

The *Nārua* project of the University of French Polynesia wins the "ExcellencES" call for projects (PIA 4)

The Minister of Higher Education and Research Sylvie Retailleau announced on Tuesday the 17 winners of the "ExcellencES" call for projects. Among them, the *Nārua* project, led by the University of French Polynesia (UPF) and its partners, will benefit from 11.2 million euros for its implementation. The project has thus been granted the full amount requested. UPF is one of two first overseas universities to be awarded the ExcellencES label.

The national call for projects "ExcellencES", launched by the French National Research Agency (ANR) within the framework of the 4th *Programme d'Investissements d'Avenir* (PIA 4), aims to recognise excellence in all its forms and to support higher education and research institutions proposing ambitious strategic projects.

It represents a crucial opportunity for UPF to embark on **a structuring transformation** thanks to a project that will have **a direct impact on Polynesian development**. PIA 4 funding will provide the means for this profound transformation at the service of the Fenua and its inhabitants by strengthening the teams, supporting and accompanying everyone in what will be a major change in the training offer but also in pedagogical and administrative practices.

"We have named this project 'Nārua', navigation by the stars in Tahitian, because the identity of this project is unique, and anchored economically, socially and culturally in its territory.

*The initial diagnosis, the result of an unprecedented consultation of our communities and our academic, territorial and economic partners, has led to the project being oriented towards **optimising and increasing the professionalism of our training offer in order to adapt it to the specificities of a multi-insular and isolated territory**. It is therefore a question of **strengthening the capacity of the territorial ecosystem of higher education with the aim of meeting the needs of the Polynesian population, and of making French Polynesia, our Fenua, a demonstrator of the issues that other insular, isolated or peripheral territories may encounter**," declared Prof. Patrick Capolsini, President of the University of French Polynesia.*

UPF will steer **an ambitious new approach to undergraduate education**, based on **transdisciplinarity** and the link with the territorial ecosystem, which will target **key sectors of the Polynesian economy**, but will also lead to a **complete reform of the UPF's bachelor's degrees**.

This approach includes lifelong **learning** tailored to the needs of public and private managers. *Nārua* is oriented towards serving society, **providing expertise to Polynesian decision-makers**, but also to **any territory concerned by insularity, remoteness or sustainable development issues**.

Strengthening UPF's connection with its territory also means highlighting **its unique identity as a multilingual university in the heart of the Pacific**, as a **French-speaking** institution structuring relations with the key regions of the Pacific zone (Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia), and **promoting Polynesian languages and cultures**.

Finally, *Nārua* sets up the conditions for this transformation through **change management** support.

It is therefore around **three axes** and **one enabling condition** that the *Nārua* project aims to address **six challenges** in **eight years**:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axis 1: Transforming our undergraduate education • Axis 2: Building capacities for sustainable development & impact in multi-insular territories • Axis 3: UPF as a lighthouse in the Pacific area and as multilingual university • Enabling condition: Accelerating organizational transformation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge 1: Retaining & attracting talent • Challenge 2: Failure rate at the Bachelor level • Challenge 3: Equal opportunities in a multi-insular territory • Challenge 4: The cultural factor • Challenge 5: Access to executive positions for local populations • Challenge 6: Mismatch between education offer and labor market in French Polynesia |
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Nārua is part of **a development strategy for French Polynesia**, embodied in a coherent set of structuring projects:

- *Archipels Connectés*, our connected campuses certified in 2021, providing digital access to education in the Polynesian islands;
- *Nāhiti*, which will be proposed to the French *Plan d'Innovation Outre-Mer*;
- and French Polynesia's smart specialisation strategy (S4+).

Furthermore, this announcement confirms that now is the time. *Nārua* fits in a timeline that is perfectly aligned with UPF's strategic plan (Horizon 2030) and with the HCERES process, which will involve **an overhaul of the training offer, to be implemented at the start of the academic year 2024**.

Eager to be among the winners, the UPF did not wait for the verdict of this call for projects to initiate its transformation. *Nārua* was born out **of an unprecedented consultation of UPF's communities and**

partners, revealing a strong concern for the academic success and professionalization of the training of Polynesians in a territory marked by multi-insularity and remoteness, and being a demonstrator of current transitions.

Thus, after the submission of *Nārua* on the 31st of January, a specific working group was formed to think and design the first ever “**Transdisciplinary bachelor on challenges of multi-insular & remote territories**”. As a flagship, the initiation of work package 1.1 of the project sets the tone and pace for the entire UPF community to see the complete implementation of *Nārua* by 2030.

The *Nārua* consortium brings together the **leading academic players in French Polynesia**: the University of French Polynesia, CNRS, Ifremer, IRD. The project is strongly supported and co-financed by the Government of French Polynesia. In addition, *Nārua* is **supported by a range of training bodies, private actors and professional organisations**, with whom very concrete models of cooperation on *Nārua*'s work-packages have been discussed, as reflected in our **letters of support**.

UPF's partners in the *Nārua* project:



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