Press release — Socrates at the Festival del Classico 2026

Socrates returns to the Festival del Classico: this year the avatar stands trial

For the second year, Logosnet's e-REAL Labs bring their digital Socrates to Turin. At the Circolo dei lettori he will talk with students and then take his seat in the dock, in the trial the students themselves will stage.

Socrates returns to the Festival del Classico. After its debut in December 2025 at Politecnico di Torino, the conversational avatar conceived by Barbara Bertagni and Fernando Salvetti and built by their e-REAL Labs team will be back on stage at the 2026 edition of the Festival, in December, this time at the Circolo dei lettori.

This year's novelty is the trial. In one morning, students from a liceo classico and students of ancient Greek law from the University of Turin's School of Law meet Socrates twice. First they prepare with him, testing questions, interpretations, and arguments. Then they bring the trial of 399 BC to life. In both moments the avatar plays himself.

Curated by Ugo Cardinale and chaired by Luciano Canfora, the Festival del Classico of the Fondazione Circolo dei lettori in Turin is today Italy's leading event devoted to the dialogue between ancient thought and the present.

“The present that the Festival del Classico brings into dialogue with the ancients is rich, complex, and many-sided, and it fully includes science and technology. This is Giulio Preti's lesson: humanistic culture and scientific culture are not two separate worlds but parts of one and the same culture. An avatar of Socrates questioning students is a concrete example,” says Ugo Cardinale, curator of the Festival. “This year there is one more novelty: the students who win selected challenges will be able to take up an internship at e-REAL Labs.”

Socrates is offered to the Festival del Classico free of charge; e-REAL Labs, through Logosnet, are sponsors of the Festival.

The e-REAL Labs Socrates is designed to behave like the Socrates we know, if only in part, through the historical sources: to question rather than to answer. At every turn he returns to the interlocutor a question that leads them to sharpen their thinking and examine its premises, following the logic described above all in Plato's dialogues. It is also one of the applications of *Socratic Prompting*, the method for training critical thinking through the use of generative artificial intelligence, developed by Fernando Salvetti and Barbara Bertagni under the scientific supervision of Roberto Pieraccini, former Head of Engineering of the Google AI Assistant in Zurich and New York.

The avatar's knowledge base is built on a selection of texts on ancient Greek law and the trial of Socrates. Socrates does not recite quotations: he knows the sources and speaks in the philosopher's shoes.

Socrates and Logosnet's e-REAL Labs

Socrates. The e-REAL Labs Socrates is a three-dimensional, life-size conversational avatar that listens and answers by voice in real time. It was built by a mixed team of staff from e-REAL Labs and Centro Studi Logos, both part of Logosnet: psychologists, philosophers, anthropologists, educators, communication experts, sociologists, and legal scholars work alongside engineers and programmers. The former define the character, the way the dialogue is conducted, and the knowledge base, built on selected texts; the latter develop the architecture that brings them to life. The system combines speech recognition and synthesis, a language model that draws on the uploaded sources, and a module that synchronizes the avatar's words, gaze, and gestures.

e-REAL Labs. Logosnet's technology labs, based mainly between New York and Piedmont (Caluso and Turin): they develop proprietary generative AI and extended reality technologies, software, and platforms. They build immersive environments that as a rule require no headsets or wearables, and conversational avatars installed, among other places, at the Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali in Turin.

Centro Studi Logos. Founded in 1996 in Caluso (Turin) as an applied research center, at the time in collaboration with Olivetti, it is Logosnet's research center: it conducts studies and publishes books and scientific articles with publishers such as Springer and FrancoAngeli. In Turin it hosts about 100 interns a year from the University and the Scuola di Amministrazione Aziendale. With the Department of Architecture and Engineering of the University of Bologna and e-REAL Labs, the Centro Studi developed the research that led to the volume *Design per spazi informativi interattivi* (FrancoAngeli, 2026, open access). It is affiliated with Fondazione Piemonte Innova and the Piedmont ICT cluster (Polo ICT), as well as the Bio-Industry Park of Colleretto Giacosa.

Logosnet. Active since 1996, with offices in Turin, Lugano, London, Houston, and New York, it operates in more than 80 countries. It works in five areas: business and organizations, healthcare, law and compliance, education, culture and tourism. e-REAL Labs and Centro Studi Logos both operate within it.

Press contacts. Logosnet / e-REAL Labs / Centro Studi Logos: +39 011 19620030

salvetti@logosnet.org · www.logosnet.org · www.e-real.net