



## Scientist Vladimíra Petráková and Zmudri.sk founder Julian Gerhart - Aspen CE Madeleine K. Albright Leadership Award Laureates for 2023

Prague, 16 November 2023 – On the eve of the celebration of the Struggle for Freedom Day, an award bearing the name of Czech native and former US Secretary of State, **Aspen CE Madeleine K. Albright Leadership Award**, was announced. This year **Pavel Řehák**, President of Aspen Institute CE and founder of the Direct family, and **Věra Jourová**, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency presented the award to Associate Professor **Vladimíra Petráková**, a prominent Czech physicist, and **Julian Gerhart**, Founder of the Slovak educational portal Zmudri.sk. The Aspen Institute CE award highlights not only their achievements, but also their inspiration and positive impact on society.

**Doc. Vladimíra Petráková** is the leader of a scientific group at the Jaroslav Heyrovský Institute of Physical Chemistry in Prague. Her team works on engineering light using nanoscale objects. Prior to her current position, she served as a Humboldt Fellow at Free University Berlin, where she focused on plasmonic nanoparticles and superresolution microscopy. She is the co-founder and chairperson of Czexpats in Science, an organization focused on building up a global network of Czech researchers and professionals. The organization's primary goal is to strengthen the connection between them and Czech institutions, leveraging their knowledge and expertise to enhance both Czech science and society. She is an advocate for women in science. She actively works to reduce the systemic barriers that women encounter in academia.

**Julian Gerhart** received a Bachelor of Arts in Marketing and Management Communication at Aarhus University in Denmark. He returned to his home country with a vision to build a better education that prepares young people to become responsible citizens. Together with his friends, he co-founded a non-profit organization, Zmudri.sk, an online platform for young people and teachers with free video courses and learning materials focusing on topics such as civic issues, financial literacy, critical thinking, job search, media literacy and more. After five years of existence, the organization has produced over 200 video courses, registered more than 10,000 teachers and gained 70,000+ followers on social media. The organization was also awarded the Forbes 30under30 and the European Citizen's Prize in the European Parliament in Brussels. He is currently studying for his MBA at Oxford University thanks to the highly competitive full ride Skoll Scholarship.



The award entails, in particular, long-term cooperation and support of both award-winning personalities, inclusion in the Institute's global network, and the opportunity to participate in international activities or events organized by Aspen Institute CE partners.

*"Thanks to their activities, these young people are a great inspiration to others and I am very happy that today we are recognising personalities who are positively influencing Central European society. Associate professor Vladimíra Petráková is a Czech science ambassador in the world and, as the founder and chairwoman of Czexpats in Science, she facilitates contact and mutual inspiration between Czech scientists abroad and at home. Julian Gerhart's project motivates tens of thousands of young people to develop their skills, thus promoting an open democratic society. By means of the Aspen CE Madeleine K. Albright Leadership Award, our Institute wants to encourage them to further develop leadership based on values, morality and courage,"* says **Milan Vašina**, Executive Director of Aspen Institute CE, congratulating this year's award recipients.

Aspen Institute CE has been awarding the Leadership Award since 2019 to young emerging professionals with outstanding achievements in actively promoting responsible citizenship, values-based leadership and the development of innovative policies with a positive social impact in Central Europe. As of last year, this award bears the name Madeleine K. Albright with the permission of her family.

For more information about Aspen Institute CE, visit [www.aspeninstitutece.org](http://www.aspeninstitutece.org).

### **Aspen Institute Central Europe**

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