

Call for applications
Winter School
Advocating for at-risk students. Empowering students' voices
in the context of Erasmus+ Project "Students at Risk" (StAR)
Padova, 18–22 January 2027

The Winter School "Advocating for at-risk students. Empowering students' voices" is organised within the Erasmus+ project "Students at Risk" (StAR) and brings together students, advocates, civil society organizations and artists, to develop innovative advocacy strategies through collaborative learning.

The Winter School builds on the insights from the student advocacy seminars held at the Universities of Padova and Trento (Italy), and offers an opportunity to students, student union members, and leaders of student-led organisations, to improve their understanding of the conditions and challenges of at-risk students worldwide, and to learn how to collaborate in developing effective advocacy actions to support students and foster academic freedom in higher education institutions.

The Winter School is organised around lectures, discussions with experts, collaborative workshops and group activities. Conducted in English, this interdisciplinary programme strengthens student-led advocacy at local, national, and European levels, ensuring a strong multiplier effect.

The main objectives of the School are:

- a) to provide knowledge on the conditions faced by students at risk and on the role of advocacy in protecting academic freedom and student rights;
- b) to offer an in-depth overview of advocacy tools and strategies at local, national, and European levels;
- c) to develop oral and written skills aimed at strengthening advocacy and negotiation capacities;
- d) to broaden both hard skills (knowledge of the topics addressed) and soft skills (crisis management, team building, problem solving, research capacity, role playing);
- e) to enrich participants' curricular background through the development of professional knowledge and competences, fostering their engagement in student-led advocacy and civic participation;
- f) to provide a shared space to develop transnational collaborations towards advocating with at-risk students and for academic freedom;
- g) to develop a framework for national programs in support of at-risk students.

The Winter School is funded by the Erasmus+ project “Students at Risk” (StAR). It is organised by the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies (SPGI) of the University of Padova, in partnership with the Department of Sociology and Social Research (DSRS) of the University of Trento.

Scientific and Organizing Committee:

- Claudia Padovani, Francesca Helm, Elisa Gamba, Stefania Bernardi (University of Padua);
- Ester Gallo, Monica Tassaduque, Cristina Mazzero, Elisabetta Dolzan (University of Trento).

Programme structure

The Winter School takes place in Padova and online.

Ahead of the in-person sessions, two online meetings will be held in December 2026 to allow the participants to connect, explore key materials and start planning:

1. Early December 2026 meeting: “Get to know each other”;
2. Mid December 2026 meeting: “Introduction on Academic Freedom”.

The in-person programme runs from Monday 18 to Friday 22 January 2027. Each day is organised in a morning session (9:30–12:30) and an afternoon session (14:00–18:00), complemented by evening activities. The provisional outline is as follows:

- **Monday 18 January:** welcome and introduction to the StAR project, to the aims and programme of the Winter School, and to the relevance of advocating for national programmes for at-risk students at risk; group work.
- **Tuesday 19 January:** storytelling and presentation of research on violations of students’ academic freedom; parallel sessions on how to design and implement an advocacy campaign.
- **Wednesday 20 and Thursday 21 January:** thematic and creative-advocacy sessions, with group work on advocacy strategies for national programmes.
- **Friday 22 January:** group presentations and final discussion.

Eligibility and how to apply

The Winter School is open to:

- graduate and PhD students affiliated with student-led organisations working within the European higher education area (EHEA) and on academic freedom (priority will be given to

the organisations affiliated with the StAR project partners: ESU, SAIH, Global Student Forum);

- displaced / refugees and asylum seekers / at-risk students enrolled in higher education institutions within the European higher education area (EHEA);
- students regularly enrolled at the University of Padova and Trento who've taken part in student advocacy seminar;

A good level of English is required. Maximum number of participants is 40.

To apply, **before 20 October 2026**, candidates must fill in this form <https://forms.gle/sQ84oj4JvGy6suH99>. During the application, they are required to submit the following documents:

- a curriculum vitae;
- a one-page motivation letter OR a short video introduction, answering the following question: "How can I be an ambassador for academic freedom?"
- a letter from the student association(s) to which they belong (if applicable);

The selection process will aim at creating a diverse group, taking into consideration academic curriculum, previous experiences with students' advocacy and/or associations, gender and intersectional elements, and personal background. A number of places will be reserved for at-risk students (risk conditions should be demonstrated/certified).

Selected candidates will be notified and receive relevant information by 20/11/2026, so as to allow them to organise their travel arrangements.

Selected participants will be offered:

- accommodation in residences in Padova from 17 to 22 January 2027;
- lunches and dinners from 18 to 21 January 2027;
- a travel reimbursement of up to €300 (upon presentation of the travel costs, receipts, and boarding passes);
- a certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the Winter School.

For any enquiries regarding the Winter School or this call, please write to: winterschool.star@gmail.com.

Data protection

Pursuant to Articles 13 and 14 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and Legislative Decree 196/2003 as amended, the personal data provided by applicants are processed by the University of Padova Data Controller, legally represented by the Rector, with registered office in Via VIII Febbraio no. 2, 35122 Padova, through the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies (SPGI), for the purposes of managing this call and the related selection process for the Winter School "Students at Risk" (StAR).

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) can be contacted at privacy@unipd.it.

Applicants may exercise their rights under the GDPR (including access, rectification, erasure and restriction of processing, and data portability) and have the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority. The full privacy notice is available at <https://www.unipd.it/en/privacy>.