ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

PTDE NEWS:
EDUCATION, INNOVATION, FUTURE

One year of Social Media and Newsletter PTDE

thank you!

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Research news:

Book publication: Politics, Theology, Literature and Gender Identities in the Public Sphere and Education (Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypriou, Armos Publications)

The book highlights a social and political theology that does not remain detached from society and its challenges. On the contrary, it is tested and transformed when it encounters culture, with its diverse expressions and the identities that it sometimes embraces, sometimes (re)shapes, and sometimes excludes. Through this encounter, the tensions, possibilities, and limitations of theological discourse in the public sphere are revealed.

24-26/04 : 1st Panhellenic Conference of the D.P.E. of Rethymno "Building Learning Together. Cultivating the Future in the Classroom"

The Directorate of Primary Education of Rethymno, in collaboration with educational institutions and local government authorities, organized a major conference on educational innovation, inclusion, critical thinking, and the use of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence in education. The conference was addressed to teachers, researchers, university students, and education professionals, focusing on contemporary issues related to democratic education and active citizenship, inclusion and the protection of rights, psychosocial support and the development of life skills, education for sustainability, creativity, arts and culture, as well as the integration of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence into the educational process.

08-10/05: Conference of the Hellenic Association of Environmental Education (PEEKPE) "Environmental Education/Education for Sustainability in the 21st-Century School: Pathways-Shifts-Transformations"

Our Department, in collaboration with the Environmental Education Centres (KEPEA) of Crete, organized the 9th Conference of the Hellenic Association of Environmental Education (PEEKPE).

The conference included 198 presentations and two workshops, was held both in person and online, and was organized under the auspices of the University of Crete. The Department's Science Education Laboratory participated with eight oral presentations, while the Chair of the Department, Professor Dimitris Stavrou, was one of the invited speakers, delivering a keynote lecture entitled "The European Perspective on Climate Change Education."

New Repository "The Fedoras Teacher Academy"

The FEDORAS Teacher Academy, in which the Department's Science Education Laboratory (EDTHE) has an active and substantial role, announced the launch of its new digital repository. The repository provides a rich collection of teaching resources on Interdisciplinarity and Sustainability in educational practice, as well as significant research materials produced by the research team of the Science Education Laboratory (EDTHE).

11-17/05: 7th International Conference of the "Odysseus 2000-2026" Programme entitled "Artificial Intelligence-eLearning-eCreativity".

The Laboratory of Advanced Learning Technologies in Lifelong and Distance Education (EDIVEA) organized the conference for the seventh consecutive year, highlighting contemporary approaches and innovative practices that connect Artificial Intelligence, distance education, and creativity within the context of lifelong learning. The conference programme included experiential workshops held on site at the University of Crete's Rethymno Campus, as well as keynote lectures that were livestreamed online. Participation was free of charge for teachers, university students, and anyone interested, providing a broad audience with the opportunity to attend the conference proceedings and become informed about contemporary developments in the field of education.

15-17/05: Successful Participation of our Department in the 6th Panhellenic Conference on Cognitive Psychology of the Hellenic Psychological Society (ELPSE)

Ελληνική Ψυχολογική Εταιρεία
Hellenic Psychological Society

6ο Πανελλήνιο Συνέδριο Γνωστικής Ψυχολογίας της ΕΛΨΕ
«Η Γνωστική Ψυχολογία στο Σταυροδρόμι των Επιστημών του Νου»

As part of the conference, entitled "Cognitive Psychology at the Crossroads of the Mind Sciences," the invited Symposium of the Division of Developmental Psychology, entitled "Innate Intersubjectivity: Studies on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Development of Infants," was held under the chairmanship of Associate Professor Vasiliki Tsourtou. The symposium focused on the importance of early infant–caregiver interactions for cognitive, social, and emotional development, highlighting the crucial role of early intersubjective experiences in shaping the infant's developmental trajectory.

29/05-01/06: Successful Completion of the 20th International Conference "The Child and the Book" entitled "Diaspora(s), Exile, Nomads, and Children's Literature"

The International Conference was successfully completed with great success and significant international impact. The conference, one of the leading international scientific events in the field of Children's and Young Adult Literature, was co-organized by the Department of Primary Education of the University of Crete and the Department of Primary Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and was hosted at the Gallos Campus in Rethymno, from 29 May to 1 June 2026.

Approximately 200 participants from 30 countries -professors, researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and doctoral candidates- engaged in a fruitful dialogue on literature, diaspora, exile, population mobility, cultural memory, and intercultural education. These themes were also addressed by the distinguished invited speakers, Professors Petros Panaou (USA/Cyprus) and Mateusz Świetlicki (Poland), as well as the award-winning illustrator Chryso Charalambous (Cyprus). The exhibition of works by Greek illustrators at the Central Library of the University of Crete, organized in collaboration with the Greek Children's Book Circle – Greek Section of IBBY, also received particular attention. The exhibition was designed by the Head of Archives Preservation and and Rare Books of the University of Crete Library, Niki Petraki, was curated by Assistant Professor of the Department of Primary Education of the University of Crete, Vasiliki Vasiloudi, and introduced by the President of the Greek Section of IBBY and distinguished author Vangelis Iliopoulos.

Our Department specifically participated with the following presentations:

- The Book, the Ship and the Butterfly: Surviving in Diaspora with Abstract Picturebooks (Vassiliki Vassiloudi & Viktoria de Rijke)
- Love, Communion, and Power: Postcolonial and Feminist Re-readings of The Little Prince in Religious Education (Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypriou)
- Metacognition and Creative Thinking: a Dynamic Relationship and its Impact on Creative Writing (Irini Gaki & Giannis Spantidakis)

The contribution of the co-organizers, Assistant Professor Vasiliki Vasiloudi (University of Crete) and Professor Gina Kalogirou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), was crucial, as was the support provided by the University Authorities, the Holy Metropolis of Rethymno, the Municipality of Rethymno, the Deans of the Schools of Education of the University of Crete and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Heads of the Departments of Primary Education of both universities, and the volunteer team of the Department of Primary Education of the University of Crete. The successful completion of an international event of such scope highlights the potential of collaborations between Greek universities and confirms their leading role in the international scientific dialogue, the production of new knowledge, and the promotion of academic outreach. At the same time, it reaffirms the dynamic nature of Children's Literature as a field of academic research that engages with contemporary social and educational challenges, strengthening international academic networking.

22-24/06: Successful Participation of the Department in the 5th International Conference on Technology and Innovation in Learning, Teaching and Education (TECH-EDU2026)

TECHEDU

PhD candidate Christina Smaropoulou presented the research paper entitled "The ARIELS Islands: Designing an AI-Enhanced LMS for Social and Emotional Learning and Self-Regulated Learning", which was conducted under the scientific supervision of Assistant Professor Aikaterini Vasiou, Professor Ioannis Spantidakis, and Associate Professor of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Georgios Koutroumanos. The paper focused on the design of an innovative Learning Management System that leverages Artificial Intelligence to enhance social and emotional learning and self-regulated learning in Primary Education.

STEPS–Science for Growth: Empowering Minds

STEPS – Science for Growth: Empowering Minds is a European project funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) under Horizon Europe, aiming to bring science closer to society. Through activities addressed to researchers, educators, university students, and citizens, it creates opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and engagement around science, research, and learning. At the core of the project lies the philosophy of the Growth Mindset, which highlights the importance of continuous learning, effort, and collaboration in developing knowledge and skills. Within the framework of STEPS, activities are implemented such as the Researchers' Night, researchers' visits to schools (Researchers at Schools), the development of educational material, as well as events and research dissemination activities targeting the wider public. At the same time, the Centre for Training and Lifelong Learning (KEDIVIM) of the University of Crete organizes the free online training programme "Growth Mindset in Research and Education: From Theory to Practice", under the scientific supervision of Professor of the Department of Primary Education, Eleni Vasilaki, which is addressed to researchers and educators at all levels of education.

Researchers' Night

Online and Printed Dictionary of Contemporary Phraseological Expressions (Scientific Coordinator: Associate Professor Paraskevi Thomou)

The research project "Online Dictionary of Greek Phraseologisms (OnDiPhra)" is being implemented in our Department by a research team of the Laboratory for the Study of Language and Literature in Education (EMEGLO) (Scientific Coordinator: Paraskevi Thomou; research team: Lena Papadopoulou, Christos Christodoulakis, Vasia Tsami, Giorgos Vavourakis).

The aim of the project is the development of an online pedagogical dictionary of Greek phraseologisms, based on authentic linguistic material from Electronic Corpora, with the purpose of supporting students learning Greek around the world. At the same time, Paraskevi Thomou and Lena Papadopoulou published the book "Dictionary of Contemporary Phraseological Expressions of Modern Greek: From Awareness to Use", which constitutes a reference book on Greek phraseology, as it includes phraseological theory, a dictionary containing 1,500 phraseological expressions, as well as activities for the use of the dictionary and the development of vocabulary.

25–27/06: Successful Participation of EMEGLO lab. in the International ARLE/IFTE Conference 2026 (The Unbounded Journey: The Teaching of First Language, Literacy, and Literature in a Dynamic World)

EMEGLO participated in the conference with the online presentation "Bridging In-School and Out-of-School Literacy Practices: A Case Study in Greek Primary Education" (Assistant Professor Vasia Tsami, postgraduate student Anastasia Mountoufari, and Associate Professor Paraskevi Thomou). The presentation showcased a case study on the mismatching between students' in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and was implemented within the framework of the project "Bridging In-School and Out-of-School Literacy Practices: A useful online toolkit for the teacher," which is part of the INGENIUM-funded programme.

Activities and events:

03/04: The volunteer group of the Department of Primary Education **"Noiazomai kai Dro" ("I Care and Act")** carried out, on 23 March, **an activity involving the creation of Easter candles for the children of SOS Children's Villages, in collaboration with participants from the Day Care Centres for the Elderly (KAPI).** The activity was completed with the delivery of the candles to a representative of SOS Children's Villages on Friday, 3 April.

20/04: An **experiential workshop** was held in Heraklion for 1st-year middle school students on the topic of **the connection between art and artificial intelligence in education, as part of an activity organized by "The Smile of the Child"** with the scientific support of the Department of Primary Education of the University of Crete. The workshop was implemented by PhD candidates of the Department of Primary Education, Maria Assariotaki and Christina Smaropoulou, under the supervision of Professor Eleni Vasilaki and Assistant Professor Aikaterini Vasiou, with the participation of 10 students who utilized AI tools for creative activities and the development of emotional and social skills.

05/05: **"The Right to Education: The Case of Migrant and Refugee Children"** was the topic of **a one-day event** organized with the aim of highlighting the equal access of all children to education. The event was co-organized by the **Laboratory for Intercultural and Migration Studies (EDIAMME-CEME)** of the University of Crete, **the Centre for Children's Rights** of the University of Crete, and the **Directorate of Primary Education of the Regional Unit of Rethymno**. The event was coordinated by Professor of the Department of Primary Education and Director of EDIAMME Aspasia Chatzidaki, while welcoming remarks were delivered by the President of the Centre for Children's Rights, Maria Kypriotaki, and the President of the Department of Primary Education.

09/05: The Laboratory for the Study of Language and Literature in Education **(EMEGLO)** participated in the **TEDx University of Crete – Ithaka 2026 event.** The organizers (Vasia Tsami, Nikoleta Panagaki, with Eva Voskaki, Anastasia Mountoufaris, and Maria Tzortzi as coordinators) invited participants to explore whether elements of racism and anti-racism coexist in primary school language textbooks, through the **experiential workshop "Education and Racism: Charting the Path towards the Ithaka of Equality".**

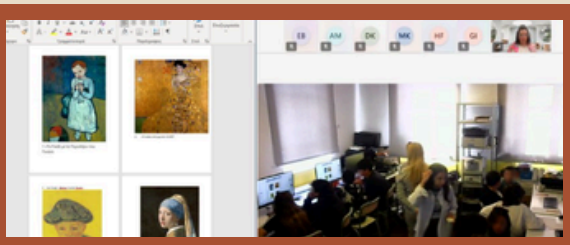
10/05: The group of students, within the framework of the course **"Art Expression"** under the supervision of Kostas Christidis, member of the Teaching Staff (E.E.P.) of the Department of Primary Education, in collaboration with the Parents and Guardians Association of the **2nd Primary School of Rethymno**, organized an activity based on social and participatory practices with the theme **"Social Sculpture and Artistic Activism"**. The activity was based on the principles of social sculpture, according to which art functions as a means of collective intervention and social transformation, fostering citizen participation, solidarity, and community engagement.

11/05: The Volunteer Group **"Noiazomai kai Dro" ("I Care and Act"),** in collaboration with the **Hellenic Red Cross**, organized a free **First Aid Training Seminar.**

11–20/05: **"The Smile of the Child",** in collaboration with the **Region of Crete** and the **EDIVEA lab.**, carried out **a tour across the Regional Unit of Rethymno** featuring prevention and awareness-raising activities, educational programmes, preventive medical examinations, first aid seminars, psychosocial support, and creative activities for children and families.

May: The **Positive Parenting Programme for Parents with Infants aged 0–12 months (Triple P – Positive Parenting – Babies)** was successfully completed in Chania. The programme was implemented in collaboration with the **Counselling Centre of the Municipality of Chania** (Responsible Psychologist: Aik. Malandraki) and **our Department** (Coordinator: V. Tsourtou, Associate Professor of Developmental Psychology). The programme (University of Queensland, Australia) is implemented in Greece by **UNICEF** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Health.** The aim of the programme is to provide psychological support to participants during their transition into the role of parenthood. We warmly thank the mothers who participated in the programme and wish them to experience parenthood in the way they desire!

In May, our Department implemented an online activity in support of the **Greek School of Imbros** entitled **"Social and Emotional Learning through Art and Artificial Intelligence".** The activity involved 12 students and teachers of the school, with the aim of connecting art and artificial intelligence in education and fostering social and emotional skills. Through interactive activities and the use of artificial intelligence tools, the children creatively expressed their emotions and experiences. The activity was implemented by PhD candidate Christina Smaropoulou, under the guidance of Professor Eleni Vasilaki and Assistant Professor Aikaterini Vasiou.



16–17/05: For the 4th consecutive year, students and university students from collaborating academic institutions participated in the **Science Festival.** The event, which took place at the **House of Culture, the 1st Experimental Primary School of Rethymno, and the Science in the City centre of the University of Crete,** was organized by the **Directorate of Secondary Education of Rethymno through the Laboratory Centre for Natural Sciences (EKFE) of Rethymno, in collaboration with the Directorate of Primary Education of Rethymno, the Natural Sciences Laboratory of the 9th Primary School of Rethymno, the Institute of Plasma Physics and Lasers of HMU, and Science in the City of the University of Crete, with the support of the Regional Unit of Rethymno and the Municipality of Rethymno.**

18/05: The volunteer group **"Noiazomai kai Dro" ("I Care and Act")** organized an evening dedicated to the film **"Dead Poets Society".** The screening took place in the "Xenia" Student Residences Hall, with free admission for the public.

05/06: On the occasion of **World Environment Day** and as a continuation of the recent Environmental Education Conference held at the Gallos Campus, our **Department** and the **Library of the University of Crete** in Rethymno organized an **Exhibition of Environmental Education Books** in the entrance area of the Library. The exhibition was curated by Professor Marianna Kalaitzidaki and designed by Niki Petraki.

13–14/06: The **PhD Candidates' Colloquium** of the Department was successfully completed. The event included 18 presentations of doctoral research projects, a talk by postdoctoral researcher Giorgos Peikos entitled **"Artificial Intelligence in Science Education: Utilizing Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools in Instructional Design"**, and the round table discussion **"The Voice of PhD Candidates: Paths, Experiences, and Perspectives"** (PhD candidates Simos Papadopoulos-Deloglou, Chara Bitsaki, Christina Smaropoulou), where the experiences and challenges of the doctoral journey were highlighted through the perspectives of the researchers themselves, as well as the workshop **"Academic Writing"** (Assistant Professor Emily Michailidi, Vasia Tsami).

18/06: **EMEGLO** organized **a one-day event for educators entitled "Bridging Theory and Practice: Useful Tools for Language Education"**. Through experiential activities and discussions, educators and academics exchanged experiences and reflections on language education, within the framework of the workshops **"Experiencing: When School Meets Children's Lives"** (Anastasia Mountoufari, Vasia Tsami, Paraskevi Thomou), **"From the Dictionary as a Tool to the Dictionary as a Textual Genre: Developing Lexicographic Literacy in Primary School"** (Evelina Kasambaloglou, Paraskevi Thomou, Vasia Tsami), and **"Workshop on Designing Teaching Activities: The EMEGLO Digital Community"** (Katerina Mavrantonaki).

Summer course "History of Psychology"

Our Department, in collaboration with Lehman College and the City University of New York, is organizing the international online and asynchronous course "History of Psychology" for the period July–August 2026. Participants will explore psychology as a human and cultural activity that developed within specific historical and social contexts and will investigate its connections with issues such as war, migration, education, philosophy, and cultural transformations across different societies and historical periods. Participation is free of charge for all students of the University of Crete.

01/04/26: Graduation Ceremony of the Department of Primary Education

The D3 Amphitheatre was filled with smiles, emotion, and applause during the graduation ceremony of the Department's graduates on 1 April 2026. During the ceremony, welcoming remarks were delivered by the President of the Department, Professor Dimitris Stavrou, as well as the Dean of the School of Education, Professor Andreas Fountoulakis. In their speeches, they referred to the social, technological, and educational challenges of the contemporary era, as well as the skills and resources acquired by the new graduates throughout their studies. The Department of Primary Education warmly congratulates all graduates and wishes them a successful career and every success in their new professional and social journey!

01/04/26: Graduation Ceremony of the MSc Program "Education Sciences"

With joy and emotion, the graduation ceremony of the graduates of the Postgraduate Programme "Education Sciences" was held on Wednesday, 1 April 2026, at the Rethymno University Campus. Welcoming remarks were delivered by the President of the Department, Professor Dimitris Stavrou, and the Dean of the School of Education, Professor Andreas Fountoulakis. Warm congratulations to all graduates on their achievement!

Active Call for Applications for the Postgraduate Programme of Studies

Special Education

The Interdepartmental Postgraduate Programme "Special Education" of the Department of Primary Education and the Department of Preschool Education announced 45 positions for postgraduate students for the new cycle of the programme, commencing in the winter semester of 2026–2027. The duration of study in the programme is four academic semesters, while the application period was set from **20/04 to 10/08.**

Noiazomai kai Dro (I Care and Act)

The members of our University's volunteer group share their work, their experiences, and their vision...

From the idea to the creation of the group...

Our group was created in 2023, on the occasion of the collection of essential supplies for the earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria. This initiative was launched by members of the university community and highlighted the willingness of many students to contribute through volunteering. Through this experience, the idea emerged to create a permanent volunteer group that would undertake activities addressing various issues concerning both the University and the local community. With the support of Professors Spantidakis and Mylonakis, the idea gradually developed and led to the creation of the "I Care and Act" group.

The Activities

The aim of our group is to identify needs and take action, offering selfless support wherever it is needed. We engage with **social** and **environmental issues**, **accessibility matters,** and any other concerns related to the **university community** and the **local society.** We consist of **students, faculty members, and university staff, and we are always open to welcoming new volunteers.** The coordinator of our group is Professor **Ioannis Spantidakis**. Our goal is to make a meaningful contribution, bring smiles to people's faces, and help create a society with greater solidarity and a stronger spirit of giving.

Our activities cover a wide range of social, environmental, and volunteering initiatives. **We have organized collections of essential supplies for earthquake victims in Turkey and those affected by the floods in Thessaly, as well as collections of clothing, school supplies, toys, and books for children and families in need. At the same time, we have implemented activities in collaboration with organizations such as the Social Grocery of Rethymno, the Hellenic Red Cross, and SOS Children's Villages. We have also organized first aid seminars, community clean-up activities, creative activities for children and older adults, school visits promoting volunteering, as well as initiatives that strengthen participation and the connection between the university community and the local society, such as film screenings and other open events.**

We believe that every action, whether small or large, contributes to improving quality of life, highlights the power of cooperation and giving, and reinforces the feeling that we can all become part of change.

The philosophy of our group is based on the belief that meaningful change comes when we care and act together. We believe in the power of collaboration, solidarity, and selfless contribution, seeking to intervene wherever there is a need and to contribute to improving the quality of life in our community. Our goal is to raise awareness among more people about the value of volunteering, strengthen social cohesion, and spread smiles through our activities.

The vision

Our vision is for the group to grow and continue implementing even more activities with a meaningful social impact. **We want students to see the University not only as a place of study, but as a community in which they actively participate, care for people and the environment, and contribute to creating better living conditions.** We believe that through collaboration, communication, and selfless contribution, we can strengthen volunteering and bring positive change both within the University and in the wider society.

Join the "Noiazomai kai dro" (I Care and Act) group!

Our group is open to every member of the University of Crete's academic community who wishes to contribute through volunteering. It mainly includes students, as well as faculty members, administrative staff, and other collaborators who support our activities. **Joining the group is a valuable opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to society, participate in positive change, meet new people, gain valuable experiences, and experience the joy of volunteering within a team that promotes collaboration, solidarity, and active engagement.**

Anyone interested in joining can simply contact us or one of the members of the group. They will then be added to our communication group and can participate, according to their availability, in our activities and organizational meetings. Interested individuals can find us on social media (Instagram and Facebook: @noiazomaikaidro), via email (noiazomaikaidro@gmail.com), or directly at the University of Crete, where the members of the group and our coordinator, Professor Ioannis Spantidakis, are always available to provide information and welcome new members.

Find the group on Social Media!

To conclude...

Volunteering is an integral part of a society based on solidarity, collaboration, and contribution. **Participation in the "Noizomai kai dro" (I Care and Act) group not only provides the opportunity to help others, but also contributes to our own personal development by cultivating skills such as teamwork, communication, organization, and problem-solving.** Above all, it brings us joy and fulfillment, as we witness the positive impact of our actions in practice. We believe that when we care and act together, we can make the world a little better.

Because if not us, then who? If not now, then when?