

# NEWSUOC

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INTERNATIONAL

A photograph showing three students in a pottery workshop. They are wearing aprons and are focused on their work. The student on the left is wearing a white cap and a dark jacket. The student in the middle is wearing glasses and a white hoodie. The student on the right is wearing a brown jacket. They are working at a wooden table with various pottery tools and materials. The background shows a workshop setting with a white pillar and some equipment.

**Liberating  
education:  
innovative  
combinations  
of learning at UoC**



ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ  
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

## NEWSUOC

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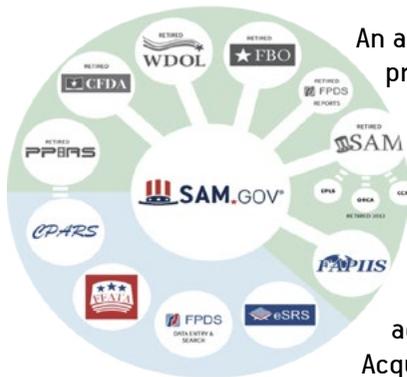
# Presentation:

## The UoC Research Support Office

The Research Support Office (RSO) of the Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Unit at the University of Crete offers support and assistance to the Academic community in Guiding, Proposal Writing, and Submission of European funded projects and tenders. Furthermore, the RSO collaborates with international organizations in order to obtain validation and approval for international funded grants. The University of Crete has been successfully validated by the following international organizations to receive grants and donations:

### SAM.gov

The System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is an official website of the U.S. Government.



An active registration in SAM.gov provides the entity with the ability to apply for federal grants or loans or bid on government contracts.

The Integrated Award Environment (IAE) is a government-wide initiative administered by GSA's Federal Acquisition Service (FAS). It manages the suite of systems,

including SAM.gov, that are an essential part of the federal awards lifecycle. The goal of the IAE is to continue to evolve and integrate the existing shared portfolio of multiple online systems used for awarding and administering federal financial assistance (i.e., grants, loans) and contracts.

The Research Support Office of the University of Crete successfully supported the demanding application process for the validation of UoC registration to Sam.gov.

### CAF International Validated Organization

CAF America is an intermediary grant-making organization that helps U.S. donors give to not-for-profit organizations outside of the U.S. It works as an intermediary with Vanguard Concierge Fund in international granting assisting US corporations, foundations, and individuals in making strategic, effective, and tax-advantaged grants internationally and domestically.



University of Crete has been validated by CAF International having completed an extensive application and due diligence process with one of CAF International's Global Offices. The CAF International Validated Organization Badge is awarded:

The University of Crete is honored to receive grants from CAF America as well as other US-based philanthropic grants.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.cafamerica.org/>

<https://www.cafamerica.org/foreign-nonprofits/>

### EARMA

The European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA) was established in 1995 in Italy, recognizing the need for Research Managers and Administrators to have a forum to meet, network and share their experiences. The Association took on the role of lobbying for and on behalf of its community and the wider research community in Europe. Over the years, EARMA has come to be seen as the representative association, at European level, for Research managers and Administrators. Today, the Association is based in Brussels.



The Research Support Office of the University of Crete successfully supported the application process of the University of Crete as an institutional member of EARMA. As of 1/1/2024 the University of Crete is an institutional member of EARMA.

# Embracing Informal Academic Development:

## NURTURING TEACHING EXCELLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CRETE AND BEYOND



In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, the role of university teachers extends beyond the dissemination of knowledge to fostering inclusive and innovative learning environments. At the **Centre of Teaching and Learning (CTL TOTT)** of

the University of Crete (UoC), we recognize the significance of continuous academic development in enhancing teaching practices. While formal training programs undoubtedly hold value, we also emphasize the importance of informal avenues for academic growth.

Our commitment to fostering a culture of continuous improvement led to the establishment of diverse initiatives including monthly online peer discussions, an 8-week MOOC tailored to the needs of passionate academics keen on refining their teaching styles, peer-observations of classroom teaching as a use of reflective academic development practice, and reflective syllabus design that aligns with inclusive student centred pedagogies.

The monthly online peer discussions serve as a platform where academics from any university can convene to exchange insights on innovative pedagogies and inclusive student-centered methods of teaching and learning. These discussions transcend geographical boundaries, fostering a global community of educators committed to enhancing the quality of higher education. By sharing experiences and best practices, participants gain valuable insights that enrich their teaching repertoire.

Similarly, our **8-week MOOC on Higher Education Pedagogy and Teaching Methodologies** provides academics with a structured learning environment to delve deeper into effective teaching strategies. Unlike traditional models, our MOOC adopts a collaborative empowerment approach, treating participants as co-learners rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This shift in perspective acknowledges the wealth of experience and expertise that educators bring to the table, empowering them to actively engage in their professional development journey. Academics who are keen on this can register themselves [here](#).



Central to our approach is the recognition of academics as reflective practitioners who continuously seek to refine their teaching practices. By prioritizing reflection through participatory academic development contexts, we aim to foster constructive synergies and collaborations within the higher education community. Through peer-coaching in active communities of practice, discourse communities, and communities of learning, we endeavor to overcome challenges and promote inclusivity and excellence in teaching.

We also designed a second MOOC as part of the [COALITION project](#), addressing contemporary challenges in Higher Education by focusing on the academic development of teaching staff and fostering inclusive learning environments. Through active communities of practice and inclusive student-centered pedagogical approaches (i-scP), the project aims to empower educators to create learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of all students. By incorporating the diverse voices of students, COALITION strives to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed without exclusion or labeling. Implemented across six EU countries, the COALITION project utilizes digital training materials, including interactive e-books, to enhance the skills of higher education teaching staff, contribute to the ongoing improvement of teaching practices and the promotion of inclusivity in higher education.

Critical insights gleaned from our MOOCs underscored the importance of designing inclusive courses that cater to the diverse needs of academics. Moving away from deficit training models, we embrace a strengths-based approach that acknowledges and builds upon educators' existing knowledge and experiences. By doing so, we empower academics to experiment with different teaching methodologies and contribute to the ongoing evolution of higher education pedagogy.

In line with our commitment to fostering collaboration, we are also excited to announce our project to create an [international map of Teaching and Learning Centres \(CTLs\) worldwide](#). This initiative aims to facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing among teaching and learning centres, fostering a global community of educators dedicated to advancing teaching excellence. By pooling our resources and expertise, we can create a vibrant ecosystem of academic development initiatives that transcends geographical boundaries and promotes continuous learning and growth.

In conclusion, embracing informal types of academic development is essential for nurturing teaching excellence in higher education. Through initiatives such as monthly peer discussions and tailored MOOCs, we invite educators from around the world to contribute to this endeavor by sharing information about CTLs in their countries or universities.

**Dr. Kallia Katsampoxaki-Hodgetts**

Coordinator of Centre of Teaching and Learning  
(CTL TOTT, UOC)





## The University of Crete welcomed the first INGENIUM Winter Senior School



*The participants of the 1st INGENIUM Winter School "The Carob Challenge: A Paradigm of Sustainable Development and Innovation", Conservatory of Rethymnon*

The University of Crete welcomed the first INGENIUM Winter Senior School titled "The Carob Challenge: A Paradigm of Sustainable Development and Innovation" from the 5th to the 9th of February, 2024. Postgraduate, Ph.D. students, and early career researchers from all ten INGENIUM European universities visited Rethymnon to attend lectures, workshops, and hands-on activities focusing on the carob as a unique Mediterranean product.

The Opening Ceremony was held on February 5 in the Municipal Conservatory in the old town of Rethymnon, where Mr. Georgios Kossioris, UoC Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Lifelong Learning, International Relations & Outlook, welcomed the 200 participants and introduced them to the University of Crete. The "10 Days of INGENIUM" is a hallmark of the alliance, promoting the main pillars of INGENIUM: research collaborations and the promotion of interdisciplinarity.

Ms. Ana Isabel Alvarez, Director of the INGENIUM European Alliance, presented the INGENIUM objectives in education, research, and the pursuit of a common European identity.

Mr. Marcello Constantini, Associate Professor, G. d'Annunzio" University of Chieti – Pescara and WP6 Leader of "INGENIUM for Research" talked about how INGENIUM enhances, supports, and encourages the internationalization of research collaborations. Ms. Susane Irene Dvaz Rodriguez, Vice-Rector for Research at the University of Oviedo, and Mr. Eric Dargent, Vice President of International Relations at the University of Rouen Normandie, presented the research work conducted at their institutions. Mr. Michalis Pavlidis, UoC Vice-Rector for Research & Development, highlighted the critical role of research at the University of Crete.



*Snapshots from the opening ceremony at the Conservatory of Rethymnon. From the left: Prof. Georgios M. Kontakis, Rector of the University of Crete, Prof. Susane Irene Diaz Rodriguez, Vice Rector for Research, University of Oviedo, and Prof. Georgios Kosiortis, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Lifelong Learning, International Relations & Outlook*

The event was also honored by Mr. Georgios Kontakis, Rector of the University of Crete, who addressed and welcomed the attendees on behalf of the University. Ms. Lioni Maria, Regional Vice-Governor of Crete, Regional Unit of Rethymnon, and Mr. Papadogiannis Nektarios, Deputy Mayor of Education at the Municipality of Rethymnon, stressed the importance of events like the INGENIUM winter school that promote Mediterranean products such as the carob. The first day concluded with music and dancing: Mariela Vitorou and her music group performed some of the most famous European and Greek songs in the Conservatory.

The INGENIUM Winter Senior School: "The Carob Challenge: A Paradigm of Sustainable Development and Innovation" aimed to present the carob holistically, enabling students to understand its importance and value. Participants presented their projects based on this unique Mediterranean product on the last day of the Winter Senior School. Ms. Kavroulaki Marianna, Experimental Archaeologist and Food Historian, talked about carob over the centuries, the archaeological findings, and its use in Greece. Ms. Tzatzani Thiresia-Teresa, Assistant Researcher at the Hellenic Agricultural Organization (ELGO) "DIMITRA," presented the carob cultivars and how they respond to climate change and food crises. Ms. Sotiraki Smaragda, European Veterinary Specialist in

Parasitology at the Hellenic Agricultural Organization (ELGO) "DIMITRA," highlighted the importance of the carob in livestock farming. Mr. Manousakas Ilias, owner of the company Creta Carob, presented various carob products and spoke about the present challenges and opportunities in carob production. The aspect of sustainability and entrepreneurship was analyzed by Mr. Konstantinos Manasakis, Associate Professor at the UoC Department of Political Science.

Students and mentors also visited the cultural site of Epimenides in Panormo, where they had the opportunity to see one of the oldest and still functional carob mills in Crete. There, Mr. Pratsinis Harris from the Institute of Biosciences & Applications NCSR "Demokritos" presented carob's natural products as a source of bioactive compounds. Mr. Katerinopoulos Charalampos, Emeritus Professor at the UoC Department of Chemistry, stressed the necessity of determining the "chemical fingerprint" of carob, focusing on its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial attributes. Mr. Kalantidis Kriton, Professor at the UoC Department of Biology, presented the carob genome, an analysis and study attempted for the first time globally.

Furthermore, Mr. Kafkalas Iosif, researcher at the UoC Department of Economics, presented the carob value chain and adverse impact, and Ms. Triliva Sofia, Professor at the UoC Department of Psychology,



Snapshot from the presentation of Prof. Kalantidis, President of the UoC Physics Department



Snapshots from the Winter School activities at the Carob Mill in Panormo

analyzed how “Community of Practice” and “Foresight Analysis” methodologies can be used to integrate stakeholders in the carob value chain.

On the final day of the Winter Senior School, 16 student groups presented their carob-based projects to a four-member panel and analyzed their entrepreneurial and innovative approach. Mr. Xirouhakis Fragiskos’s workshop about the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship gave the students valuable information that helped them form and present their projects.

Participants not only learned about carob but also baked their own carob-flavored products. They baked bread with carob flour and tasted their carob creations based on traditional Greek recipes and local ingredients. Some participants did not hesitate to dive into the beach of Panormos and enjoy the sunny weather!

Students also had the opportunity to attend the INGENIUM Science Factory-PhD days workshops that aim to bring together Ph.D. students from all the INGENIUM Universities and improve their transferable and soft skills. Ms. Susane Irene Díaz Rodriquez, Vice-Rector for Research at the University of Oviedo presented the connection of AI with research, while Ms. Anne Hytönen, RDI Specialist in science communication, South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, talked about communication and dissemination of research. Additionally, Ms. Drakaki Eleni, Economist, UoC presented the social impact of entrepreneurship and innovation.

During the “10 Days of INGENIUM”, parallel events, workshops and meetings of INGENIUM took place in two central hotels of Rethymnon, where 80 people, academic and administrative staff from all European universities participated. The Staff Academy

workshops, organized by the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, showcase innovative pedagogical methodologies, one from each partner university, that are currently implemented or wishing to develop them in cooperation with INGENIUM partners. Additionally, a two-day meeting session was held to discuss the implementation of the INGENIUM European campus and establishing a cohesive cooperation framework.

Participants visited the FORTH Institute and some of its most pioneering facilities. Prof. Nektarios Tavernarakis, President of FORTH, welcomed the INGENIUM guest and introduced the activities of the Institute. Prof. Dimitris Plexousakis, ICS Director and Vice President of FORTH, presented the Institute of Computer Science (ICS), while Prof. Vassilis Charmandaris, IA Director, the Institute of Astrophysics (IA) and Skinakas Observatory. INGENIUM students talked with researchers and learned how an idea can develop into a significant research project. They visited the Lab of Ambient Intelligent Infrastructures (ICS), the Computation Vision and Robotics Lab, the Developmental Morphogenesis Lab, the Ultrafast Laser Micro and Nano Processing Laboratory (IESL) & Biomimetic spin-off company, and the facility of Photonics for Heritage Science group (IESL).



Snapshot from the Winter School visit at the Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH)

The baton of the “10 Days of INGENIUM” events passed to the team of the Munster Technological University, which hosted the INGENIUM Winter Junior School from the 12th to the 16th of February. In Cork, Ireland, undergraduate students and their mentors participated in Hackathons on CYBER SECURITY and SUSTAINABILITY and had the opportunity to attend workshops on inclusion in higher education. Representatives from all INGENIUM universities participated in sustainability workshops and had the chance to discuss and explore the support of entrepreneurship activities in the alliance.



The Munster Technological University (MTU) team receives the “10 Days of INGENIUM” baton

The next edition of the “10 Days of INGENIUM” events will be hosted by the Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iasi, Romania, and the University of Rouen, Normandy, in May 2024.

Photos: UoC Visual Anthropology Lab

**What Students said for the INGENIUM Winter Senior School in UoC:**

**Katerina Andrianopoulou, Master student, Biology, UoC**



Could you imagine that in only five days you can meet and connect with more than fifty people, engage in many activities, learn new things, explore a beautiful city and make memories you will remember for the rest of your life? I couldn't!

But with the Ingenium winter school in Rethymno all of these came true! An ideal combination of knowledge, fun, multiculturalism and insightfulness!

**Panagou Georgia, PhD, Chemistry, UoC**

The 10 Days of INGENIUM brought, once again, an effortless sense of union among individuals of different countries and disciplines around Europe. It was a pleasure to share ideas, learn new perspectives, and forge connections with bright minds. I eagerly anticipate the continued growth of INGENIUM University and look forward to the next initiatives it will undertake.



**Dimitris Gousopoulos, PhD, Philology, UoC**

Is it possible within a week to meet ambitious researchers from 10 European universities, attend interesting lectures, visit cutting-edge research centres, participate in hands-on activities, and have fun, taste local food, see picturesque places, and have a good time? Yes, if you were lucky enough to participate in the INGENIUM Winter Senior School at Rethymnon, Crete.

Not to mention all the things we learned about carob and the delicious carob products we tasted. Next time, if you get the chance, don't miss it!



**Simon Patterson, Researcher, Food Systems Resource Efficient, MTU**



It was a pleasure to be part of the #10daysofINGENIUM Winter School and represent MTU at the University of Crete in Rethymnon, Crete this past week.

**Pascal Goschnick, Master student, Technology Entrepreneurship, HKA**



I am excited to be a part of INGENIUM winter school that connected me with a lot of people from various fields of research.

**Mikael Silventoinen, Master student, Development and Leadership in Health Care and Social Services, XAMK**



Influential experience hosted by the University of Crete during INGENIUM University Senior Winter School will always be remembered. Firm contacts were made and through schedule kept everyone's mind active challenging us all to

innovate.

**Jun He, Phd, Centre for the Study of Changes in Physical and Sports Activities (CETAPS), URN**

It was a very fruitful experience, with researchers from #multiple disciplines, gathering in #Crete to find a way out for a special local sustainable food. We had the opportunity to learn from experts in fields such as history, biology, chemistry, economy, management, psychology, informatics, communication, and more.



# First Winter School: The Origins of Civilizations: A Cretan Perspective



Celebrating the first year of activities of the Center of Greek and Chinese Civilizations (KELKIP), the University of Crete organized its first Winter School on **“The Origins of Civilizations: A Cretan Perspective”** from February 18 to 27, 2024, in collaboration with the Institute for

by Professors of Archaeology, Ancient Philosophy, History and Social Anthropology on the various civilizations that emerged or have been evidenced on the island of Crete, as well as on early Greek ideas on the origins of political communities, including Plato’s reflections on an ideal Cretan city-state. Moreover, a series of field trips allowed the students to visit major archaeological museums and sites and acquaint themselves with traditional practices of pottery and livestock farming. Mr. Xiao Qian, the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Greece, honored the program with a visit to the University Campus of Gallos, in Rethymnon.

Mediterranean Studies, and Southwest University (China).

Ten humanities students travelled from China together with Prof. Wang Yong, the Secretary of the Chinese KELKIP, to attend a series of lectures, taught

Photos: M. Zouridaki, G. Kamilakis, Visual Anthropology Lab: Image, Music, Text, University of Crete

See the school’s Program [here](#)





## Teaching History of Medicine at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion



The Medical School of the University of Crete launched its [International Program in Medicine](#) in September 2023 and students from around the world enrolled in one of the best-established curriculums worldwide. The History of Medicine and Medical Deontology Department (HMMDD) participates in this effort, introducing novel teaching techniques.

Lectures are given during visits to local Museums, combining knowledge and exhibition to enhance educational outcomes. The pedagogical significance of museums and their collaboration with the HMMDDs as part of the curriculum of the undergraduate study program in Medical Schools has been treasured in

numerous studies. The role of museum exhibits and visual arts in medical education has permeated the curriculum and has been shown to facilitate clinical education, cultivating a range of competencies. These skills complete the trainee both as a personality and as a scientist and promote the interrelation of science, art, history and cognition.

Through the deepening of experiential museum learning, students' interest in the historical path of the science they study increases as they discover its spatial and timeline relationship by relating to their future practice. By studying historical hallmarks, technological developments, important figures and historical objects, the resolution of conflicting views in relation to history is tackled.

A guided visit to the **Archaeological Museum of Heraklion** in Crete, curated primarily by health professionals, in this case, **Assistant Professor Gregory Tsoucalas**, reveals the linear progression of the medical sciences and bridges the oversimplified dichotomy between traditional and modern medicine. Objects of the past exhibit ways of theurgical medicine, reveal medical practices and bring to life forgotten gods. When such a visit is supplemented with an interactive discussion, the student's demand for understanding the origins of medicine is balanced

and the critical thinking process afforded by history itself is emphasized. The promotion of observation, diagnostic skills, empathy, team building, communication skills, scientific resilience and cultural sensitivity have been shown to be enhanced in preclinical students. Thus, through museum-based pedagogical methods, students can better evaluate historical data and integrate it into the past and modern medicine.

Surveys focusing on Medical School graduates reveal both the desire of the students, as well as the Schools' lagging in terms of education in issues of medical humanities, such as the History of Medicine, Philosophy of Medicine and Deontology. The educational visit initiative of the HMMDD of the University of Crete, in collaboration with

the administration of the Archeological Museum of Heraklion, strengthens and supports inter-disciplinarity and cooperation between medicine and humanity sciences. Through such diverse actions and initiatives, with on-the-spot lectures and quizzes, HMMDD anticipates the satisfaction of the students participating. Better learning results in the immediate future, joyful education, peripatetic lectures and everlasting memories are the pearls expected throughout this teaching program.

Gregory Tsoucalas

*Assistant Professor of the History of Medicine and Head of the History of Medicine and Medical Deontology Department, School of Medicine, University of Crete, Heraklion, Greece.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that Goddess of the Snakes of ancient Crete, holding the two snakes from their neck, symbolizes the dominion over nature and the snake, thus upon the circle of life and death, signifying she was the goddess of healing?



Did you know that species of Rhinoceros beetles, genus *Oryctes*, were related to the beliefs of herding and rural communities by being worshiped as they had been the representatives of the circle of life and death?



Did you know that votive offerings (Greek: αναθήματα, anathemata) in ancient Crete, resembling to a human limb or organ, intended to invoke god's generosity towards a better health or a swift cure?

# INFORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS & THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF CRETE: A CASE STUDY



Informal learning refers to knowledge acquired outside of formal settings and arises from the learner's involvement in experiential learning activities that are not directly linked to a learning purpose. Museums provide an excellent informal setting for the design of diverse programs that support learning for audiences ranging from the youngest children to the oldest adults. Universities have also started designing strategies that promote informal learning environments, bridging the differences between informal and formal settings and empowering curricula used in formal settings for students' academic development.

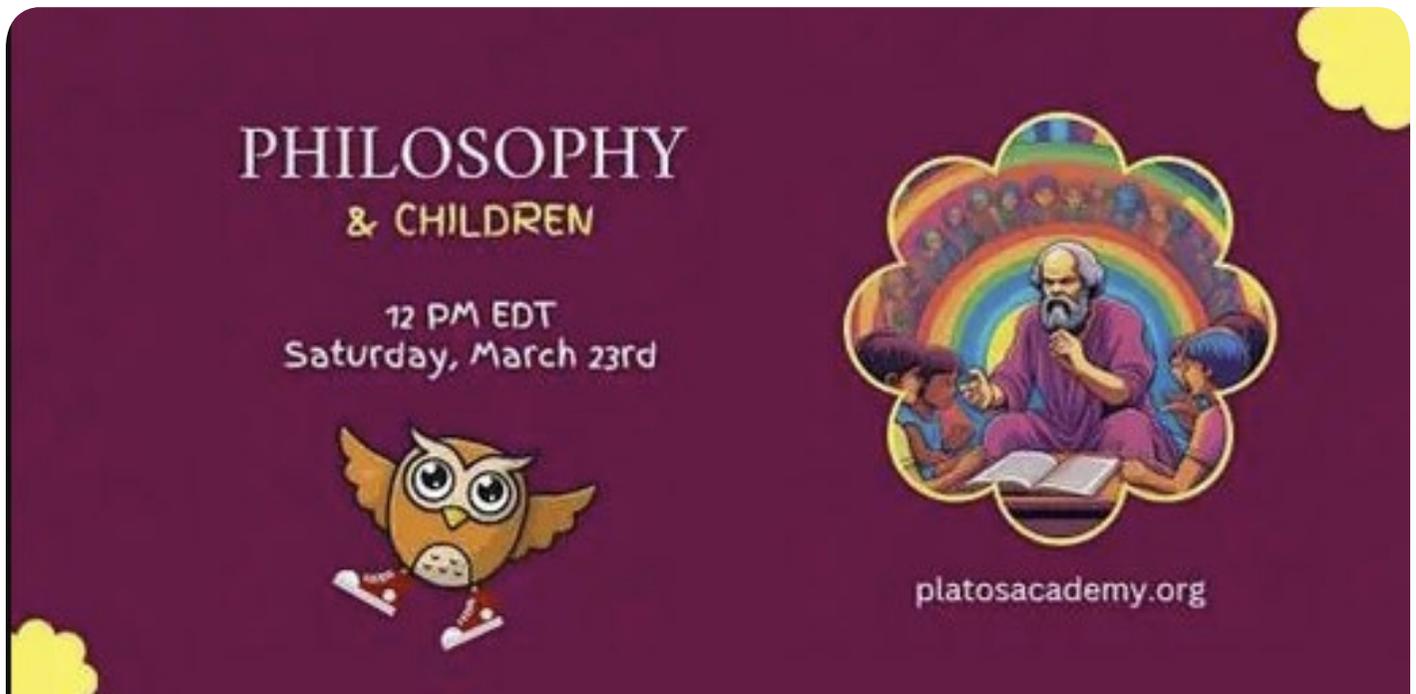
The **Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC)**, operating under the University of Crete's supervision, has not just applied, but also validated, the power of informal learning. This was achieved by the Museum's long commitment to offering a diverse range of activities and educational programs to primary and secondary school pupils. The NHMC has also extended its reach to university students and adults, using its exhibition, spaces and expertise as a backdrop for informal learning in advanced subjects. The success of these efforts is now being tested, inspiring the design of more programs directed at young scientists in informal settings.

A preliminary study by **Anastasia Pratikaki** (UoC School of Science and Engineering) and **Panagiotis Georgantis** (Natural History Museum of Crete - UoC) investigated the beliefs and benefits of science students regarding informal learning environments,

particularly in the environment of a Natural History Museum, through an experiential workshop conducted by the NHMC-UoC on **Earthquakes, Volcanoes, Prevention and Interventions, following the Inquiry-Based Learning methodology.**

Twenty-three students from the UoC Departments of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Biology, and Physics participated in the study. Quantitative data were collected through 27 questions, using a 5-point Likert Scale divided into three sections: before, during and after the workshop. Qualitative data derived from 7 open-ended questions, collecting feedback regarding the benefits of the informal learning environment and the participants' proposals for more hands-on experience in the workshop. The students answered both as students and as future secondary school teachers. The mean satisfaction score was very high (4.64). More than 80% of them considered the visit to the NHMC-UoC essential for their learning and claimed that it helped them understand the topic better. They believed that in-class preparation before and having students' feedback after the workshop were important. They also considered it necessary to be trained in informal learning environments, and 90% of them will incorporate informal learning activities in their future teaching career. The study's main finding is that students greatly appreciate and highly validate informal learning environments, in general, as well as the specific workshop they attended. This is in accordance with the proven efficacy of informal learning in museums by experts in the field.

# PHILOSOPHY AND CHILDREN: A WEBINAR BY PLATO'S ACADEMY CENTRE



On March 23, 2024, [Plato's Academy Centre](#) in Athens organized a free-of-charge webinar titled 'Philosophy and Children', with a multidisciplinary list of speakers from around the world.

The aims of the webinar were twofold: first, it provided a platform for practitioners of philosophy for children to exchange ideas, perspectives, teaching tools, and pedagogical methods; and, second, it encouraged the general public, including parents and educators, to embrace philosophy in relatable ways.

The program featured a diverse lineup of speakers, including two members of the University of Crete: Dr Stelios Gadris, UoC Department of Philosophy, and Dr Maria Kasmirli, postdoctoral researcher in the UoC Department of Philosophy and a teacher at the School of European Education in Heraklion, both members of the [Philosophical Research and Translation Lab \(UCRC\)](#).

Dr Gadris talk, «Parrhesia: Becoming part of the circle, or How not to facilitate», addressed the issue of parrhesia in a philosophical investigation with children and more specifically about the role of the adult facilitator as a catalyst for the mediation of a philosophy session with children.

In her talk, which was titled «'Just asking questions': Philosophy for children, not sophistry for children», Dr Kasmirli emphasized that it was important for children not only to master basic philosophical skills, but also to learn how to use the skills in a responsible, self-critical way, and she made several suggestions as to how teachers might help their students achieve this.

The event was well received. Speakers and participants examined diverse learning and teaching approaches in the areas of philosophy and classics, explored how learning about philosophy can help children to think critically, and discussed what ancient philosophical texts can offer today's children.

### Welcome event for international students of the Erasmus Plus Joint Master degree in ACES

The University of Crete hosted a successful welcome event for its international students of the Erasmus Plus Joint Master degree in Aqua Culture, Environment, and Society program (ACES) on February 27, 2024, at the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics. The event marked a significant moment of cultural exchange and academic introduction for the ACES Erasmus Mundus program participants.

During the event, esteemed academic members, colleagues, and members of the UoC Erasmus Student Network (ESN) introduced the University's facilities, departments and student services. Prof. Michail Pavlidis, Vice-Rector for Research & Development and ACES instructor, delivered an inspiring address, emphasizing the importance of international collaboration and the enriching value of diverse perspectives in the academic environment.

The event was not only a warm welcome for the twenty-five international students but also established strong connections among students and the broader University community.



#### Erasmus+ Heraklion city tour

The Municipality of Heraklion welcomed the new Erasmus students of the University of Crete with an exciting city tour on February 16, 2024, featuring the most important monuments of the old city of Heraklion.

We would like to thank the Municipality of Heraklion and the tour guide, Mrs. Lina Logkaki, for offering their excellent welcome services to the Erasmus students of UoC!



The Orientation Day for incoming Erasmus students in the spring semester 2024 was held on the 9th of February at Gallos University Campus (Rethymnon) and on the 15th of February in Voutes Campus (Heraklion). The University of Crete welcomed approximately 80 new Erasmus students in the spring semester 2024!

Students had the opportunity to meet each other, learn about the facilities & services of the UoC and received their Erasmus souvenirs!



The international and Erasmus students of the University of Crete attended the cake-cutting festivities of the Cultural Association of Kato Vathia "Niros", a traditional event celebrating the new year!

At the invitation of the Career Counselor of the University of Crete and Secretary of the Cultural Association, Dimitris Sampsonidis, forty students from America, Asia, and Europe experienced authentic Cretan hospitality.

Students tasted traditional dishes, such as "gamopilafo" (a traditional pilaf served in Cretan weddings), wood oven roast and other local

delicacies. They learned Cretan and Greek folk dances and partied together with the villagers.

The lucky winner of the coin hidden in the cake was an Erasmus student from Hungary! According to Greek tradition, the person who finds the hidden coin in his or her share of the cake, will be lucky throughout the year!

The villagers of Kato Vathia met young people from different countries of the world and learned about the value of the Erasmus Mobility.

Wonderful moments of sharing culture and exploring career paths in a traditional event!



# Shaping the future in neuroregeneration.

## The University of Crete spin-off company “BioNature” signed a partnership for the clinical exploitation of its synthetic substance BNN27

### University of Crete Rectorate Press Release

The University of Crete spin-off company [BioNature](#), founded by Professors Achilleas Gravanis and Ilias Kastanas, signed a cooperation agreement for the clinical exploitation of its synthetic substance BNN27 (licensing for the development of a new drug). The substance BNN27 advances to the clinical evaluation stages against Diabetic Retinopathy, which affects 190 million patients worldwide, in the form of an eye drop with nanotechnology composition, through the cooperation Novaliq-BioNature.

The head of the BioNature research program for the development of synthetic micromolecular substances that mimic endogenous neurotrophins (Microneurotrophins) such as BNN27 is Mr. Achilleas Gravanis, Professor of Pharmacology at the Medical School of the University of Crete. Central roles in the research program are held by Ms. Theodora Kalogeropoulou, Research Director at the National Research Foundation (NRF) in Athens who synthesizes the Microneurotrophins, and Mr. Yiannis Charalambopoulos, Professor of Pharmacology at

the Medical School of the University of Crete who studies their actions on neural tissue. Additionally, the efficacy studies of the Microneurotrophins in eye pathology were coordinated by Ms. Kyriaki Thermos, Professor Emeritus of Pharmacology at the Medical School of the University of Crete.

The spin-off company BioNature and its scientists at the University of Crete and the National Research Foundation (NRF) bring the country to the international drug development industry for the first time. It is the first synthetic chemical substance of Greek inspiration and synthesis to proceed to clinical evaluation for human use. BioNature highlights the ability of scientists from Greek universities and research centers to produce high-quality and internationally competitive basic research, with prospects for commercial exploitation in the highly competitive international field of therapeutics and new drug development.

[more info](#)



# Launch of the European Reference Centre for the Welfare of Aquatic Animals



The operations of the European Reference Centre for the Welfare of Aquatic Animals, the first specialized Centre within the EU framework, commenced today, February 16, 2024, in the presence of the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Ms. Stella Kyriakides, the Minister of Rural Development and Food, Mr. Lefteris Avgenakis, the Regional Governor of Crete, Mr. Stavros Arnaoutakis, the Mayor of Heraklion, Mr. Alexis Kalokerinos, the Rector of the University of Crete, Professor Georgios M. Kontakis, the Vice-Rector of Research and Development of the University of Crete, Mr. Michail Pavlidis, local authorities, and the heads of numerous organizations.

The Reference Centre, which is one of the four to be established in Europe and the first specialized in aquatic animal issues, will operate as a consortium led by the University of Crete, with the participation of the Biology Centre of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the University of Barcelona.

The event took place at a central hotel in Heraklion.



Snapshot from the opening ceremony

# Distinctions



## The PsychoNegotiators as Finalists in The Global Competition “The Negotiation Challenge (TNC)”

The team of psychology students from the University of Crete, Galini Lazarakou, Zinovia Leimoni, and Antonios Petris, known as the **PsychoNegotiators**, have been distinguished in the realm of student negotiation competitions over the last year. In a field dominated by students with backgrounds in Economics and Law, the University of Crete students, with their studies in Psychology, bring a new perspective to these types of competitions, proving that everyone can participate, each presenting a unique approach.

Under the guidance of Mr. Georgios Trialonis and Assistant Professors of the Psychology Department at the University of Crete, Ms. Panagiota Dimitropoulou and Mr. Alexis Arvanitis, the negotiation team from the University of Crete demonstrated exceptional negotiation skills and strategic insight. Their journey began with a dynamic victory in the national competition, Athens Negotiations Tournament, conducted by the Athens University of Economics and Business. This victory opened the door to the global stage.

In their first participation in the global university

competition The Negotiation Challenge (TNC), facing top universities from around the world such as Harvard, Columbia, and Washington University, the University of Crete team climbed the ranks of the competition and showcased their abilities in cultivating constructive relationships and maximizing value during three rounds of intense negotiations. Notably, in the second round, competing against the University of Washington, Antonios, Zina, and Galini emerged as the team with the second-highest performance in the entire competition. Thanks to their effort, dedication, and soft skills, the team qualified as one of the 16 finalists among 66 teams from universities around the world.

The final round of The Negotiation Challenge is scheduled to take place on April 5-6, 2024, at the University of Twente in the Netherlands. The PsychoNegotiators, with the practical support of the University of Crete behind them, are ready to showcase their skills abroad and make the most of this experience, both socially and personally.

We warmly wish them every success!

### Prof. Georgios Vasilikogiannakis selected at Chemistry Europe Fellows (EuChemS)



The Department of Chemistry congratulates Georgios Vasilikogiannakis, Professor of Organic Chemistry at the UoC, for his selection at Chemistry Europe Fellows of the European Chemists Union (EuChemS) for 2022/23. This honorary title is awarded every two years to outstanding members of Chemistry Europe for their significant contribution to Chemistry Europe journals and is a recognition of high-quality research. The final competition and award for 2022/23 fellows will take place at a formal ceremony during the 9th EuChemS Chemistry Conference in Dublin in July 2024.

Professor G. Vasilikogiannakis has been serving at the UoC Department of Chemistry since 2002. His research focuses on the total synthesis of biologically active natural products and analogs; development of the sustainable chemistry of singlet oxygen and application to the synthesis of high value organic compounds (funded by the European Research Council - ERC-consolidating grant); and development of continuous flow reactors for gas-liquid biphasic reactions in nebula.

### Assoc Prof. Antonis Anastasopoulos at the Sectoral Scientific Board for the Humanities of the National Council for Research, Technology and Innovation (NSRTEC)



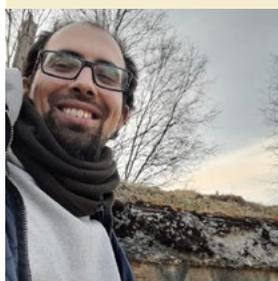
Antonis Anastasopoulos, Associate Professor at the UoC Department of Ottoman History, was appointed a member of the seven-member Sectoral Scientific Board for National Research, Technology and Innovation Council. The Sectoral Scientific Boards support the work of the National Research and Technology Council, which is the highest advisory body of the State for the formulation of the national strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation Development in the country.



### Nikos Loudas earns a prestigious scholarship from Princeton University

Congratulations to Nikos Loudas, graduate of the UoC Department of Physics (degree 2022, MSc 2023) and member of the Institute of Astrophysics (FORTH) for earning a full research scholarship from Princeton University for a 5-year PhD position in Astrophysics.

### Andreas Vavvos earns Fulbright & Konstantinos Vellios Scholarship



Congratulations to Andreas Vavvos who earned a Fulbright Scholarship for his academic excellence during his postgraduate studies (Special Account for Research Grants of the University of Crete) and a scholarship from the Konstantinos Vellios institution for undergraduate studies. As a Fulbright Visiting Research Student, he will spend a 6-month period at Rice University in Houston, Texas, at the Department of Anthropology and the Center for Environmental Studies. Congratulations!



# Upcoming

### **MASH-up n' HEI Train the Trainer (TtT) activity**

**May 29-30, UoC Research and Study Center (UCRC), Rethymnon**

The Erasmus+ project "MASH-up n' HEI: Multimodal Approach for Social-emotional Learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)" invites participants to its Train the Trainer (TtT) educational activity. This initiative aims to develop and evaluate a comprehensive Social-emotional Learning (SEL) program that incorporates music and digital tools, specifically tailored for the student population, including those with learning difficulties. The project, led by a consortium from Cyprus, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Greece, underlines the importance of ensuring equitable access to education for marginalized groups within higher education.

A core mission of the project is to foster expertise among university professionals in delivering SEL to students and to raise awareness about the project outcomes both within and beyond the consortium member countries. The TtT workshop is a pivotal component of this mission, designed to:

- Facilitate collaboration among participants from various organizations to further develop SEL in tertiary education.
- Strengthen the role and value of SEL within academic training.
- Enable participants to gain new insights into the use of music and digital tools for SEL and apply these within their institutions.
- Promote best practices among consortium organizations.

We welcome around 15-20 participants from consortium organizations to get trained on the latest advancements in inclusive SEL education as outlined by the project's deliverables.

This project is funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 program

of the European Union, reflecting the consortium's commitment to enhancing SEL in higher education without necessarily mirroring the official views of the European Commission.

Official site [here](#)

### **4th Annual Conference | Women in Fintech & AI**

**June 27-28, Gallos Campus, Rethymnon**

The UoC Department of Preschool Education in collaboration with COST Action CA 19130 – Fintech and Artificial Intelligence in Finance, is pleased to announce the 4th annual [Women in Fintech & AI Conference](#). This year's conference will be held on June 27 and 28, 2024, at the Gallos Campus, and will focus on the critical role of education in financial technology, as well as inclusion in the financial services sector.

Researchers and professionals are invited to submit original research papers or case studies on the following key topics:

- Financial education and training. Strategies to improve access to financial knowledge and tools, especially for women and underrepresented groups.
- Transparency in financial technology (Fintech) and artificial intelligence (AI): Ensuring fair and transparent decision-making models within the realm of AI-based financial services.
- Transparency versus Black Box Decision-Support Models in the Financial sector.
- Transparency in the Performance of Investment Products for Clients.
- Fintech and Artificial Intelligence in Finance.
- Gender parity in Fintech, inclusion of diversity in the fintech sector.

For young researchers, there will be a contest and the Best WI-FI 2024 Young Researcher Paper – FinTech Contest award.

Conference website:

<https://fin-ai.eu/womeninfintech2024/>

### 12/3 Workshop: “Socrates and the Sophists”



*Francesca Pentassuglio (speaker), Joshua Billings, Zacharoula Petraki, Georgia Soulmaidi-Sermamoglou, Giorgos Iliopoulos*

On March 12, the Athens MA in Ancient Philosophy and the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies (Princeton University) at Princeton Athens Center co-organized a workshop on “Socrates and the Sophists”. The Athens MA in Ancient Philosophy is a joint postgraduate program that was established in 2023 with the collaboration of the University of Crete (Department of Philosophy), University of Athens, University of Thessaloniki and University of Patras. The workshop was coordinated by Professors Chloe Balla (Department of Philosophy, UoC / Athens MA in Ancient Philosophy) and Joshua Billings (Princeton University)

### 26-27.3 Georgetown University Delegates Explore Collaborative Environmental Initiatives in Crete

A delegation from Georgetown University’s Earth Commons Institute for the Environment and Sustainability, including Prof. Peter Marra (Dean), Ms. Katerina Downward (Executive Director, Greece), Ms. Raha Hakimdavar (Senior Advisor, Qatar and the Earth Commons Institute), and Mr. Peter Poulos (Director of Partner Relations, Greece), visited the University of

Crete on March 26-27 to strengthen partnerships in addressing environmental challenges.

The University of Crete was represented by Prof. Georgios Kossioris (Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Lifelong Learning, International Relations, and Outlook), Prof. Michail Pavlidis (Vice Rector for Research and Development), Prof. Kriton Kalantides (Head of the UoC Department of Biology), Prof. Maria Vamvakaki (Head of the UoC Department of Materials Science and Technology), Prof. Dimitrios Anglos (Head of the Department of Chemistry), Prof. Maria Kanakidou (Deputy Head of the Department of Chemistry), and Assoc. Prof. Kostantinos Manasakis (UoC Department of Political Science and Coordinator of the University Sustainability Committee).

The visit aimed to foster collaboration on climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. Activities included tours at the Natural History Museum of Crete and Voutes on March 26, focusing on environmental resilience and sustainability, followed by a visit to the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research on March 27, highlighting marine conservation efforts. This initiative highlighted the importance of international cooperation in addressing global environmental issues. For more information please check: <https://economics.soc.uoc.gr/el/seminar/276/adaptation-to-climate-change-the-irrigation-technology-mix-of-italian-farmers>

### 26/3 Brain and Artificial Intelligence: A Fascinating Dynamic Interplay

The Hellenic Society for Neuroscience under the auspices of the University of Crete & the Foundation for Research & Technology-Hellas is organizing an event titled: “*Brain and Artificial Intelligence: A Fascinating Dynamic Interplay*” in the context of the Brain Awareness Week 2024.

**Location:** Kastellakis Auditorium, Heraklion Chamber of Commerce & Industry, 9 Koroneou str

**Coordination:** **Emmanouil Froudarakis**, Assistant Professor of Physiology-Neurophysiology, Medical School, University of Crete. Collaborating Researcher, Institute of Molecular Biology – Biotechnology, Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas. Secretary, Hellenic Society for Neuroscience

## Speakers

### Unraveling the Brain-AI Dichotomy

**Panayiota Poirazi** Director of Research, Institute of Molecular Biology – Biotechnology, Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH), Secretary General elect, Federation of European Neuroscience Societies

### *Brain-machine interfaces: Science fiction or reality?*

**Vassilis Raos** Professor of Physiology, Medical School, University of Crete. Collaborating Researcher, Institute of Applied & Computational Mathematics, Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH), President, Hellenic Society for Neuroscience

### *AI Applications in the Neurosciences. Some Ethical and Social Challenges.*

**Stavroula Tsinorema** Professor of Modern & Contemporary Philosophy and Bioethics, Department of Philosophy and Social Studies, University of Crete.

You can find the programme [here](#)

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### Exhibition 'Memento Mori: Representations of Death in European Art (15th – 17th century)' at the UoC Library, Voutes Campus, Heraklion

As part of the practical training of the Postgraduate Studies Program in Art History at the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Crete, the UoC Library in Heraklion, hosts an exhibition titled 'Memento Mori: Representations of Death in European Art (15th – 17th century)'. Its goal is to present aspects of the iconography of death, a theme that experienced significant development in the West during the early modern period.

Exhibition curated by: Eva Vrentzou and Eva Pasparraki, postgraduate students in Art History – Niki Petraki, Library staff, material conservation workshop.

Duration: 1/2/24 – 30/9/24

Operating hours: Monday – Friday -> 09:00 – 20:00, Saturday -> 09:00 – 15:00

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