



Press Release

Katerina Harvati receives Albert Einstein World Award for Science

**World Cultural Council pays tribute to palaeoanthropologist's
research into the origins and development of humankind – Award
ceremony November 2 in Argentina**

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Katerina Harvati

Photo: Berthold Steinhilber/laif

Tübingen Professor Katerina Harvati is to receive the 2026 Albert Einstein World Award for Science, presented by the World Cultural Council. The prize is in recognition of the paleoanthropologist's work, which has fundamentally transformed our understanding of human origins. Harvati, of the Institute for Archaeological Sciences and the Senckenberg Centre for Human Evolution and Palaeoenvironment at the University of Tübingen, has pioneered new techniques including virtual anthropology and geometric morphometrics, which enable quantitative comparisons of biological

forms as well as virtual reconstructions from fossil fragments. Her work has shed light on longstanding questions on the evolution and adaptations of extinct human species and revolutionized our understanding of early modern human dispersals.

The Albert Einstein World Award of Science has been presented annually since 1984 in recognition of outstanding and steadfast scientific and technological research and development. It is awarded by the World Cultural Council, which was founded in Mexico. University of Tübingen President, Professor Karla Pollmann, welcomed the news of the award. "I am delighted to hear that Professor Katerina Harvati is receiving further recognition for her outstanding research in the form of the Albert Einstein

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World Award for Science. This well-deserved award also serves as an inspiration for future generations to push the boundaries of research in all fields,” the president said. The award ceremony for Professor Harvati will take place on 2 November at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba in Argentina.

In its announcement, the World Cultural Council-appointed committee of experts explained that it awarded the prize to Harvati because she has provided rigorous evidence that Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* are distinct species. The committee further cited how her research was pivotal in confirming the African origin of modern humans and mapping their migration routes. The experts also noted that with her discovery of the Apidima-1 fossil in Greece, the oldest *Homo sapiens* ever found in Eurasia, Harvati demonstrated that modern humans reached Europe approximately 150,000 years earlier than previously estimated.

Harvati's excavations in Greece and the Balkans have shown that this region served as an Ice Age refuge and migration corridor for humans and animals during the harsh climatic periods of the Pleistocene, the committee said, adding that the discovery of the oldest archaeological sites in Greece has dated human presence in the region back to some 700,000 years ago. In Greece, Harvati's research team recently discovered the oldest known hand-held wooden tools made by humans, dating back approximately 430,000 years.

Katerina Harvati was born in Greece. She received her Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Columbia University in New York, her Master's degree from the City University of New York, and her Ph.D. in primate evolutionary biology from the City University of New York and the New York Consortium. Since 2009, she has held the Chair of Paleoanthropology at the University of Tübingen. She is the spokesperson for the Human Origins excellence cluster, launched in 2026.

The **Albert Einstein World Award for Science**, awarded annually by the World Cultural Council, recognizes individuals for their exceptional contributions to the advancement of science. It emphasizes their impact on both their specific field and the broader scientific community and takes into special consideration research which has brought true benefit and wellbeing to humankind. The winner of the award is elected by the Interdisciplinary Committee, which is composed of world renowned scientists, among them several Nobel laureates.

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