

07-7-2021 Two Day Webinar on the collaboration between Greek and UK Universities.

A two-day webinar was held within the framework of the “UK-Greece Strategic Partnership in Education to foster collaborations between UK and Greek Universities” which is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the British Embassy in Athens and the British Council.

The four thematic webinars were attended by representatives of Greek and UK universities, who were informed about the institutional framework and exchanged ideas and good practices in establishing bilateral partnerships. The two-day webinar attracted a lot of participation, having about 150 university representatives registered from almost all Greek universities and 30 UK universities.

In the webinar entitled "Wider framework of collaboration", special reference was made by the Greek participants to the institutional changes set out in Law 4692/2020, which simplifies the process of establishing foreign-language undergraduate programmes in every HEI, institutionalises the joint and dual degrees between Greek and foreign HEIs, enhances the attraction of international students and facilitates their accommodation. Particular reference was made to the financial support that Greek universities will receive under the National Recovery Plan "Greece 2.0", with the aim of promoting their extroversion and enhancing their contribution to the transformation of the growth model of the Greek economy. The activities of Study in Greece, the official body for the internationalisation and extroversion of Greek higher education, were also presented. From the British side, reference was made to the UK Government's strategy on the internationalisation of education, as well as to concrete measures to strengthen the internationalisation of UK universities, one of which is the new Turing Scheme, which will provide financial support to UK students for participation in exchange programmes of foreign universities.

In the webinar on "Dual and joint programmes", speakers pointed out the importance of gradually building a relationship of trust between Universities, starting with smaller scale partnerships, and subsequently moving towards an agreement on joint programmes at the level of undergraduate, postgraduate or doctoral studies. As regards the structure of such agreements, the key role of finding the minimum common denominator for mutually beneficial collaborations was highlighted.

In the webinar on "Research collaborations", speakers pointed out that international collaborations are key to conducting cutting-edge research in all scientific fields, as friction between different approaches stimulates creativity and innovation. It has been observed that research collaborations between universities create opportunities for synergies with businesses as well as with civil society organisations. The speakers also highlighted the potentially significant social impact of international research collaborations at local, national and global level.

In the fourth webinar, 'Summer programmes and short courses', the speakers agreed that the limited duration of such programmes requires innovative planning, it encourages interdisciplinarity and interculturalism, allows for skills to be cultivated, while practical experience is gained and connection with the labour market is enabled. At the same time, it enhances inclusion, as practical barriers to participation are removed. These advantages, along with the fact that little coordination is required to run such programmes, demonstrate that short courses are an ideal starting point for forming partnerships on which universities can build for further joint activities.

In her opening address, the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, Niki Kerameos, stated: "Promoting the extroversion of Greek Universities has been a constant strategic priority of the Government since the beginning of its mandate. The

participation of our Universities in international research groups and networks can bring significant benefits, contributing to the broadening of their horizons and the empowerment of all members of the academic community."

The Deputy Minister responsible for Higher Education, Angelos Syrigos, stated: "Over the last year and a half, reality has proved in the most compelling way that the future of humanity lies in building bridges. The extroversion and internationalisation of Greek Higher were programmatic commitments of the current government, and the leadership of the Ministry of Education implements them with vision and consistency."

The British Ambassador to Greece, Kate Smith, stated: "The current programme adds a new pillar to the UK-Greece education relationship, building on the joint commitment of the two governments to enhance extroversion. The collaborations, which will be formed under the auspices of the programme, will create more opportunities for UK and Greek institutions to work together, and will help British and Greek people to plan the future together."

The Secretary-General for Higher Education, Apostolos Dimitropoulos, stated: "I am convinced that, after Brexit, Greece and the United Kingdom, as well as Greek and UK universities, can not only maintain the excellent cooperation they have had within the context of the European Union, but also further expand it through more, closer and innovative partnerships."

The Director of the British Council Greece, Anastasia Andritsou, stated: "The response of Greek and UK universities to the collaboration programme with the Ministry of Education and the British Embassy has exceeded our expectations. With the successful conclusion of the two-day webinar, we are even more optimistic that these activities will create a fertile ground for new partnerships that will strengthen the already strong educational ties between the two countries."