

Press Release

Successful Completion of the 1st International Winter School for PhD Candidates of the OpenEU Alliance, Athens 21–23 November 2025



The 1st International Winter School of the OpenEU Alliance was successfully completed, in a vibrant, engaging, and collaborative academic environment. The responsibility for this inaugural event was undertaken by the Hellenic Open University and it was hosted at the Hellenic Open University Branch in Athens. The Winter School brought together more than seventy PhD candidates and professors from the eight partner institutions of the Alliance. Held over three days, the Winter School was delivered in a hybrid format that enabled participation both in person and via Webex, as well as through a live YouTube broadcast.

This inclusive approach ensured broad accessibility and facilitated real-time interaction across all available channels. The YouTube session, which was addressed to all OpenEU PhD students who were not able to participate in the 1st Winter School, attracted a total of 110 students and ensured that a substantial part of the lectures and discussions was effectively communicated to the intended beneficiaries.

The program featured presentations by professors on key issues related to doctoral research, alongside research presentations by PhD candidates representing a wide range of academic fields.



This project has received funding from the European Union (EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY - EACEA) under grant agreement No 101177241.

Throughout the Winter School, interactive tools were actively employed to enhance participation and to provide attendees with opportunities to share their expectations, concerns, and reflections in real time.

The in-person component of the programme was complemented by a cultural activity, during which participants enjoyed an evening walk beneath the Acropolis, through the historical districts of Plaka and Monastiraki, and tasted traditional Greek dishes in the neighbourhood of Psyrri. This cultural dimension added a unique aspect to the event, making the 1st International Winter School for PhD Candidates a well-rounded experience that blended academic knowledge, collaboration, and cultural immersion.

A particular honour for the event was the in-person presence of the Rector of the Hellenic Open University, Professor Manolis Koutouzis, Emeritus Professor Antonis Lionarakis, and Professor Dimitris Kalles, as well as Professors Boryana Bratanova and Sylvia Velikova from the University of Veliko Tarnovo, Assistant Professor Michalis Talias from the Open University of Cyprus, and Assistant Professor Evangelia Manousou, who served as the academic lead of the Winter School together with PhD candidate Kyriaki Rassia. Equally significant was the contribution and support of the HOU PhD candidates, who assisted at every stage of the event, reinforcing its organisation and helping to foster a climate of collaboration and academic community.

The overall evaluation of the event was exceptionally positive, with participants praising the excellent organization, the high academic quality of the presentations, the valuable networking opportunities, and the strong sense of community that developed among the Alliance's PhD candidates.

The discussions highlighted the importance of continuing such initiatives within the OpenEU framework. Participants emphasized the need for stronger collaborations, more structured opportunities for mentoring, and the establishment of a permanent network of doctoral candidates across the partner universities.

The Winter School confirmed the strong potential of the OpenEU Alliance to support researchers, to strengthen academic collaboration among institutions, and to foster a shared academic identity.





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