

THE CIRCLE U.LYMPICS

DEVELOPING A BOTTOM-UP PROJECT



How it started

Administrative staff members from Université Paris Cité, King's College London and Aarhus University met during a staff week in Oslo in May 2023. The theme was "from top-down to bottom-up", and the task: how to develop bottom-up activities.

The Circle U. seed-funding scheme provided an important incentive to move on.

Seed-funding was approved in November 2023, and the Circle U.lympics project launched in January 2024!

The concept

- Extracurricular activity
- Bringing together students that are not normally mobile
- 4 interdisciplinary online talks open to all students
- 1 week in person meeting open to selected students
- Circle U. academics recruited to contribute
- Managed by a core team of 4 admin staff across the partner universities



Results

194 students for 2024 U.lympics

140 students signed up for the online talks
54 took part in the physical event in Paris

199 students for 2025 EU.lympics

168 students signed up for the online talks
31 took part in the physical event in Aarhus

10 Circle U. academics + 3 academic chairs contributed to talks in each edition.

What we learned

- Students' engagement has confirmed that we have a viable concept
- Recruiting academics has been relatively easy (also outside project circles)
- Requires committed admin staff: lots of work involved especially for the 1st edition
- Student funding for travel an issue for extracurricular activities
- Future considerations: should this be credit bearing and developed into a proper course?

"We took the idea of contribution of the Olympics to European identity, a very broad topic, to allow for an interdisciplinary approach, with manageable contributions from multiple institutions."

– Hannah, organiser, King's College

Next up

3rd edition "Circle U.nited for Sustainability" scheduled to launch in February 2026 with Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin as the host.

Students from HU Berlin's Sustainability Office and the Climate Hub coordinators involved.



Circle U.
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