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Annual  
Summit,  
Year 3  
Report

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2026-01

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# About the Annual Summit

The third Open House Europe (OHEu) Annual Summit took place in Athens from January 8–10, 2026, hosted by Open House Greece—the organisation responsible for organising Open House Athens and Open House Thessaloniki. The summit centred on the OHEu annual theme for 2025, ‘Future Heritage’, exploring how architecture connects the past, present and future of European cities. Emphasising both preservation and innovation, the theme examined how architectural heritage is defined, reinterpreted and passed on in the face of social, environmental and cultural changes.

The Annual Summit is a key gathering that brings together festival organisers, architects, urbanists and the public for meaningful discussions on architecture and the built environment. It also serves as a moment to celebrate and reflect on the previous year’s activities, enabling partner organisations to share ideas, inspiration and lessons learned.

The Annual Summit was divided into two programmes: internal and public. The internal programme comprised ten sessions involving Open House Europe and Open House Worldwide members, two guided tours, a welcome event at Athens City Hall and some informal gatherings. All events were very important opportunities to share knowledge for the Open House organisers and community. This year, the focus was on discussing the future of the Open House Europe project. The public programme welcomed audiences to lectures, presentations and panel discussions featuring leading voices in architecture and design to discuss the annual theme. The public programme included 16 presentations, four panel discussions, and the opening of the ‘Visual Stories’ exhibition.

The event was organised by Open House Greece in collaboration with Afront—Zavod za prostorsko inovativnost (Open House Slovenia organisers), with the support of the Open House Europe (OHEu) coordinators and Open House Worldwide (OHWW).

# Annual Summit programme

This year, the internal programme began on January 8, 2026, with a meeting at Athens City Hall. Following a welcome speech by the Mayor of Athens, Haris Doukas, delegations from all partner festivals, as well as guests from other festivals and members of the Open House Worldwide community, took part in a guided tour of the City Hall. The meeting included light refreshments and provided an informal setting for internal discussions and networking.

The second day of the Annual Summit was dedicated to meetings focused on summarising the year's activities. The initial sessions and workshop were led by the Open House Europe coordinators and focused on ideas for sustaining the Open House Europe project and concluding what had been done so far. This was followed by sessions led by festivals' organisers, structured around thematic areas for knowledge sharing. Selected members of the network, identified for their expertise in specific themes, presented best practices and insights to the wider group. After a short lunch break, participants joined a guided tour of the Acropolis of Athens, located nearby. The day concluded at the Athens Concert Hall with the opening of the public programme, featuring the launch of the 'Visual Stories' exhibition, which was accompanied by a public presentation entitled 'Embracing Future Heritage'.

The final day of the summit was dedicated to the public programme. It featured three panel discussions: 'Heritage as a Building Material', 'Shaping Future Tendencies and Values in Architecture' and 'Acting Locally, Sharing Globally: The Impact of Open House Across Regions', as well as a public lecture. Each panel included four speakers, who delivered individual presentations of 15–20 minutes prior to the moderated discussions. The summit concluded in the evening with a closing lecture by Theodore Spyropoulos, architect and educator, Director of the Architectural Association Design Research Laboratory in London, co-founder of Minimaforms and resident artist at Somerset House. The public programme was followed by a final dinner attended by partners from Open House Europe and Open House Worldwide.



Group photo at Acropolis, Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The structure of the Annual Summit programme was informed by the experience of previous editions held in Lisbon and Dublin. The internal and public programmes were scheduled on separate days to improve manageability for both organisers and participants. Friday was selected for the opening of the public programme and the 'Visual Stories' exhibition to attract a wider professional audience from the fields of architecture, design and culture. The internal programme was slightly shorter than in previous years, reflecting the conclusion of the project and the focus on best practices and knowledge exchange among participating festivals.

Day 1: Thursday,  
January 8



Welcome reception at the City Hall. Photo  
by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House  
Greece



Welcome reception at the City Hall. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

## Welcome reception at Athens City Hall

The first day of the Open House Europe Annual Summit began with a welcome at the Athens City Hall. The event opened with an informal reception featuring light food and drinks, creating an opportunity for participants to meet, reconnect and engage in initial discussions in a relaxed setting.

Following the reception, the Mayor of Athens, Haris Doukas, delivered a welcome address, officially opening the summit and highlighting the importance of international collaboration in the fields of architecture and culture.

After the mayor's speech, participants were divided into two groups and took part in guided tours of the Athens City Hall. The tours offered insight into the building's architectural features, historical significance and role within the civic life of the city, while also providing a setting for informal exchange among members of the Open House Europe and Open House Worldwide networks.



Welcome reception at the City Hall. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece



Welcome reception at the City Hall. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

## Day 2: Friday, January 9



The second day of the Annual Summit opened the internal programme, starting with a session and workshop focused on reflecting on the Open House Europe cooperation model and assessing the relevance and sustainability of its key elements. The session began with a presentation by the Open House Europe coordinators outlining the main project elements. Participants were then divided into working groups, each assigned to discuss specific cooperation elements.



Internal Programme. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

## Main topics addressed during the session and workshop:

- Strategic planning, coordination and internal communication
- Fundraising activities and capacity limits
- Annual themes
- Annual summits
- Organisational capacity-building and training events
- Volunteer exchanges and organiser exchanges
- Audience engagement and monitoring activities, including the 'Visual Stories' exhibitions
- Open House Europe branding and external communication, including website and social media

During the working group discussions, participants reflected on how each cooperation element had functioned over the past three years, identifying strengths, challenges and lessons learned. The discussions focused on evaluating added value, relevance for continuation and possible future formats or adaptations.

# Internal programme for OHEu and OHWW members



Internal Programme. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

## Fundraising with London, Melbourne, New York

Presented by:

Celia Mead (Open House London)

Tania Davidge (Open House Melbourne)

Kristin LaBuz (Open House New York)



Internal Programme. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The fundraising session featured presentations from representatives of Open House Melbourne, Open House New York and Open House London, who shared practical approaches to building sustainable funding models for large-scale public architecture festivals. The session focused on how fundraising can be integrated into long-term organisational strategy, audience engagement and partnerships, while reflecting the specific contexts in which each festival operates.

The presentation from Open House Melbourne highlighted the importance of aligning fundraising with organisational values and long-term strategy, ensuring that income generation supports community engagement and programme development. Open House New York presented its experience with ticketed fundraising events, which generate a significant share of the organisation's annual budget, demonstrating the financial potential of well-curated, experience-driven events. Open House London emphasised the role of partnerships, ambassadors and an accessible approach to fundraising, framing donor engagement as an extension of the festival's public mission rather than a purely financial activity.

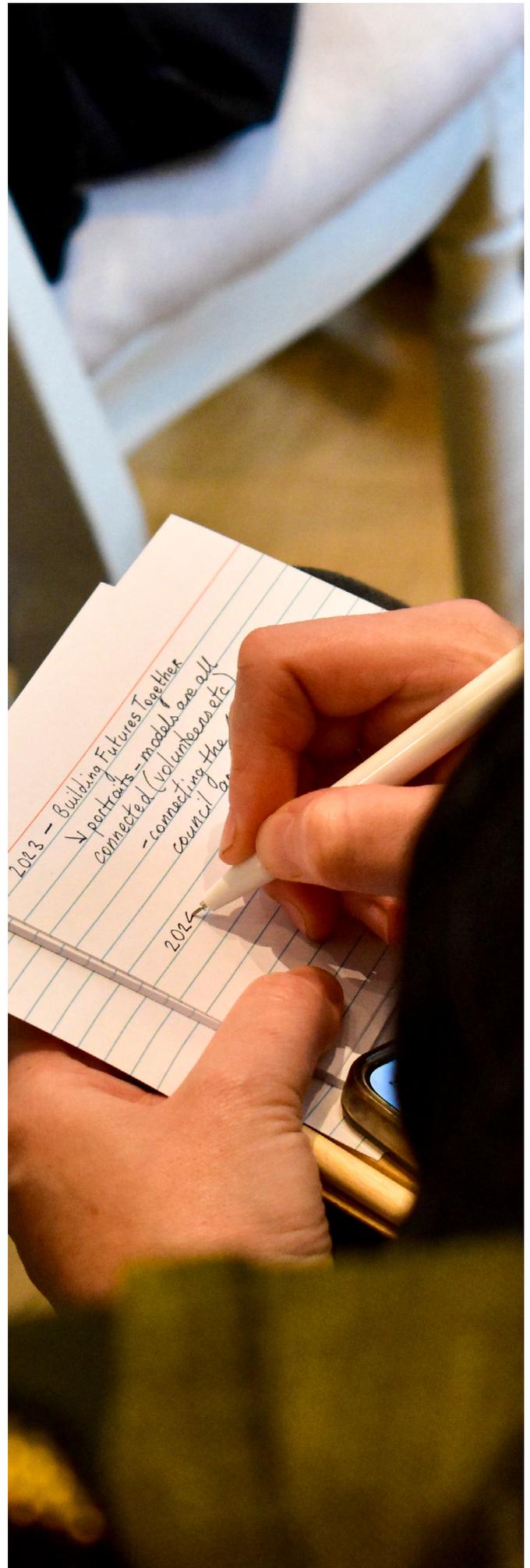
## Volunteers with Santiago and Vilnius

Presented by:

Robert Newcombe (Open House Santiago)

Aurelija Slapšytė (Open House Vilnius)

The session on volunteering included presentations from Open House Vilnius and Open House Santiago, both of which focused on volunteer training, engagement and retention as key components of delivering high-quality public programmes. The presentation from Open House Vilnius outlined a structured volunteer journey that includes mentor training sessions, large-scale volunteer briefings, trial tours ahead of the festival, and closing events that recognise volunteer contributions and creativity. Emphasis was placed on clear communication, testing tour quality in advance, and building a strong sense of community among volunteers. Open House Santiago presented the OH! Stgo Volunteers Club, which is a year-round programme designed to extend volunteer engagement beyond the annual festival through training, visits to cultural spaces, strategic partnerships and skills development, with the aim of creating a consolidated volunteer network that benefits both participants and local communities.



Renata Hajnová (Open House Praha)

Zala Koščak (Open House Slovenia)

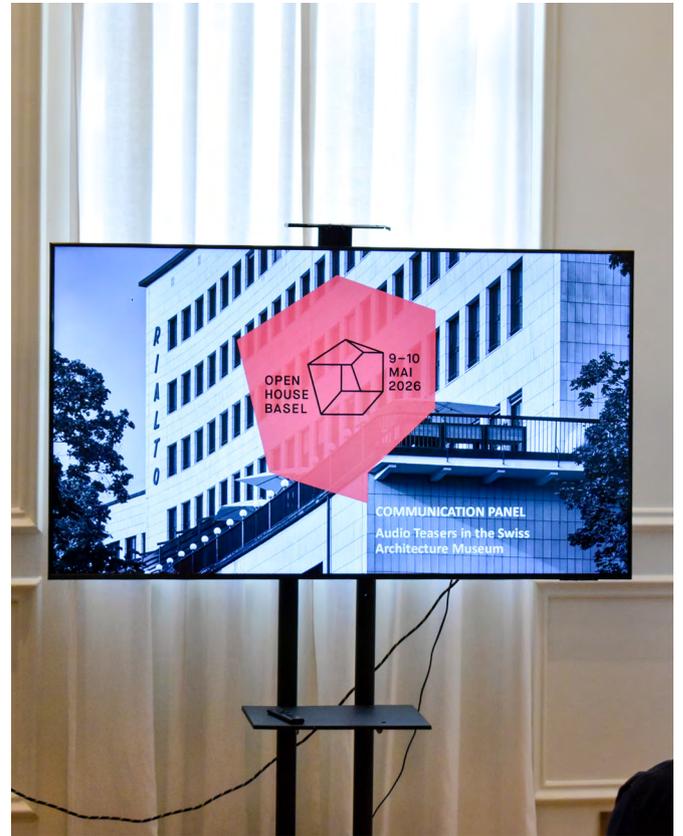


Internal Programme. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The session on digital tools featured presentations from Open House Slovenia and Open House Prague, focusing on how digital platforms can support festival organisation, visitor experience and long-term audience engagement. Open House Slovenia presented the development of its integrated digital platform, which has evolved from a simple festival website into a multifunctional tool that includes an architectural archive, festival programme management, visitor registrations, project submissions, voting systems and partner visibility. The platform now serves both as a public-facing archive of contemporary architecture and as an operational tool that supports communication, data collection and long-term visibility for partners and projects. Open House Prague introduced its custom-built mobile application designed to manage large visitor flows during the festival weekend, offering real-time information, interactive maps, queue updates and communication tools for visitors, volunteers and organisers. The app was presented as a practical solution to common challenges such as overcrowding, lack of real-time information and staff overload, while also opening opportunities for future development through ticketing, partner visibility and shared use across the Open House network.

Esther Baur and Nora Volk (Open House Basel)

Karen Lee Walpole (Open House Dublin)



Internal Programme. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The session focusing on communication featured presentations from Open House Basel and Open House Dublin, highlighting how targeted communication tools can strengthen audience engagement, interpretation of architecture and the overall visibility of Open House programmes. Open House Basel presented its 'Audio Teasers' initiative, developed in collaboration with the Swiss Architecture Museum, which integrates short audio narratives into exhibitions and festival programming to offer visitors new ways of engaging with architecture. The project demonstrated how communication tools can extend beyond promotion to become a form of mediation, supporting learning, accessibility and deeper public interaction. Open House Dublin focused on the strategic use of storytelling and digital communication to reach broader and more diverse audiences, combining clear visual identity, accessible messaging and cross-platform dissemination. Together, the presentations showed how communication strategies can move beyond promotion to become an active tool for education, audience development and long-term engagement, while also contributing to the increased visibility and financial sustainability of Open House activities.

## Guided tour of the Acropolis of Athens



Internal Programme. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

After the sessions, the participant group was divided into two smaller groups, each accompanied by a professional guide, and proceeded on foot from the venue to the Acropolis of Athens, located nearby. The guided tour focused on the architectural significance of the Acropolis and the technical aspects of its construction, highlighting how the site was designed and built as a complex ensemble rather than as individual monuments. The visit complemented the Annual Summit's thematic focus on heritage, interpretation and the relationship between the past and the present.

# Public programme



Visual Stories exhibition opening. Photo by Elpida Spyrou © Courtesy of Open House Greece

## 'Visual Stories' exhibition opening

For the past three years, Open House Europe has run an international open call for visual stories, encouraging festival participants to share their views on architecture and reflect on the annual theme through photography, film, drawing and other visual art forms. The annual theme for 2025 was 'Future Heritage'. There were 209 applications related to 16 Open House festivals, of which 47 were selected. All selected entries became an exhibition whose launch began the public programme of this year's Annual Summit in Athens.

The team behind Open House Athens and Open House Thessaloniki, who were the main organisers of the Annual Summit, was responsible for the exhibition's display. The Open House Europe project coordinator was responsible for the exhibition's catalogue. The catalogues were sent to the selected participants as a gift before the exhibition's opening.



Visual Stories exhibition opening. Photo by Elpida Spyrou © Courtesy of Open House Greece



Visual Stories exhibition opening. Photo by Paulina Puolyte-Vaitkiene © Courtesy of Open House Greece

PILA

Eleftheria Deko

K-Studio )



Opening discussion of the public programme. Photo by Elpida Spyrou© Courtesy of Open House Greece

The event started with a welcome word from the Mayor of Athens, Haris Doukas. It was followed by a series of presentations from leading Greek architects and designers, reflecting and expanding on the 2025 annual theme of ‘Future Heritage’.

The panel discussion (after the presentations) explored how architectural history and heritage are not only referenced but actively used as design materials—structurally, symbolically and socially—in contemporary practice. Speakers delved into the potential for historical narratives and materials to enable site-specific architecture, while critically examining the fine line between thoughtful reuse and the abuse of historicism.

## Day 3: Saturday, January 10

The third day of the Annual Summit was dedicated exclusively to the general public and took place at the Athens Concert Hall. The day's programme opened with three panel discussions titled 'Heritage as a Building Material', 'Shaping Future Tendencies and Values in Architecture', and 'Acting Locally, Sharing Globally: The Impact of Open House Across Regions'. All panel discussions followed the same format: each speaker was given approximately 15–20 minutes to present their work, followed by a 40-minute moderated discussion that allowed for deeper reflection and exchange of perspectives among the panellists and audience.

After internal sessions. Photo by Elpida Spyrou © Courtesy of Open House Greece



## Panel discussion: 'Heritage as a Building Material'



Panel discussion: 'Heritage as a Building Material'. Photo by Konstantina Markoglou © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The morning panel explored what it means to work with heritage as a resource for contemporary practice, and whether historical narratives and materials can enable more meaningful, site-specific architecture. Contributing to this discussion were Slovenian architects Rok Žnidaršič, co-founder of Medprostor, and Maruša Zorec, founder of Arrea Architecture, alongside Greek architects Dionisis Sotovikis, member of the board of directors of the Hellenic Institute of Architecture, and a representative from XZA Architects. The discussion was moderated by the Architecture and Design Editor at 'ek' magazine, Stavros Martinos.

## Panel discussion: 'Shaping Future Tendencies and Values in Architecture'



'Shaping Future Tendencies and Values in Architecture'. Photo by Elpida Spyrou © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The conversation shifted to policy and ethics midday with the second panel. Focusing on the policy side of heritage, this panel explored the fundamental forces and values influencing the future of architecture in Europe. Moderated by Greek political scientist Stathis N. Kalyvas, the main question raised was 'Which values must we uphold, reinvent or let go of?'. The panel brought together advocates and policymakers: Matevž Čelik, architect and head of the European architecture platform LINA; Jonas Janke, architect, co-founder of studio 'b+' and one of the initiators behind the 'HouseEurope!' campaign; Sergei Bazaryia, programme manager of European Heritage Days; and Jutta Kastner, policy officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

## Panel discussion: 'Acting Locally, Sharing Globally: The Impact of Open House Across Regions'



'Acting Locally, Sharing Globally: The Impact of Open House Across Regions'. Photo by Andonis Gjika © Courtesy of Open House Greece

The final panel focused on the impact and regional possibilities of the Open House format itself. Speakers discussed how cooperation between festivals leads to innovation and broader outreach in democratising knowledge about architecture. The session presented the latest monitoring report on Open House Europe and featured insights from international representatives on how collaboration strengthens global connections. The panel included Tadas Šarūnas, Lithuanian sociologist completing impact research on the project; Martynas Germanavičius, project lead of Open House Europe; Tania Davidge, executive director and chief curator of Open House Melbourne, working to establish Open House Australia; and Robert Newcombe, British architectural designer and co-founder of Open House Santiago. The panel was moderated by Manijeh Verghese, CEO of Open City, which founded the Open House format and the Open House Worldwide network.

## Closing lecture by architect and educator Dr Theodore Spyropoulos



Closing Lecture. Photo by Elpida Spyrou © Courtesy of Open House Greece

Dr Theodore Spyropoulos is the director of the Architectural Association Design Research Lab (AADRL), a resident artist at Somerset House, and a member of the Advisory Board of Casa Batlló, Barcelona. He was the chair of the AA Graduate School, has taught at the Städelschule Frankfurt and has been a visiting research fellow at MIT. He co-founded the experimental design practice Minimaforms, whose work is held in major collections and exhibited at institutions including MoMA, the Barbican, the ICA and other international museums worldwide.

The presentation explored how architectural thinking is evolving in response to technological, cultural and philosophical shifts, drawing connections between architecture, systems theory and broader notions of intelligence and agency. Through references to thinkers such as Hans Hollein, Carlo Rovelli and James Bridle, as well as references to his own projects and work, Spyropoulos reflected on architecture as a network of relationships—between people, technology, environment and knowledge—rather than as isolated physical objects.

# Communication

The communication for the Annual Summit was executed by the project's coordinator, Architektūros fondas, and the Annual Summit's host, Open House Greece, as a collaborative effort. The communication plan was developed and implemented by Open House Europe's communications coordinator, Vilius Balčiūnas, and Katerina Doudoumi, creative manager at Open House Greece.

Open House Greece's communication channels provided the necessary reach to engage local audiences in the Annual Summit's public programme, as well as to increase the event's international visibility. Open House Greece distributed local press releases, and extensive information about the public programme was communicated via their social media channels (for both Open House Athens and Open House Thessaloniki).

Communication across the Open House Europe project's network was encouraged, ensuring wide engagement of audiences across the continent. A detailed event programme was published on the Open House Europe website, including a schedule of the event and information about the speakers. An extensive communication campaign took place on the project's social media channels, in collaboration with the channels of Open House Athens (event host), and Open House Thessaloniki and Open House Slovenia (event co-hosts). The campaign promoted the detailed event programme and provided comprehensive information regarding the panels and speakers. Moments from the summit were also shared on social media, and further communication is planned as content from the summit (such as recordings of panel discussions and photos) is received.

In addition to OHEu's and Open House Greece's communication channels, an international press release was published on the E-flux platform (via their website, newsletter and social media). The project's partnership with the largest online architecture platform, ArchDaily, enabled information about the event to be published on their website. Furthermore, the event's local media sponsor, archisearch.gr, also published information regarding the event.

# Organisers' reflections on the Annual Summit

## Open House Athens and Open House Thessaloniki

The Annual Summit in Athens exceeded our expectations and affirmed the relevance and urgency of the conversations we set out to host. The programme unfolded seamlessly, with a strong opening and a series of thoughtful presentations and panels that sustained a high level of engagement throughout. Hundreds of participants—Athenians as well as visitors from abroad—attended the summit, contributing to a truly international and interdisciplinary exchange. The diversity of perspectives, the depth of discussions and the active involvement of the audience confirmed that Athens is a vital meeting point for contemporary debates on heritage, architecture and design. For us as organisers, the summit was not only a success in terms of attendance but also in fostering meaningful dialogue, new connections and a shared sense of purpose for shaping future architectural values.

## Open House Slovenia

Co-organising the Open House Europe Annual Summit in Athens was an inspiring and insightful learning experience. Bringing the Open House Europe project partners and the whole Open House Worldwide network together in a city with such a layered architectural and cultural identity reminded us why openness, dialogue and accessibility matter so deeply in our work. The summit created a space for meaningful exchange between cities, disciplines and perspectives, reinforcing the shared values that connect Open House organisations across Europe and the world. Athens offered a powerful backdrop for conversations about heritage, contemporary challenges and the future role of architecture in shaping more inclusive cities. Collaborating closely with local organisers highlighted the importance of trust, adaptability and collective effort in delivering an event of this scale. Overall, the experience strengthened our sense of community and reaffirmed the value of working together to make architecture more visible, understandable and accessible to all.

The internal programme of the summit was diverse and highly informative, offering valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange and learning among partners. Through a dedicated workshop, we collectively explored the possible next steps for the Open House Europe project, reflecting on how the initiative could continue to grow and evolve in the future. The public programme on Friday and Saturday was particularly rich and engaging. Through lectures and discussions led by renowned architects and key decision-makers, we examined a wide range of topics connected to the 2025 annual theme of 'Future Heritage', addressing the relationship between heritage, contemporary architecture and future urban development. We are especially proud to have brought three speakers from Slovenia to Athens, who presented Slovenian architecture to an international audience and contributed meaningfully to the overall programme.

# Open House Europe team



Open House Europe team photo. Photo by Elpida Spyrou © Courtesy of Open House Greece

# Partner festivals



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