

# SYMPOSIUM 'LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION'

Supported by the Vice-Rector of Academic and Student Affairs

University of Luxembourg  
9-10 October 2025





# Symposium 'Linguistic diversity in higher education'

## Short description

**The symposium 'Linguistic Diversity in Higher Education' will address how linguistic diversity influences educational processes in higher education while considering its challenges, opportunities, and the development of inclusive academic practices.**

This symposium will bring together experts from European universities to present cutting-edge research on language policies and their effects on educational practices, multi- and plurilingual pedagogies across disciplines, and professional development for academic staff navigating linguistic diversity in higher education. The focus will be on the following themes:

- Language policies and their impact on teaching and learning practices
- Teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms
- Professional development for teaching staff in navigating linguistic diversity
- Multi-/plurilingual pedagogies across academic disciplines in higher education

The expected outcomes of this symposium include exploring how language policies and linguistic diversity influence teaching and learning in higher education, identifying key challenges and opportunities across institutions and disciplines, and gathering evidence-based strategies for teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms. Ultimately, the symposium aims to promote linguistic diversity and foster more effective, inclusive, and equitable higher education environments.

## Organizers

Ass. Prof. Dr Birgit Huemer	Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics, Head of University of Luxembourg Language Centre
Argyro-Maria Skourmalla	PhD candidate (Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, University of Luxembourg)

## Administration and contact

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### **University of Luxembourg, Campus Belval**

Black Box – Maison des Sciences Humaines  
11, Porte des Sciences  
Belval (Esch-sur-Alzette)

[languagecentre@uni.lu](mailto:languagecentre@uni.lu) <http://languagecentre.uni.lu>

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# 1. Program

Thursday, 9 October

16:00-18:00, Maison du Savoir 3.200

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16:00-16:15      Opening remarks

16:15-18:00      Workshop 'Plurilingual practices for teaching in multilingual university classrooms'  
Facilitators: **Argyro-Maria Skourmalla** (PhD candidate, University of Luxembourg) & **Birgit Huemer** (Head of the University of Luxembourg Language Centre)

09:00-09:30 *Opening*

09:30-10:00 Welcoming remarks:

**Philippe Hiligsmann** (Vice-Rector for Academic and Student Affairs, University of Luxembourg)

**Birgit Huemer** (Head of University of Luxembourg Language Centre)  
Welcome and introduction to the topics of the symposium

10:00-10:40 **Pauline Degrave** (Université catholique de Louvain)

Clarifying the EMI-CLIL continuum through pedagogical practices in English- and Dutch-taught courses at a French-speaking university

10:40-11:20 **Robert Wilkinson & René Gabriëls** (Maastricht University)

Language policy contestations: Linguistic diversity and inequality

11:20-11:40 *Coffee break*

11:40-12:20 **Elisabetta Bonvino & Diego Cortés Velásquez** (Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Plurilingualism in Higher Education: Insights from the PEP Project Survey

12:20-13:00 **Argyro-Maria Skourmalla** (University of Luxembourg)

Institutional language policies and individuals' educational experiences at the University of Luxembourg

13:00-14:00 *Buffet lunch*

14:00-15:30 **Panel discussion**

Discussants: **Philippe Hiligsmann** (Vice-rector for Academic and Student Affairs, University of Luxembourg),

**Eva Martha Eckkrammer** (President of Trier University),

**Christophe Schommer** (Associate Professor in Artificial Intelligence, University of Luxembourg),

**Mihajlo Miladinović** (Master's Student in European Law, University of Luxembourg)

Moderation: **Birgit Huemer** (Head of the University of Luxembourg Language Centre) & **Argyro-Maria Skourmalla** (PhD candidate, University of Luxembourg)

15:30-16:00 Closing remarks

## 2. List of participants

### **BONVINO Elisabetta**

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### **WILKINSON Robert**

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### 3. Workshop

#### Plurilingual practices for teaching in multilingual university classrooms

16:00-18:00, Maison du Savoir 3.200

Facilitator: Argyro-Maria Skourmalla, PhD candidate (Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, University of Luxembourg)

This workshop focuses on integrating plurilingualism into teaching practices in multilingual university classrooms. It will start with a brief presentation of relevant key findings from the doctoral research project 'Linguistic diversity in teaching and in learning at the University of Luxembourg', which explores the implications of linguistic diversity in higher education. Subsequently, the workshop will delve into the main features of plurilingualism in teaching, offering insights into how it can be effectively applied in various disciplinary contexts.

The workshop is addressed at teaching staff from all disciplines. Participants will engage in practical, hands-on activities designed to illustrate concepts and strategies for embracing linguistic diversity in the classroom, that can be adapted across different fields of study. The workshop will conclude with a selection of existing resources and materials to inspire the implementation of plurilingual practices in teaching.

## 4. Abstracts and short biographies

**Pauline Degrave**

Clarifying the EMI-CLIL continuum through pedagogical practices in English- and Dutch-taught courses at a French-speaking university

A growing number of universities are offering content courses taught in a foreign language, most often English. This practice is generally known as English-Medium Instruction (EMI), in which the foreign language serves primarily as a medium for teaching disciplinary content, rather than as an explicit object of learning. EMI is therefore often contrasted with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) which explicitly pursues dual objectives: content learning and language development.

Although this theoretical distinction provides a useful framework, its application in practice remains complex. A foreign language can hardly function as a neutral medium of instruction, since its presence inevitably affects both students and lecturers. Students may face comprehension difficulties, reduced participation, or challenges in assessment, while lecturers must adapt their teaching strategies, materials, and evaluation practices. Furthermore, the line between EMI and CLIL is often difficult to draw, producing blurred boundaries, unclear learning objectives, and inconsistent pedagogical approaches.

This presentation aims to clarify these distinctions by introducing a continuum of pedagogical practices situated between EMI and CLIL in higher education. Drawing on insights from a community of practice established with lecturers giving classes in English or in Dutch in a Belgian French-speaking university, we identify four practices that exemplify different orientations toward the integration of content and language. They differ in their aims, teaching strategies, and assessment formats.

Grounded in lived experiences, this practice-based perspective contributes to concretely illustrate the theoretical continuum between EMI and CLIL while offering a conceptual tool for course design and institutional policy.

## The speaker

**Pauline Degrave** is an Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at UCLouvain (Belgium), with a focus on Dutch as a foreign language. Her research concentrates on language-in-education practices, including EMI and CLIL, which she has notably explored in a pedagogical project supporting lecturers teaching in English or Dutch in a French-speaking university. Beyond this topic, she also investigates the interface between music and language acquisition. Committed to translating research into practice, she regularly produces pedagogical publications and trains pre- and in-service teachers.

Language policy contestations: Linguistic diversity and inequality

Unwittingly, the Englishization of higher education has led to increased linguistic diversity in many countries in recent decades. A significant advantage is that the transition from a monolingual to a multilingual university—entailing greater linguistic diversity—generates opportunities for student exchange and thus interculturality as well as scholarly, scientific and educational innovation. However, the Englishization of higher education also nurtures barriers, for example, through new forms of inequality. Whether such inequalities are stimulated by linguistic diversity depends on how higher education manages such diversity. In our paper, we focus on new forms of inequality brought about by language policies and the introduction of English-Medium Instruction. We distinguish barriers not only within higher education, but also between higher education and society. Based on our empirical research, we demonstrate how students perceive these barriers. Their perceptions concern issues such as democracy and linguistic justice. We address a series of questions. Who benefits from Englishization, and who does not? What conflicting interests are at stake? How can this development be explained? And finally, given the gap between the ideal of linguistic diversity and reality, what are the challenges for language policies at local, national, and transnational levels?

## The speakers

**René Gabriëls** is a lecturer in philosophy at Maastricht University (Netherlands). His research concerns social philosophy, sociolinguistics, philosophy of language and sociology of stratification. He focuses on democracy, inequality, human rights, linguistic justice, poverty and the relation between semantics and pragmatics, with current research on English-medium instruction (EMI) at universities and on food banks.

ORCID: 0000-0002-2259-0983

**Robert Wilkinson** worked at Maastricht University from the early 1980s. In the mid-1980s he was a key player in the establishment of multilingual degree programmes, which later mutated into EMI. Subsequently he served as advisor to universities elsewhere as well as to the university board. In a career stretching from the early 1970s, he has worked in several countries and in many industries, especially pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and air traffic control. He was the originator of ICLHE in the early 2000s. He is supposed to be retired.

ORCID: 0000-0002-8737-3357

### Plurilingualism in Higher Education: Insights from the PEP Project Survey

The PEP (Promoting Plurilingual Education Policies) Project investigates how linguistic diversity is addressed in higher education across various European contexts. This presentation introduces the project and focuses on the findings from a large-scale survey conducted within its framework. Over 800 teachers from different European countries participated in the survey, which explored attitudes, practices, and institutional conditions related to plurilingualism. Results reveal strong support for pluri/multilingual practices and policies, alongside significant gaps in institutional support, teacher training, and concrete implementation across disciplines. The presentation will discuss these findings in relation to the development of inclusive, plurilingual pedagogies and the need for systemic support and policy alignment. By linking research and action, the PEP Project highlights concrete strategies for embedding linguistic diversity into teaching and learning in higher education.

## The speakers

**Elisabetta Bonvino** is Full Professor of Language Teaching at Roma Tre University. Her research interests include plurilingual education, intercomprehension among Romance languages, and second language teaching and learning. She has participated in several national and international projects in the field of language education and plurilingualism, and has published extensively in this field.

**Diego Cortés Velásquez** is Associate Professor of Language Education at Roma Tre University. He is the scientific coordinator of Certit, the university's certification of Italian as a second language. His research focuses on plurilingual education, task-based language teaching, cross-cultural pragmatics, and language assessment. He is involved in several national and international projects that promote inclusive and evidence-based approaches to language learning and evaluation.

### Institutional language policies and individuals' educational experiences at the University of Luxembourg

The presentation explores the relationship between institutional language policies and the lived experiences of individuals at the University of Luxembourg, on multilingualism and linguistic diversity in teaching and learning at the undergraduate level. The focus is on the University's Pedagogical Charter and Multilingualism Policy which outline the institution's multilingual environment and respect for diversity in this academic context.

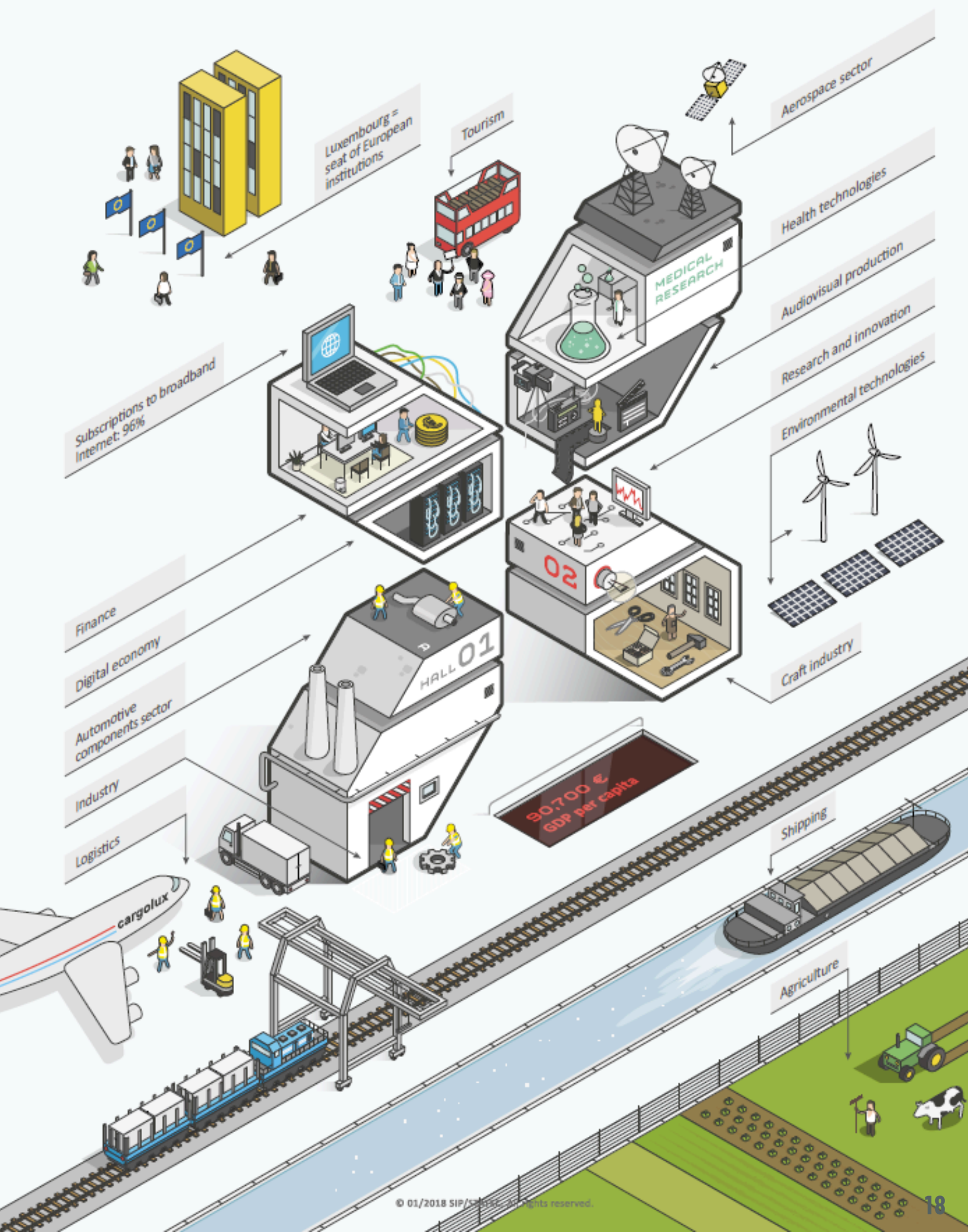
These policy documents are examined alongside the experiences of teaching staff and students. Individuals' perspectives bring to the fore opportunities and challenges that arise from implementing these frameworks in the classroom. These perspectives reveal a heterogeneity in how individuals interpret and apply the above institutional policies, resulting in dissatisfaction and a sense of disconnection between institutional intentions and classroom realities. This presentation offers a critical analysis of the dynamics between institutional policy documents and individuals' experiences. It argues for a more consistent framework that would bridge the gap between institutional language policies and the everyday experiences of teaching staff and students, contributing to a more inclusive learning environment.



## The speaker

**Argyro-Maria Skourmalla** is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences (FSHE) at the University of Luxembourg. Her research interests include plurilingual education, linguistic diversity, second language teaching and learning, language policies and practices. She has participated in research projects on teaching Greek as a second language to immigrant populations and as a trainer for in service teachers on issues relevant to language education for refugee children.

# 5. Luxembourg at a glance



## 6. The University of Luxembourg

### THE UNIVERSITY

  
**2003**  
Foundation

**3** Faculties | **3** Campuses

**5**   
Interdisciplinary Centres

### OUR VISION AND MISSION

**OUR VISION** A University for Luxembourg and the World

**OUR MISSION** To be a world-class research university focusing on:

- Cutting-edge Research
- High-quality Education
- Contribution to the social, cultural and economic development of the country

### OUR APPROACH

INTERNATIONAL

INTERDISCIPLINARY

MULTILINGUAL

RESEARCH ORIENTED

CLOSE TO EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND LEADING INDUSTRY PLAYERS

### RESEARCH

**2,600**  
Publications in 2024

**900+**  
Ongoing Projects

**234**  
Horizon projects accepted to Dec 2024<sup>1</sup>

EU funding

**22**  
ERC Grants awarded to Dec 2024

**137**  
FNR<sup>2</sup> projects accepted in 2024

National funding

**€49.6m**  
FNR awarded funding in 2024

<sup>1</sup> Horizon Europe is the biggest EU Research and Innovation funding programme, with a €95.5 billion budget for the 2021-2027 period.

It succeeds Horizon 2020, which ran from 2014 to 2020, with a budget of €80 billion.

<sup>2</sup> The Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR) is the main funding body for research activities in Luxembourg.

### RANKINGS

**#20**  in the THE (Times Higher Education) Young University Rankings 2024

among the top **#250**   
best universities worldwide according to the THE World University Rankings 2024

**#4** worldwide for our international outlook according to the THE World University Rankings 2023

### TEACHING

**51** Master's Degrees

**24** Bachelor's Degrees

**13** Doctoral Programmes

**58** Bilingual & Multilingual Degrees

**15** Continuing Education Programmes

**4** Teaching Languages   
(French, German, English and Luxembourgish)

### OUR FOCUS AREAS

#### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Trustworthy ICT | Cybersecurity | Digital humanities | Big Data of the past | FinTech | Space technology and telecommunication | Data science

#### MEDICINE AND HEALTH

Systems biomedicine | Neuroscience | Oncology | Experimental psychology | Digital Health | Social and economic determinants of health

#### SUSTAINABLE AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable finance and governance | Inequalities | Diversity and migration | Law and regulations | Educational research

### PEOPLE

**3,600** Bachelor Students

**2,500** Staff

**2,100** Master Students

**300+** Professors

**1,000+** Doctoral candidates

 **1,600** Academic Staff

**19,000** Alumni (since 2003) including 1,700+ doctoral graduates

 **150** Nationalities

## 7. The Language Centre

**Multilingualism** is a key feature of the University of Luxembourg and is integrated into most study programmes.

### Mission

The University of Luxembourg Language Centre was founded in 2014.

Its mission is:

- to enable the students of the University to function well in this multilingual educational environment;
- to facilitate international student mobility and integration into Luxembourg society;
- to enhance the employability of the University's graduates.

### Services

The Language Centre plays a key role in the implementation of the university's Multilingualism Policy. It also offers academic, general and professional language courses for students in the University's official languages – French, English and German – as well as courses in other languages. The Language Centre also offers one-to-one consultations for academic writing in French, German, and English.

Alongside courses and services, the Language Centre organises events to practise language skills in a fun and enjoyable way. Such events include:

- The Language Café, which is a conversational session that gives learners the opportunity to practise their speaking and listening skills with fellow students in a laidback atmosphere.
- The Language Tandem, which gives two people with different native languages the opportunity to practise their language skills.
- The Multilingual Mixer, where students can exchange in English, German, French, Luxembourgish, and other languages about a variety of topics.
- The Long Night of Writing, organised together with the Learning Centre to support and motivate students to finish their assignments on time.

## 8. Institute for Innovative Teaching and Learning (I<sup>2</sup>TL)

Established to drive excellence in education, I<sup>2</sup>TL unifies efforts in teacher development and digital education, while supporting a broad range of pedagogical initiatives and collaborations. At the heart of I<sup>2</sup>TL's mission is the active engagement of students as partners in co-designing, testing, and implementing educational innovations, ensuring initiatives remain relevant, impactful, and learner-focused. Its establishment marks a cornerstone in the University's teaching and learning strategy, reinforcing a long-term commitment to educational excellence.

The institute is built on three interconnected pillars, forming a dynamic ecosystem where ideas, resources, and outcomes flow seamlessly, each pillar reinforcing and complementing the others:

### **Teacher Development**

This pillar supports educators in refining their teaching skills and obtaining a university teaching qualification. It also engages in communities of practice and promotes the use of modern pedagogical tools for continuous growth and innovation. Within this pillar, activities linked to Advance HE and Advancing Competences in Teaching (ACT) for instructors and student success will serve as foundational initiatives.

### **Digital Education**

This pillar advances the effective use of emerging technologies in education by providing centralized techno-pedagogical support and expanding e-learning through strategic collaborations. It ensures that high-quality digital resources, inclusive learning experiences, and comprehensive instructor training collectively foster pedagogical innovation.

### **Education Innovation Fund (EIF)**

This pillar supports student-centered initiatives that transform curricula, teaching methods, and learning outcomes. Through biannual calls for proposals, the Fund finances initiatives that address emerging pedagogical needs, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and introduce novel approaches to teaching and learning.

## 9. Campus Belval

### About the campus

Belval Campus is the University of Luxembourg's main site. Close to Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg's second largest city, Belval combines research with teaching and urban life with leisure activities. Once home to Luxembourg's largest steelworks, this site now features research and learning facilities such as the University library and learning centre as well as student accommodation. The campus is located at the centre of an urban district and has excellent connection to public transportation.

For a virtual tour of the campus: <https://www.virtualtour.lu/uni>

### Discover the buildings in detail

- **Maison du Savoir (MSA):** Completed in 2015, the MSA ("House of Knowledge") is the headquarters of the University of Luxembourg. Address: 2, place de l'Université, L-4365 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.
- **Maison des Sciences Humaines (MSH):** The MSH ("House of Humanities") includes the Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences (FHSE) and the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C<sup>2</sup>DH). Address: 11, porte des Sciences, L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg
- **Maison des Artes et des Etudiants (MAE):** The MAE ("House of Arts and Students"). Address: 6, avenue de la Fonte, L-4364 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.
- **Maison du Nombre (MNO):** The MNO ("House of Numbers") includes offices and departments such as the Department of Mathematics, Department of Computer Science and the Department of Engineering. Address: 6, avenue de la Fonte, L-4364 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.
- **Library/Luxembourg Learning Centre (LLC):** An open and innovative space, an enjoyable place to work and live. Address: 7, Ënnert den Héichiewen, L-4362 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.



## How to get to campus Belval

### By public transport

#### From Findel airport to Luxembourg city

The bus lines **6**, **16** and **29** as well as the **tram** run regularly from Findel airport (just in front of the airport building) to the central train station Luxembourg Gare.



#### From Luxembourg city to Belval campus

Trains departing around every 15 minutes from Luxembourg Central Station are direct to "Belval-Université". The Maison des Sciences Humaines is within 10 minutes walking distance from the train station. Get information on train schedules at <https://www.cfl.lu/en-gb/>



#### Bus stops (the closest):

- Esch-sur-Alzette, Porte des Sciences
- Belval, Porte de France
- Esch-sur-Alzette, Raemerich
- Belval (Université), Gare Routière

The following bus lines are servicing several stops from Luxembourg centre to Belval Campus:

RGTR Line 605: Luxembourg - Monterey - Villerupt (F) via Belvaux

RGTR Line 606: Luxembourg - Differdange - Hussigny (F)

RGTR Line 607: Luxembourg - Soleuvre - Obercorn

RGTR Line 608: Luxembourg - Soleuvre - Niederkorn

RGTR Ligne transfrontalière 306: Trier (D) - Cloche d'Or - Belval

More information on bus lines at <https://www.mobiliteit.lu/en/>



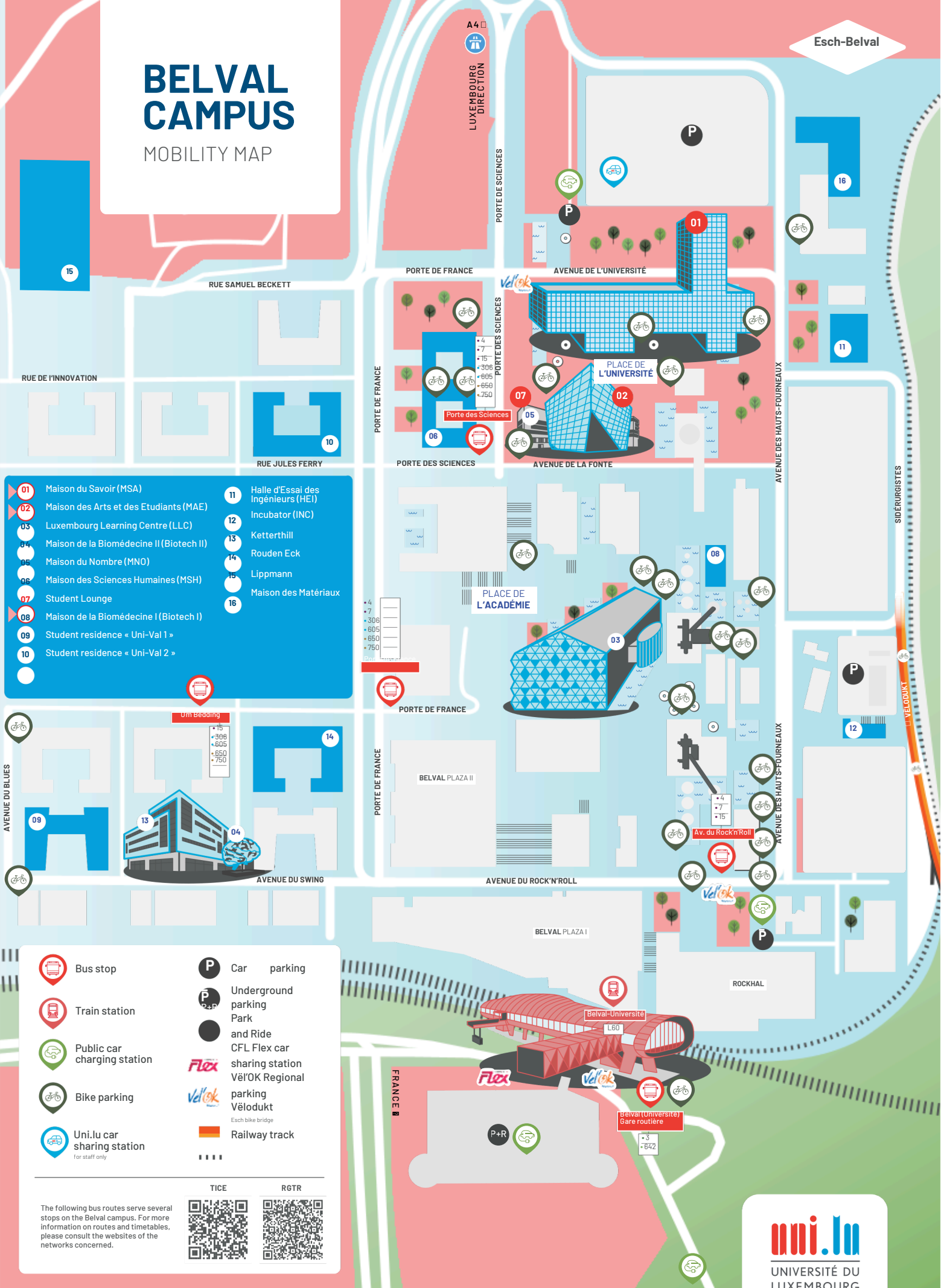
By car: outdoor parking areas and underground car parks are available throughout the campus, particularly P+R Belval Université.

When on site, access to buildings is easy on foot.

# BELVAL CAMPUS

## MOBILITY MAP

Esch-Belval



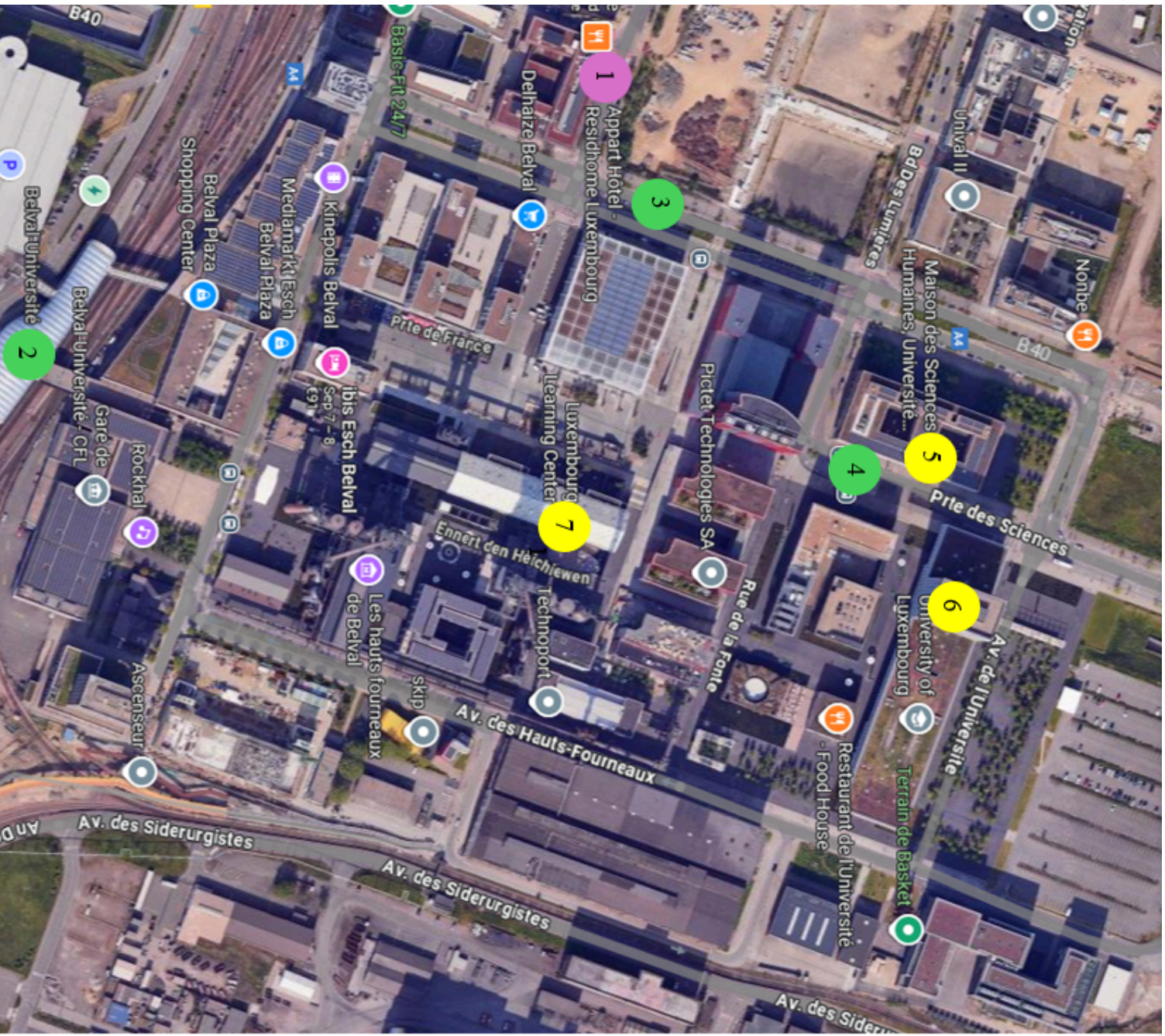
- 01 Maison du Savoir (MSA)
- 02 Maison des Arts et des Etudiants (MAE)
- 03 Luxembourg Learning Centre (LLC)
- 04 Maison de la Biomédecine II (Biotech II)
- 05 Maison du Nombre (MNO)
- 06 Maison des Sciences Humaines (MSH)
- 07 Student Lounge
- 08 Maison de la Biomédecine I (Biotech I)
- 09 Student residence « Uni-Val 1 »
- 10 Student residence « Uni-Val 2 »
- 11 Halle d'Essai des Ingénieurs (HEI)
- 12 Incubator (INC)
- 13 Ketterhill
- 14 Rouden Eck
- 15 Lippmann
- 16 Maison des Matériaux

- Bus stop
- Train station
- Public car charging station
- Bike parking
- Uni.lu car sharing station for staff only
- Car parking
- Underground parking
- and Ride
- CFL Flex car sharing station
- Vél'OK Regional parking
- Vélodukt
- Esch bike bridge
- Railway track

The following bus routes serve several stops on the Belval campus. For more information on routes and timetables, please consult the websites of the networks concerned.

TICE	R6TR





- 1 Residhome Appart Hotel Luxembourg
- 2 Train station "Belval-Université"
- 3 Bus stop "Porte de France"
- 4 Bus stop "Porte des Sciences"
- 5 Maison des Sciences Humaines (Symposium, Black Box room)
- 6 Maison du Savoir (Workshop, room 3.200)
- 7 Luxembourg Learning Center