ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

PTDE NEWS:
EDUCATION, INNOVATION, FUTURE

Wishing You a Happy Academic Year!

Stay in touch:

Committee for Digital Research Dissemination and Societal Engagement "DIA.DI.K.T.Y.O."

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Issue 5: July-September 2026

Research News:

26-28/06: Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypríou, Lecturer in Social and Political Theology in our Department, participated in the **10th Regular Conference of the Hellenic Sociological Society**, held in Mytilene, where she presented her paper entitled **"Orthodoxy under Negotiation: Theological Differences, Symbolic Struggles and Judicial Regulation."** Her presentation focused on the relationship between religious education, Orthodox Christian consciousness and judicial regulation, highlighting the importance of theological pluralism and dialogue in education.

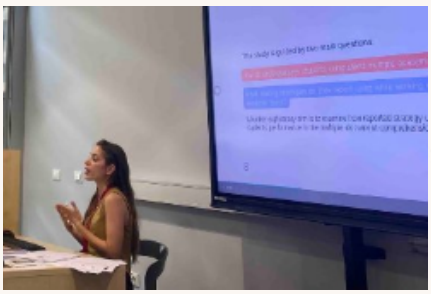
29/06-03/07: The **research visit** of the E.ME.G.LO. Research Laboratory to the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at the University of Oviedo, Spain, was a great success. The E.ME.G.LO. research team (Vasia Tsami, Vivi Thomou and Anastasia Mountoufari) met with their collaborators from the TECN@ Laboratory at the University of Oviedo as part of the INGENIUM research project **"Bridging In-School and Out-of-School Literacy Practices: A Useful Online Toolkit for the Teacher."** During the visit, the collaborators had the opportunity to meet in person, work together on the implementation of the research project, and visit the Department of Education at the University of Oviedo, as well as a local school.

30/06-03/07: The Lecturer of the Department of Primary Education, Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypriou, participated in the **9th Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion (EuARe)**, held at LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome, under the central theme **"Religion and (In)equalities."**

Her presentation, entitled **"Invisible Inequality: Gender and Christian Orthodox Political Theology"**, focused on women's theological agency and the conditions shaping its visibility and recognition in contemporary Orthodox political theology, while also highlighting the contribution of feminist theological approaches.

30/06-03/07: Professor Eleni Vasilaki and Assistant Professor Aikaterini Vasiou represented our Department at the **9th International Conference on Self-Determination Theory (SDT 2026)**, held in Geneva, where they presented their research paper entitled **"Contextualizing Motivation: A Qualitative Study with Students, Teachers, and Parents through Self-Determination and Ecological Systems Theory."**
The study explores learning motivation through the experiences of students, teachers and parents. Its findings highlight the importance of the school and family environment in shaping children's learning motivation and psychosocial adjustment, drawing on Self-Determination Theory in combination with Ecological Systems Theory.

06-08/07: The Department participated in the **FELA 2026 – 24th European Conference on Literacy, entitled "Literacy. The Door to a Better World",** held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, with two research presentations.
PhD candidate Evangelia Manouseli, Professor Ioannis Spantidakis and Dr Despoina Vasarmidou presented their paper entitled **"Investigating Multiple-Document Comprehension and Reading Strategies in Greek Higher Education: Methodological Reflections from an Exploratory Translation and Adaptation Phase.**" Evangelia Manouseli also presented the paper **"Podcasting as Multimodal Literacy Practice: A Sociocognitive and Scaffolded Approach in Primary Education."**
The two presentations highlighted contemporary research approaches to literacy, ranging from multiple-document comprehension and reading strategies in higher education to podcasting as a multimodal learning practice in primary education.



CONFERENCE ON LITERACY LJUBLJANA 2026

06-10/07: The Laboratory of Science Education (EDTHE) organised the **GIREP-MPTL 2026 International Conference on Physics Education**, held at the Gallos Campus in Rethymno, with more than 350 participants from 41 countries.
Under the theme **"Bridging Physics Education and Society in the Digital Age,"** the conference brought together the international scientific community through keynote lectures, research presentations, symposia and hands-on workshops.
As part of the event, the **GIREP PhD Summer School** was also held, offering scientific guidance and opportunities for exchange to early-career researchers.
Professor Dimitris Stavrou, Chair of the Department of Primary Education and of the Local Organising Committee, highlighted the importance of the conference in strengthening international scientific dialogue and establishing the University of Crete as a meeting point for the international research community.

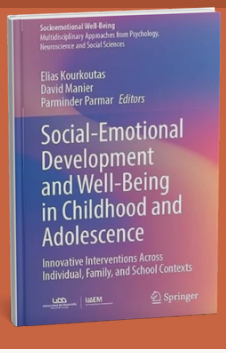
08-11/07: Our Department participated in the 47th Annual Conference of the **International School Psychology Association (ISPA)**, held in Lyon, France.
PhD candidate Malamati Veloni presented part of her doctoral research entitled **"Unpacking University Life: A Thematic Exploration of Major Events Among University Students."** The co-presenters were Assistant Professor Aikaterini Vasiou and Professor Eleni Vasilaki from the Department of Primary Education, along with Professor Michail Linardakis from the Department of Preschool Education. The study focuses on significant life events experienced by university students during their studies and highlights the importance of developing support structures to enhance students' adjustment, psychological resilience and well-being.

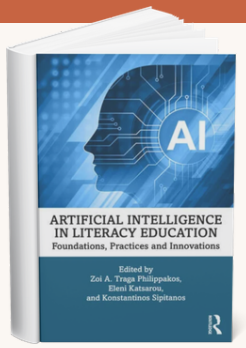
18-21/08: Maria Assariotaki, PhD candidate in Educational Psychology, Professor Eleni Vasilaki and Assistant Professor Katerina Vasiou participated in the **EARA 2026 conference of the European Association for Research on Adolescence**, held in Utrecht, where they presented their paper entitled **"Arts–Science Learning and Positive Youth Development: A Mixed-Methods Pilot Intervention with 5th- and 6th-Grade Primary Students."**
The oral presentation focused on differences observed between children, exploring what appears to change, for which children, and through which potential developmental pathways.

EARA European Association for Research on Adolescence

Edited volume **«Social-Emotional Development and Well-Being in Childhood and Adolescence: Innovative Interventions Across Individual, Family, and School Contexts (Socioemotional Well-Being)»**

The volume is edited by Professor Elias Kourkoutas of the Department of Primary Education, David Manier and Parminder Parmar. It explores the social and emotional development and psychological well-being of children and adolescents through contemporary interdisciplinary approaches. The book highlights the role of the family, school and wider social environment in shaping children's development and presents innovative, evidence-based interventions that promote inclusion, resilience and social and emotional learning.





Edited volume **«Artificial Intelligence in Literacy Education: Foundations, Practices and Innovations»**

The volume is co-edited by Zoi A. Traga Philippakos, Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Eleni Katsarou, Professor at the Department of Primary Education of the University of Crete, and Konstantinos Sipitanos, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Crete.
The book explores the role of Artificial Intelligence in literacy teaching and learning, highlighting its potential, challenges and ethical implications in education through contemporary theoretical and research perspectives. It also features contributions from distinguished international researchers and a foreword by Neil Selwyn.

Article **«Youth Creativity in Arts-Based Interventions Guided by the 7Cs Model of Positive Youth Development»**

A new scientific publication in Springer Nature's international journal Discover Education examines the role of creativity in arts-based interventions promoting positive youth development. The study highlights creativity as an important developmental force through which young people can express themselves, connect with others, collaborate and develop their own voice, while also activating and connecting the different dimensions of the 7Cs model of positive youth development. The authors include Maria Assariotaki, PhD candidate, Eleni Vasilaki, Professor at the Department of Primary Education, and Aikaterini Vasiou, Assistant Professor at the Department of Primary Education. The article is open access and available to the scientific and educational community. DOI: 10.1007/s44217-026-01692-7

Article **«Theoretical Underpinnings and Empirical Findings for Designing Interdisciplinary Boundary Zones for Teacher Education»**

The article published in the international journal Science & Education focuses on interdisciplinarity in teacher education and the challenges faced by teachers with a strong disciplinary background when encountering different ways of organising knowledge. The research highlights the importance of creating appropriate "boundary zones" in teacher education, where encounters between different disciplines can provide opportunities for learning, reflection and the development of interdisciplinary skills. The authors of the article are L. Branchetti, A. Nipyrakis, S. Satanassi, C. Bitsaki, C. Pipitone, D. Stavrou and O. Levrini. DOI: 10.1007/s11191-026-00759-z

Article **«Contribution of Eye Movements to Primary-School Children's Silent Reading Speed: Evidence from Ex-Gaussian Analysis.»**

The study published in the Journal of Eye Movement Research forms part of the interdisciplinary research activities of the Laboratory of Psychology and Educational Assessment (LPEA) at the University of Crete. It focuses on the contribution of eye movements to the development of reading skills among primary school pupils. Using eye-tracking technologies and examining features such as fixation duration and frequency, regressive eye movements and saccades, the research contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms associated with reading speed. The study also highlights the potential for connecting basic research with educational practice and investigating reading development in natural settings, such as the classroom. The authors are A. Gleni, S. Plainis, A. Mouzaki, M. K. Tsilimbaris, P. Dimitropoulou and P. G. Simos. DOI: 10.16910/jemr.19.4.93.

Article **«Social-emotional learning interventions: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials in primary education»**

The study published in the European Journal of Psychology of Education is a collaboration between Aikaterini Vasiou, Assistant Professor, and Christina Smaropoulou, PhD candidate, at the Department of Primary Education. Through a systematic review of 11 randomised controlled studies, it examines the effectiveness of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions in primary education. The findings highlight positive effects on students' emotional regulation, social skills and academic outcomes, while also emphasising the importance of intervention design, implementation fidelity, appropriate teacher training and adaptation to the educational context. The publication is open access. DOI: 10.1007/s10212-026-01174-2

30/07: The Department's graduation ceremony concluded with emotion, smiles and applause. The ceremony featured addresses by the Dean of the School of Education, Professor Andreas Fountoulakis, and the Vice-Chair of the Department of Primary Education, Professor Eleni Vasilaki. Professor Fountoulakis referred to the rapid changes shaping contemporary society, with particular emphasis on developments in Artificial Intelligence, highlighting the crucial role of education in preparing future teachers for the challenges ahead. Professor Vasilaki stressed that the essence of education lies in believing in every child's potential and creating an environment that fosters a "Growth Mindset". She also noted that this philosophy lies at the heart of the European STEPS project, which the University of Crete is implementing under the Horizon Europe programme.

Congratulatory Message to the Graduates from the Department's Vice-Chair, Professor Eleni Vasilaki

"Dear graduates,

Today marks not simply the completion of a degree, but the beginning of a new journey. From today onwards, you are not merely graduates of the Department of Primary Education; you are the people who will accompany thousands of children on their first steps towards knowledge and the fulfilment of their dreams. You have learned that education is not simply about transmitting knowledge. It is about believing in every child's potential. [...] At some point, you will hear a child say, "I can't." That is precisely the moment when your true role will be put to the test. [...] You will help them add just one word to that sentence: "yet". "I can't... yet." Within this little word lies hope, perseverance, learning and growth. [...] And if you manage to help even one child believe that they can become more than they believe they can be today, then you will have achieved something far more important than good teaching. You will have changed a life. And when a child's life changes, the world changes a little, too.

We hope you will always keep this belief alive and give children the most precious gift of all: the conviction that they can.

Congratulations on your graduation, and best wishes as you embark on the wonderful journey that lies ahead!"

A few words from one of our top graduates:

"The degree I hold is the culmination of a wonderful journey filled with effort, knowledge and growth, but also the starting point for every dream waiting to become reality. Because education does not only change the person who learns; it also changes the person who teaches."

Nefeli-Sofia Mavraki

A New Chapter Begins

The three top-ranking students admitted to the Department share their thoughts and feelings about the next steps in their journey...

Georgia Gritzapi

I am very happy and proud to have been admitted to the Department of Primary Education at the University of Crete. At the same time, I am eager to acquire new knowledge. I look forward to embarking on this new educational journey in the field of primary education! I have already been working in secondary education for over two decades, and I would like to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of teachers in contemporary society.

Nikolaos Griniezakis

I feel immense joy, excitement and pride at having secured a place in my first-choice department! To be honest, I don't have any particular expectations... I would simply say that I hope and wish to fill my toolkit with useful knowledge that will support me in my future career as a teacher who places love for children and genuine care for their wellbeing at the heart of their practice!

Nikoleta Lygidaki

I feel extremely happy that, after a great deal of hard work, I managed to gain admission to the Department of Primary Education. Although this experience is entirely new to me, my time at the Department has been excellent so far! My expectations are to acquire the knowledge and skills that will help me become a creative and well-qualified teacher. I look forward to having wonderful experiences, meeting new people and growing both academically and personally. I am particularly excited to learn more about the field of education through coursework and practical experience!

Activities and events:

11/09: Three faculty members from our Department attended the **blessing ceremony at the University of Crete's Experimental Lower Secondary School of Rethymno:** Professor Giannis Spantidakis, Chair of the Scientific Supervisory Council (EP.E.S.) of the Experimental Nursery School, Primary School and Lower Secondary School of Rethymno; Professor Marianna Kalaitzidaki, Chair of the EP.E.S. of the Experimental Upper Secondary School of Rethymno; and Professor Kostas Karras.

To mark the beginning of the new school year, our Department wishes all pupils, teachers and their families a creative and fulfilling academic year, filled with health, progress, inspiration, collaboration and wonderful experiences.

18-20/09: **The 3rd Children's Festival in Rethymno**, organised by **"The Smile of the Child"** and the University of Crete's **E.DI.V.E.A.** laboratory at the Department of Primary Education, was successfully completed. For three days, the Rethymno Municipal Garden was filled with games, creativity and educational activities for children and adults alike. Robotics, virtual and augmented reality, arts and crafts workshops, chess and many other activities offered children opportunities for exploration, learning and creative expression. The high level of participation highlighted the importance of initiatives that combine education, play and social contribution, creating wonderful experiences for children and their families.

Open Days: School visits for the academic year 2026-2027

Dates: Tuesdays, 12:00–14:00.
2026: 6/10, 13/10, 20/10, 3/11, 10/11, 24/11, 1/12, 8/12, **2027:** 9/2, 16/2, 23/2, 2/3, 9/3, 16/3, 30/3, 6/4, 13/4
Duration: about an hour. **Maximum students:** 40 students.
For visits in October 2026, applications must be submitted at least one week before the requested date. For visits from November 2026 to April 2027, applications must be submitted at least one month before the requested date.
Contact person: Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypriou (sathanasopouloukypriou@uoc.gr).
Liaison with the Public Relations Department and alternate contact in the event of Athanasopoulou-Kypriou's unexpected absence: Vasia Tsami (v.tsami@uoc.gr).

Welcoming New Members of Teaching Staff:

Athena Thoma
Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education

Ioannis Ieronimakis
Assistant Professor of Teacher Education and Training in Informal and Non-Formal Education

Iosif Maravelakis
Teaching Fellow in History

Eugenia-Maria Pitsiava
Teaching Fellow in Digital Technologies in Education

Dimitris Deslis
Teaching Fellow in Educational Research in Science Education

Marios Bourgoutzianis
Teaching Fellow in Teaching Methodology

Athanasia-Antonia Kokolaki
Teaching Fellow in Science Education

Our Department wishes them a successful start and every success in their work!

Our Department at the Researcher's night 2026

The 2026 Researchers' Night at the University of Crete was a great success, taking place on 25 September! Our Department actively participated in the event, offering visitors the opportunity to explore science through hands-on and interactive activities.
Through games, experiments and presentations, children, parents, teachers and university students had the opportunity to take part, experiment, discover and engage more closely with our Department's educational and research activities.

Pre-event, Moraitis School

"I Thought I Knew: Reading Religious Texts with a Growth Mindset"
Spyridoula Athanasopoulou-Kypriou

Main events, Gallos Campus

"Seeing Myself in Science"
Emily Michailidi & Dimitris Stavrou

"We Are All Stars: A STEAM Journey of Creation and Discovery"
Maria Assariotaki & Eleni Vasilaki

"One Story, Two Paths: George and Helen Facing Life's Challenges"
Matina Veloni & Aikaterini Vasiou

"The Bridge of Emotions and the Compass of Effort: Emotions, Self-Regulated Learning and a Growth Mindset through Creative Challenges"
Christina Smaropoulou & Aikaterini Vasiou

"AI Challenge: Exploring Artificial Intelligence"
Aristea Mavrogianni, Eleni Vasilaki & Maria Grydaki

"Investigating Water Quality with the Help of Nanotechnology and Artificial Intelligence"
Laboratory of Science Education

"Albedo: How Earth's Surfaces Affect Temperature"
Laboratory of Science Education

"The Enhanced Greenhouse Effect: Our Changing Planet"
Laboratory of Science Education

"Journeying Through the Water Cycle"
Laboratory of Science Education

"Women Who Changed the World"
Vasiliki Vasiloudi (E.ME.G.LO.)

"Promoting Gender Equality: Teaching Applications"
Research Laboratory on Language and Literature Education (E.ME.G.LO.)

"Critical Media Literacy at the Museum"
Antonis Chourdakis, Giannis Ieronymakis & Marina Souka

Post-event (26/09), Rethymno city

Museum of Education
Eleni Glykatzi-Arveler Museum Collection
Science in the City

STEPS Νοοτροπία Ανάπτυξης στην Επιστήμη

Researchers' Night 2026 was held at our University under the auspices of the European Horizon STEPS programme (Growth Mindset) and provided a unique opportunity for the public to discover first-hand the research and work carried out at the University of Crete.

Our Department warmly thanks and congratulates everyone who took part in the events and contributed to the successful completion of Researchers' Night 2026!