CASE STUDY

GÉANT is an association of European National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and thus a central part of the pan-European research community. GÉANT and its services stand for scientific excellence, research, education and innovation. It connects over 10,000 academic institutions and more than 50 million users, making GÉANT the largest R&E network in the world.

COMPANY NAME
GÉANT Association

BUSINESS
Services to Research and Education

WEB
www.geant.org

THE PROJECT

With its InAcademia service, GÉANT provides a solution for commercial and retail services that specialise in offering discounts and services to academic users. InAcademia can be integrated into services' web presence for users to signal their eligibility for targeted offers, therefore removing the need for services to collect and process large volumes of personal information or to manage the complexity of academic federated identity.

InAcademia uses the information provided by SAML identity providers, such as the Shibboleth IdP, from the home organisation to validate the student status. All information is validated in real time and the authenticity of the data is ensured by the established eduGAIN infrastructure.
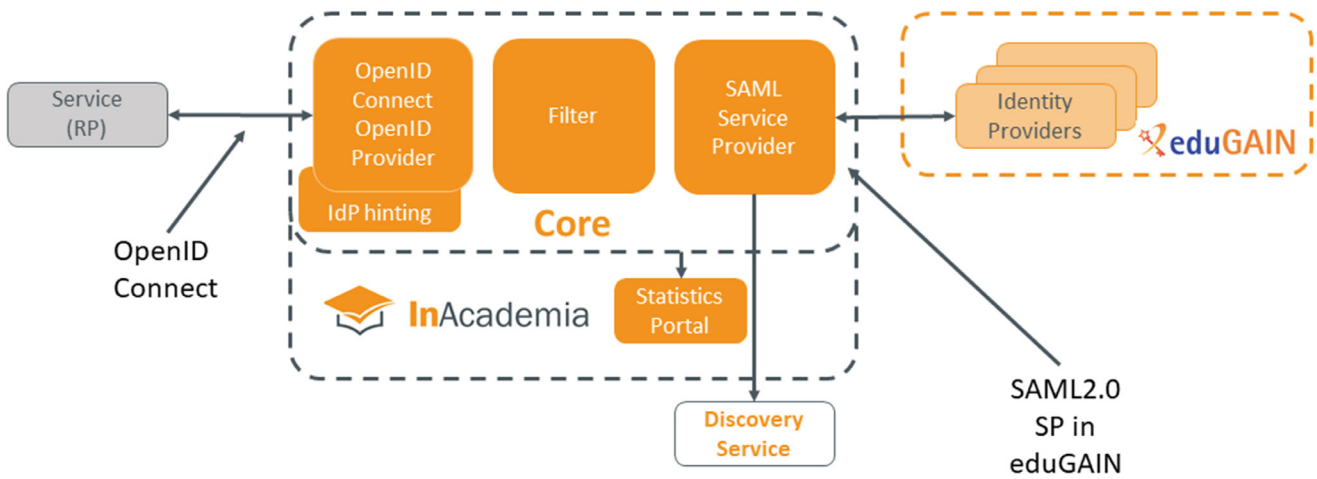
The InAcademia service is based on the SAML and OpenID Connect (OIDC) standards and has a SATOSA proxy at its core. The service is constantly being expanded.

On a technical level, InAcademia 'speaks' OIDC in the direction of the merchants (services that request verification) and SAML in the direction of the IdPs (the originating institutions, i.e. universities that participate in eduGAIN), using SATOSA as a proxy to the two standards.

SATOSA outsources authentication to the IdP of the origin institution, and an additional layer on top of SATOSA compares the affiliation received from the IdP to that requested by the RP, returning a pseudonymised response to the service confirming whether the user is affiliated to an institution, discarding any superfluous data received in the process. DAASI International programmed a number of microservices, e.g. for error handling, logging and consent, and has played a key role in the continual improvement of the service.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Between 2020 and the end of 2022, DAASI International was commissioned to work on the continual improvement of the code, making con-

tributions to the OIDC frontend and other micro-services, such as the implementation of support for OIDC's authorisation code flow and ensuring best-practice alignment to the code's error handling and logging. The improved logging can be used to analyse user journeys and identify incompatible IdPs, which in turnled to improvements of InAcademia's student validation success rate. These contributions ensured that significant progress could be made to the code base without disrupting service to existing customers.