and challenge their preconceptions. Such an environment is conducive to promoting tolerance, empathy and understanding across cultural divides.

“You can only move as fast as your environment allows.”

In addition, the initiative's emphasis on inclusivity ensures that educational opportunities are available to a wider range of students, including those from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups. This approach is now an integral part of EDUC's activities. It not only enriches the educational landscape, but also prepares students to enter a global workforce with a deeper understanding and appreciation of diversity.

EDUC has a significant impact. On the one hand, by promoting international cooperation and mobility, and developing joint programmes and research. These programmes often focus on addressing global challenges, promoting innovation and fostering a sense of European identity among students, faculty and staff. This not only raises educational standards but is also in line with the European Union's wider objectives of promoting unity and cooperation.

On the other hand, as its name suggests, EDUC is dedicated to digital learning and the integration of digital tools in education. This approach not only makes education more accessible and inclusive, but also ensures that European higher education institutions remain competitive in an increasingly digital world.

Finally, it promotes European values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Many research projects within the EDUC Alliance focus on sustainable development issues, ranging from environmental protection to social equity. This research contributes to the global body of knowledge on sustainability and

offers practical solutions to related challenges. All stakeholders also engage with local and international communities on sustainability issues.

EDUC creates an environment where ideas can be freely exchanged and critically examined, irrespective of national or institutional boundaries. This cross-border academic interaction encourages a culture of open inquiry and debate, essential for academic freedom. It allows scholars and students to explore a wide range of perspectives and methodologies, enhancing the robustness and credibility of



PROF. DR. FLORIAN SCHWEIGERT:
Attribution: BioAnalyt GmbH, CC BY-SA 4.0, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

enhancing the robustness and credibility of academic work. Furthermore, the initiative emphasizes the importance of maintaining high ethical standards and integrity in research and education. This instills a sense of responsibility and honesty in future generations of academics.

A good example is the Voltaire Prize for Tolerance, International Understanding and Respect for Differences, which was initiated at the

the University of Potsdam. This prestigious prize is now seen as representing a European perspective by linking it to EDUC activities.

what we have achieved so far. Driven by enthusiasm and the highest levels of motivation, we soon realised that bringing together six

“All of us involved in EDUC can be very proud.”

By creating a network of eight universities in different European countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Czech Republic, Spain and Norway, EDUC creates a rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic diversity. Students, faculty and staff benefit from exposure to multiple languages and cultural perspectives, enhancing their language skills and cultural sensitivities. This multicultural environment not only promotes multilingualism as a practical skill, but also fosters an appreciation of linguistic diversity as a key component of global citizenship. In addition, the initiative facilitates international cooperation and research, linking European education with global issues and perspectives. Through these collaborations, the initiative not only strengthens Europe's role in global education, but also highlights the importance of multilingualism in international dialogue and problem-solving.

All of us involved in EDUC can be very proud of

universities from five nations, and later eight, was not so much a matter of changing the minds of those directly involved, but rather of slowly adapting structural readiness, especially in relation to national and regional frameworks.

You can only move as fast as your environment allows. We were and are all aware of these challenges. But despite the many obstacles, large and small, the will to deepen and strengthen the alliance day by day is alive and strong.

This vitality and strength of all those involved in the creation and implementation of the European Digital UniverCity will be the foundations and cornerstones of a strong and lasting integrated structure within our universities, best described as solid and lasting bonds, enabling seamless academic interaction in freedom and dignity for the benefit of the European idea.



PROF. DR. FLORIAN SCHWEIGERT: *At work during a Steering Committee meeting in Hungary, March 2023. Photo: Csortos Szabolcs / Pécs University*

MAJOR R&I BOOST

The research and innovation collaboration of EDUC Universities takes charge with EDUC-WIDE: a Horizon Europe project for excellence, inclusiveness and impact.



NEW FAMILY MEMBER: *The Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University from Ukraine.*

The European Commission supported the EDUC-WIDE project (Full project title: EmpoWering EDUC for Inclusive Development of the ERA) in its Horizon Europe call supporting European Excellence Initiative.

The call was highly competitive, with only 12 projects funded from 61 submitted proposal, making this another major achievement and recognition for the EDUC Alliance.

EDUC-WIDE is set to kick-off with a meeting in Brno on 11-12 March 2024. It will run until February 2027, with a total budget of 3,5 million EUR.

Growing within and beyond EU

With EDUC-WIDE, the EDUC University Alliance is welcoming a new member to its family, the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University from Ukraine. We are

looking forward to contributing to the European future of Ukraine by establishing firm connections of its R&I with the European Research Area (ERA).

The main objective of EDUC-WIDE is to foster inclusive development of the ERA, reduce disparities in research excellence and research culture within and beyond EU, and strengthen European position in global R&I cooperation.

To maximize the impact of the project, ten associated partners have joined the EDUC Universities in the EDUC-WIDE project. Among them, industrial clusters and innovation centres will connect EDUC Universities with regional innovation ecosystems.

Culture upgrade

Researchers from EDUC Universities can look forward to calls for mobility fellowships, access to research infrastructures, as well as R&I seed projects.

EDUC-WIDE will also support leaders, managers and administrators involved in R&I with a broad range of trainings on Open Science, research assessment, career advisory services, research management and gender equality.

Conclusively, EDUC-WIDE will empower the EDUC University Alliance to claim a central role as actor of change in its cities, regions, and countries. By change, we mean transition to knowledge-driven economy and society; a transition driven by green and digital technologies.

The change

The change shall respect the principles of sustainable development broadly – be protective to the environment, to societal cohesion, and to our European values.

The change shall be inclusive; that is why we place a central focus on capacity

UPGRADING R&I

In practical terms, EDUC-WIDE will facilitate upgrading of the R&I culture of EDUC to match the current priorities of ERA by:

- imprinting Open Science (OS) into the R&I culture of EDUC and into the mindset of EDUC researchers
- implementing a reform of research assessment to recognize diversity and maximise the quality and impact of research
- opening varied career tracks to researchers and reducing inter-sectoral barriers
- supporting the exchange of researchers and their ideas, creating new R&I directions contributing to Green and Digital Transition in Europe, the Cancer Mission, and the UN SDGs

development at partners from less performing countries in terms of R&I – Czechia, Hungary, and Ukraine.

And the change that we envision will be driven from the bottom; we are looking forward to the initiative of individual researchers seeking collaboration within EDUC and we hope the project activities will provide useful means to connect across the Alliance.

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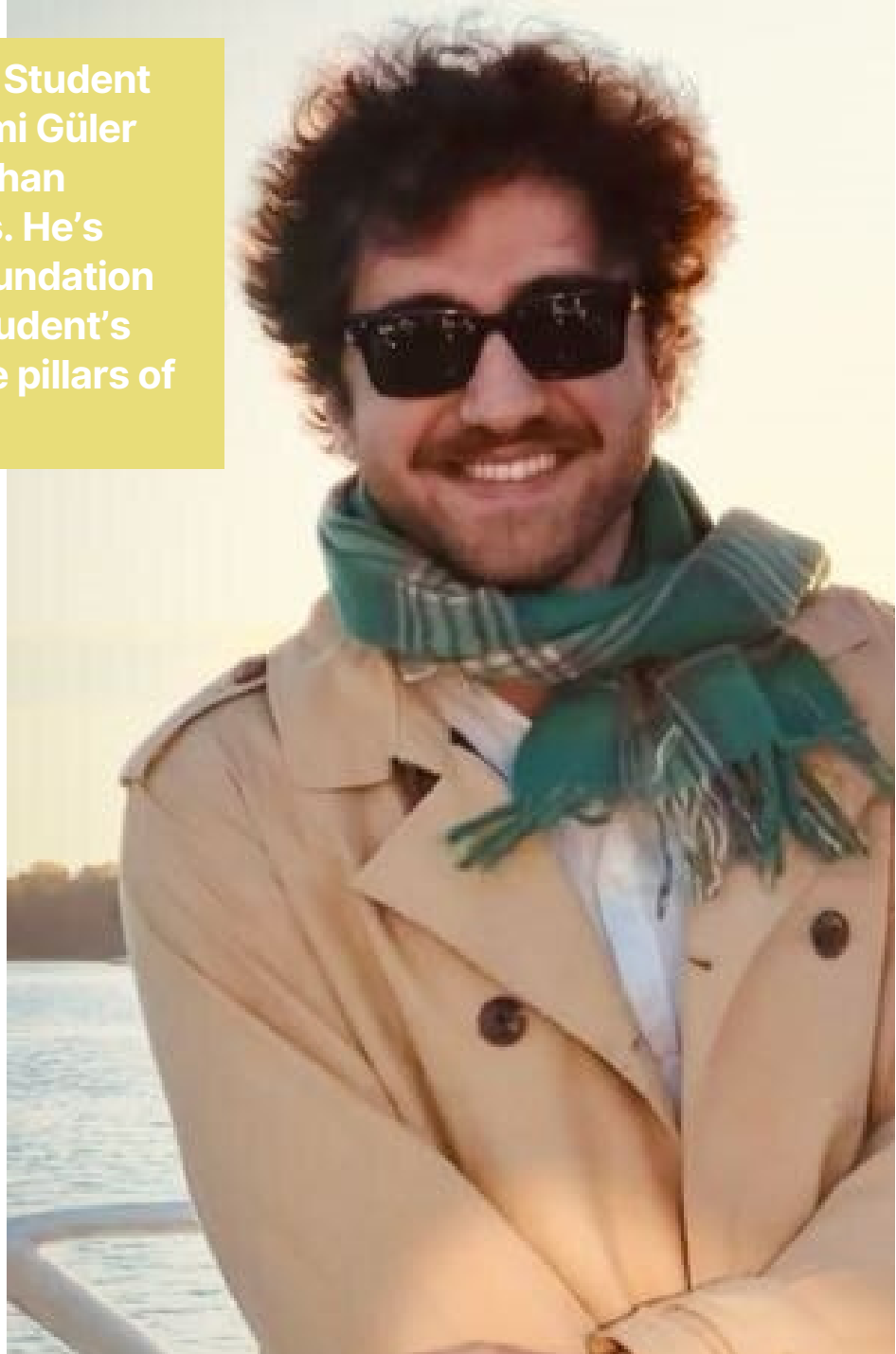
EXTENDING THE SWEET SPOT FOR THE STUDENT BOARD

Chair of the EDUC Student Board, Hikmet Hilmi Güler represents more than 200.000 students. He's busy laying the foundation to integrate the student's voice as one of the pillars of our Alliance.

Hikmet Hilmi Güler and the rest of the EDUC Student Governing Board was elected 28 August, marking an important milestone for our student community.

To very shortly summarize: His educational background/training is in Politics & Public Administration & Design Thinking, and he is working in the Energy & Renewables sector, while previously working in career & counselling, consulting and management. He also has a fair amount of exposure and experience in the executive side of things in his previous engagements.

Being part of the EDUC Project for some time, Güler had joined many



CHAIR: *Hikmet Hilmi Güler of the EDUC Student Board.*
(Photo: Private)

discussions and felt that it came quite natural for him to put his candidacy for the Chair role.

"Having a competent and engaged Student Board is a crucial pull factor. Knowing my fellow SB Members personally, I was confident in our capacity – to plan, work, and create together. On the other hand, it was the close and mutually supportive relationship that we had long established with the EDUC Management that also gave me the certainty for a constructive and forward-looking shared effort," he says.

In your vision, what are the primary goals and aims for the EDUC Alliance Student Board during your term?

I see this year at the Student Board to be the time to lay a strong foundation. A foundation that ensures the integration of our Board as one of the pillars of EDUC – representing our more than 200.000 student body collectively and contributing to the strategy and steering of EDUC Alliance.

How do you plan to strengthen the connection between the Student Board and the general EDUC Governance?

We have defined our procedures and set our guiding document – the SB Charter. Yet, it is one thing to define and describe actions, and

another thing to actually work them out. So that's one of the things we're primarily focused on right now, meaning, we are having discussions with each and every partner university and their administrations to make sure that the participation in our Student Board is on a democratic basis.

Reflecting on the past year, what key accomplishments has the Student Board achieved under your leadership?

The Student Board has become an integral element in the governance of EDUC, thanks to both our efforts and certainly also to the general EDUC Administration, it is crucial that we develop and establish routines on the synergies that we initiated within & between the alliance structures.

We are currently establishing this with the many set touchpoints, connecting our board with the local project coordination and management, the task-level, to the administrative & steering level.

With this structure we also make sure that our board members are able to extend the sweet spot between interest and capacity for their own engagement.



THINK TANK: *The Student Board gathered at University Paris-Nanterre June 2023.*
(Photo: Knut Jul Meland / USN)

IS IT CRITICAL TO THINK?

Introducing the EDUC Initiation to Research and Critical Thinking Course: When education meets research.

One of the cornerstones of EU principles is bridging the gap between education and research, ensuring the development of research in Europe. Therefore it is necessary to boost the attractiveness of scientific careers for young people from their early Bachelor years, who are expected to play a crucial role in Europe's prosperity.

To fulfill this necessity, the EDUC Alliance has introduced an innovative learning pathway: the Initiation to Research and Critical Thinking course.

Cultivation

Throughout a dynamic, cross-cutting, and multidisciplinary approach, the course integrates various learning methods, ranging from online modules to a brief physical internship in a research laboratory. Numerous research groups have expressed keen interest, embracing the opportunity to welcome these young, enthusiastic minds. This experience provides invaluable insights into research activities and career opportunities.

A key aspect of the initiative is the "Presentation Day" event, which allows students to share their experiences. The Initiation to Research and Critical Thinking course by EDUC Alliance serves as a guide/tool for young minds toward a future in research.

By combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on experiences, we are not just imparting education; we are cultivating the researchers and critical thinkers of tomorrow.

Forth edition

The course has reached its fourth edition, involving a total of 500 students in online classes, and 20 students participating in mobility programs between 2021 and 2022, restricted to the first two editions. Currently, the course features six new modules and engages 20 additional faculty members compared to previous editions.

Work is underway to enrich the program for the new edition that will be in April, 2024. Together, let's build a brighter future through the synergy of Education and Research.

The course, in asynchronous mode and freely accessible, is divided into eight online modules in English, structured in an interactive and stimulating manner, thanks to the contribution of faculty researchers from the universities of the EDUC Alliance.

EIGHT FOCUS POINTS

- **identification of a scientific question**
- **bibliographic research and tools**
- **selection of instruments to resolve a scientific question**
- **basis of scientific integrity**
- **presentation of the research professions and the means of accessing them in each EDUC Universities**
- **elements of a European research project**
- **research presentation**
- **critical thinking**

LET'S GET INTERNATIONALLY DIGITAL

EDUC is on its way to highlight the internationalisation of local programmes at The European Association for International Education (EAIE) Forum in 2024.

For European University alliances, massively increasing the European exposure of students – in a scalable way – is a key challenge. The EDUC European University is deploying an innovative model to achieve this: Virtual Mobility & Exchange.

Digitalisation is one of the pillars of the EDUC Alliance, as it enables collaboration between teachers and European exposure of students making higher education flourish in many ways.

Engaging Gen Z

We can sometimes hear echos of general perceptions of distance learning as being: time-consuming, difficult to manage, that you need to have a high level in English or some knowledge of online pedagogical tools, not to mention the fact that students are fed up with being at a distance and that they do not consider it as a 'real' mobility. However, the reality of the feedback from teachers and students who have implemented or experienced EDUC activities reveals that they find it more interactive than traditional lectures, making teaching more dynamic and varied, enabling the acquisition of new know-hows. Indeed, it is a great way to engage students – especially the Z generation – while personalising the pathway.

Truly European

With the EDUC European University Alliance, students teaching and learning experiences are not limited to their university. Thanks to online and blended courses – and all of the EDUC's support in creating and maintaining them – they can experience a truly European education.

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WHAT IS VIRTUAL MOBILITY & EXCHANGE?

- ranging from modalities where students use online platforms and tools to participate in courses at distant universities, to various approaches of digitally supported collaboration between students and between teachers from different universities.
- including a variety of combinations of different education (offline/online) and learning approaches (formal/informal, individual/group-based).

Check out the
EDUC Course catalogue:
<https://courses.educalliance.eu/>

Find out more about the
EDUC Teacher's Journey:
<https://educ.univ-rennes.fr/en/teachers-journey>

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Young researchers face the challenge of building their careers, especially soon after earning their PhD. This is where The EDUC Young Researchers Programme (EYRP) comes in.

The EDUC Young Researchers Programme (EYRP) aims to strengthen the career perspectives of promising post-doctoral researchers who will be recruited by one of the universities of the alliance and will pursue their research in cooperation with at least one EDUC partner, including international mobility periods.

The post-doc researchers will attend a shared training programme and will be connected with the local ecosystem, including possible cross-sectoral mobilities.

Follow the guidelines

The EYRP Guidelines were approved by the EDUC partners in December 2023, and they include all the information about the structure

of the programme: application requirements and selection procedures, mentoring programme and personal career development plan.

Next steps

The next steps will be taken in the upcoming year when the call for the first three post-doc positions will be published, identifying research topics according to the EDUC strategic areas and existing cooperations.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please regularly check the EDUC website. The Alliance is working to give extra opportunities and chances for growth to young researchers around Europe.



JOIN THE TEACHERS' JOURNEY

An exciting opportunity awaits you within the vibrant landscape of international education programs offered by the EDUC Alliance.

We're looking for teachers willing to collaborate with colleagues from different universities, elevate their teaching, and broaden the scope of educational offerings.

The possibilities are vast—whether you're into synchronous or asynchronous online learning, COIL courses, seminar series, or other innovative formats, this is your chance to join the EDUC activities.

To streamline the process, we've created a dedicated space on the EDUC Moodle platform, accessible with a simple request for

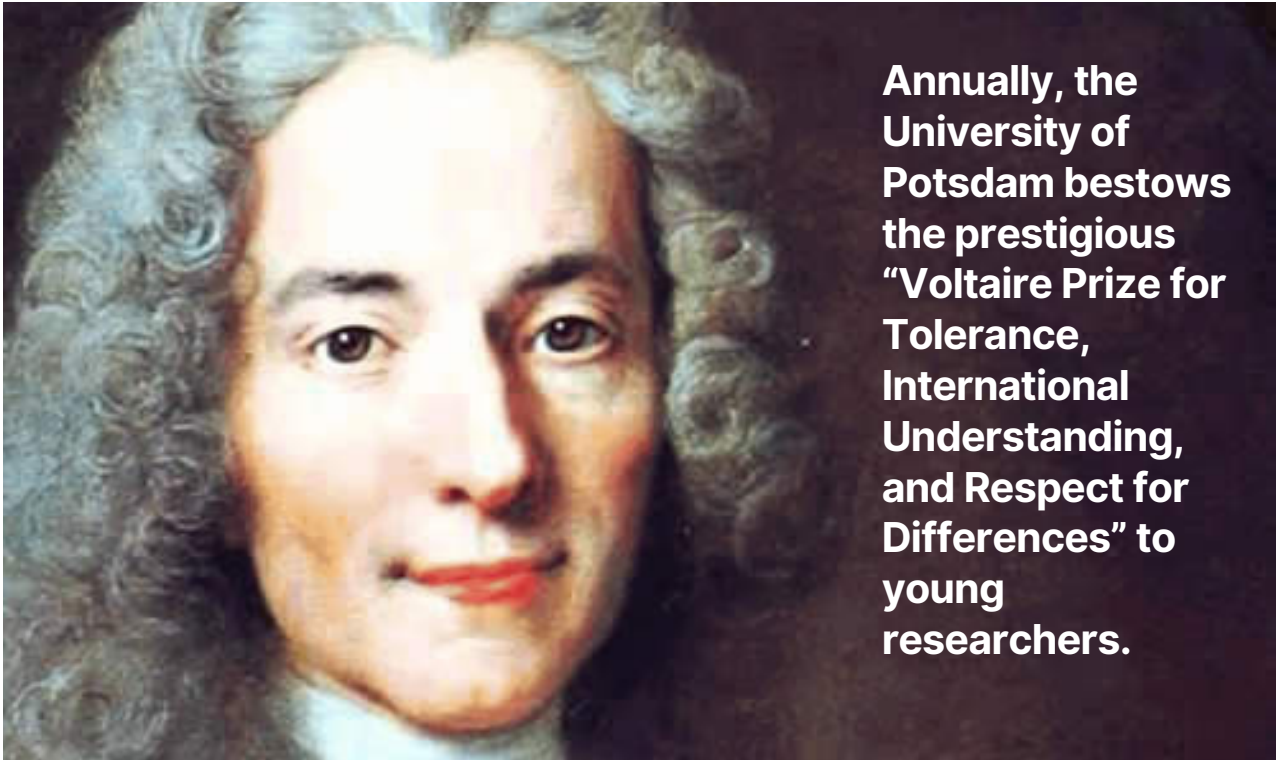
an access key, named EDUC Teacher's Journey. The local EDUC teams will guide and support you every step of the way. Seize this opportunity to not only enhance your professional skills but also contribute to the evolution of global education.

Let your ideas flow freely and make an impact. Your proposals are the driving force behind the EDUC Teacher's Journey – submit yours today and let's embark on this transformative adventure together.

Connect with local teams for further information:

<https://www.educalliance.eu/contact>

IN THE NAME AND SPIRIT OF VOLTAIRE



Annually, the University of Potsdam bestows the prestigious “Voltaire Prize for Tolerance, International Understanding, and Respect for Differences” to young researchers.

A TRAILBLAZER: *Portrait from cirka 1720 of the French philosopher François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778).*

With the Voltaire Prize, the University of Potsdam (UP) seeks to honour a young scholar each year who has significantly contributed to the societal discourse on peace, international understanding, and tolerance or has actively championed freedom in research and teaching, as well as the right to free expression.

- **More about the process of nomination:**
[Voltaire Prize - Voltaire-Preis - University of Potsdam \(uni-potsdam.de\)](#)

Enlightenment pioneer

Named after the eminent French philosopher François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778), a key figure of the Enlightenment, the prize commemorates his ground-breaking influence.

Voltaire's outspoken critiques of absolutism, feudalism, and the Catholic Church positioned

him as a trailblazer for the French Revolution.

On the global stage, the University of Potsdam positions itself among research and teaching collaborators as an institution deeply connected to the Enlightenment principles of Voltaire and La Mettrie, alongside nineteenth-century advancements in the natural sciences.

Cosmopolitanism

Integration into international networks is a pivotal element of the university's comprehensive strategy, enhancing the overall quality and competitiveness of research, study, and teaching endeavours.

Concurrently, the execution of the internationalization strategy aims to foster cosmopolitanism, encourage intercultural exchange, and cultivate a culture of hospitality.

LEADING THE WAY IN CAMPUS GREENING

Two great and green news from the Universitat Jaume I (UJI)



UJI has obtained the highest national certification for a building on campus and is also expanding its network of solar parks.

5 Green Leaves

For the first time, the Green Building Council España (GBCe) has awarded the UJI with their highest sustainability certification – the 5 Green Leaves – for the new Research II building on campus.

This is a first-class scientific facility that will have more than 5,500 square metres of floor space for research and knowledge transfer.

This is the first building on campus to achieve the 5 Green Leaves of the GBCe's GREEN Building 2020 evaluation and certification system, both in the project phase and in the finished work, a fact that accredits the construction of a building that responds to the current social, environmental and economic challenges.

Three new solar parks

UJI is making progress in energy efficiency and sustainability on campus with the expansion of the network of solar parks for self-consumption, with new installations on the roofs of the Research II building, the teaching block of the School of Technology and Experimental Sciences and the Doctoral School and Social Council building.

These actions together result in an increase of 507 kilowatts of installed power on campus. Thus, the contribution of photovoltaic energy in 2023 accounted for an 11 % of UJI's total consumption.

"The commitment to sustainability is a priority in the planning of the UJI's investments in the framework of sustainable development" says UJI's rector, Eva Alcón.