

Empowering Libraries as AI Education and Innovation Hubs for Democracy, Knowledge, and Sustainable Futures

Thessaloniki Winter School 2026

**MetaDATA LAB, Department of Library Science, Archives and Information Systems,
International Hellenic University, Greece**

The Thessaloniki Winter School 2026, entitled “Empowering Libraries as AI Education and Innovation Hubs for Democracy, Knowledge, and Sustainable Futures,” is the first key training event of the European project TELL (Trans-European Learning Libraries). It is organised and hosted by the MetaDATA LAB of the Department of Library Science, Archives and Information Systems, International Hellenic University (IHU), Greece, and is delivered as an intensive five-day programme for professionals from libraries, archives, and cultural institutions across Europe, as well as students and unemployed professionals. The Winter School will take place at the American Farm School, Thessaloniki (Perrotis College Libraries), from 26 to 30 January 2026. Its main focus is the practical implementation of the 2023 Council of Europe Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy, linked to European priorities, AI-driven innovation, and sustainability frameworks (Agenda 2030 / SDGs).

The MetaDATA LAB is offering 11 funded places for students, librarians, archivists, and other information professionals to attend the Winter School. Interested applicants should send an email to Chrysanthi Theodoridou at citheodoridou@gmail.com by 23 January 2026.

At a Glance:



Dates: 26–30 January 2026



Location: American Farm School, Thessaloniki (Perrotis College Libraries), Thessaloniki, Greece



Organiser: MetaDATA LAB, Department of Library Science, Archives and Information Systems, International Hellenic University, Greece



Participants: 27–30 professionals from libraries, archives, and cultural institutions across Europe



Focus: Implementation of the 2023 Council of Europe Recommendation on Library Legislation and Policy, connecting it with EU priorities, AI innovation, and sustainability frameworks

Programme Overview

Day 1 – Freedom of Expression, Access to Information, and Democratic Participation | Exploring libraries as enablers of democracy, transparency, and civic engagement.

Day 2 – Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in Libraries | Integrating sustainability, inclusion, and social impact into library strategies.

Day 3 – Artificial Intelligence in Libraries | Ethical AI, data-driven services, and European best practices for innovation.

Day 4 – *Global and Local Threats: Resilience and Lessons from Covid-19* | Strengthening preparedness, adaptability, and crisis response capacities.

Day 5 – *Wrap-up, Evaluation, and Action Plan for Replication* | Designing follow-up strategies and transnational collaboration pathways.

Thematic Pillars of the Winter School

The programme is organised around five thematic pillars/days, with an emphasis on linking policy> strategy> practice:

1. **Freedom of expression, access to information & democratic participation** (libraries as infrastructures of democracy, public dialogue, and social resilience).
2. **Agenda 2030 & the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in libraries** (integrating sustainability, inclusion, social impact, and indicators).
3. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital transformation in libraries** (ethics, data-driven services, LLMs, skills/roles).
4. **Global and local threats – resilience & lessons from Covid-19** (crises, climate change, misinformation, social cohesion, preparedness).
5. **Wrap-up, evaluation & action plan for replication/scaling** (transnational cooperation, continuity, and sustainable use of results).

Presentations and Key Sessions

Day 1 (26/1) – Democracy, core principles and participation

- Opening session: “Libraries as infrastructures for democracy and resilience”
- Thematic session: “Freedom of Expression, Access to Information, and Democratic Participation in Libraries” (interactive small-group format with questions)
- Case studies and World Café: “European Library Practices for Democracy. Implementing the Council of Europe Recommendation”

Day 2 (27/1) – Policy, strategy and sustainable development (SDGs)

- “Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: Digital Inclusion and the Role of Libraries in Achieving the SDGs” (hands-on mapping of library activities to SDGs/targets/indicators)
- “Accessible Libraries, Inclusive Democracies: Physical Accessibility as a Foundation for Human Rights and Participation”
- Open discussion/interview: “National Policies, National Networks, European Networks – Role and Impact” (with the participation of the Director of the National Library of Greece)
- Hands-on: “Developing Targeted Micro-Strategies for Local and National Library Implementation”

Day 3 (28/1) – AI and digital transformation + resilience

- “Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Emerging Technologies in Libraries: A Participatory Dialogue on the Next Decade”

- “Libraries as Health and Inclusion Hubs: Building Dementia-Friendly Communities”
- “The potential of Large Language Models (LLMs) in Knowledge Engineering and Ontology Development... (MeDoraH project)”
- “Libraries as Infrastructures for Resilience... Addressing Global and Local Challenges with AI”
- “At the Frontlines of Crisis: How Libraries Respond to Migration, Conflict, Disasters, and Pandemics”

Day 4 (29/1) – Resilience, ethics, digital citizenship

- “Co-Designing Community-Focused Digital and AI Literacy Programmes in Libraries” (collaborative design of AI/digital literacy programmes)
- “Reimagining Libraries in the Age of AI: Librarians’ Perspectives on AI Information Literacy and Professional Transformation”
- Panel/Round Table: “Ethical AI, Digital Citizenship, and Library Responses to Global and Local Threats”

Day 5 (30/1) – Infrastructure innovation, cultural technology and continuity of collaborations

- “Designing and Developing Next-Generation Digital Repositories, Libraries, and Archives... Using Cutting-Edge Platforms such as RG”
- “Immersive Futures for Libraries, Archives, Museums and Cultural Organisations... through Augmented Reality”
- World Café: “Climate Change, Extreme Conditions, and Risk Management for Cultural Institutions... Emergency Preparedness”
- “From Metadata to Intelligence: Using ChatGPT to Enhance Cataloguing with MARC21, DDC, LCSH, and Dublin Core”
- “From Collaboration to Continuity: Building Transnational Cooperation and Sustaining Long-Term Impact”, following certificate ceremony/farewell remarks