



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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«How to craft a successful internationalization strategy? The case of covid-19»

Professor Meletios-Athanasios Dimopoulos

Rector of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Universities were and still remain a crucial part in every society. The recent pandemic of the covid-19 has proved that it is high time we enhanced our **efforts for more internationalized Universities, widely open to cooperation with other Universities abroad.**

We strongly believe that universities are about knowledge, innovation, as well as the pursuit of excellence. We are committed to work towards the advancement of critical human capacities, contribute to sustainable development and social cohesion and promote Europe's cultural heritage, with respect to the principles of democracy, ethics and cultural diversity.

The internationalization of the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens is a priority for Rectoral Authorities and members of our Academic community. Decades of cooperation with partner institutions from most European countries as well as the participation of the NKUA in international organizations, associations, and university networks, **have led to a consistent development of**

our University's international profile and its fundamental role in student and staff mobility.

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens is one of the 25 best universities worldwide in the field of academic and research collaborations with universities and institutions abroad, as well as in the field of collaborations with partners and market players at national, regional and international level, according to the results of the U-Multirank ranking.

This is a key point; we consider cooperation among Higher Education Institutes as an essential element for the strengthening of relations of the respective countries. The recent pandemic has clearly shown that knowledge is produced upon research, which is mainly conducted by Universities!

For the current academic year, there were a total of 104 active international collaborations of the NKUA with foreign universities, institutions, and international organisations.

- 78 of them refer to and relate to student and faculty members exchanges between NKUA and Universities abroad
- 6 of them refer to active international collaborations of the NKUA which concern joint programmes of MSc/ MSc/.
- 4 of them refer to active international collaborations that concerning the participation of the NKUA in European MSc programmes.
- 14 of them refer to specific cooperation protocols for the preparation of Doctoral Dissertation with co-supervision with universities of the foreign universities.
- 2 of them refer to internationally oriented summer schools in cooperation with national and international institutions

In particular, until today, many articles have been published with the participation of members of the NKUA, mainly through international collaborations, which have collected a very large number of references and have a

high h-index! These are articles with a decisive contribution to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and bring the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens to the forefront of knowledge produced internationally.

That is also why we have already moved on by establishing the 1st, in a Greek University, undergraduate degree program to be taught exclusively in the English language, the **“BA Program in the Archaeology, History, and Literature of Ancient Greece”** and that’s why we have also established our next 2nd program, a **BA in Medicine**, that will be taught in English.

Meanwhile, there also many post graduate programs taught in English, **representing our efforts for a more internationalized University. A University that builds bridges and enhances cooperation internationally.**

Another example that represents our firm belief in the internationalization of our Programs and in the extroversion of our activities is our participation from the beginning at the **European Universities Initiative** of EU, within the **CIVIS University**.

CIVIS University is an alliance of ten European Universities. The European Commission with the **European Universities Initiative** wants to support the creation and development of 20 alliances of European universities by 2024. Through this, the Commission has the ambition to bring Europeans closer together and to improve the international competitiveness of our higher education institutions.

This CIVIS alliance, **will bring together some 470,000 students and 68,000 staff members.**

Recently in Marseille, CIVIS and six leading African universities issued a clear call for a European Universities Initiative which is open to global partnerships.

Our vision for a European Universities Initiative which is open to global partnerships:

- **Acts as a catalyst for challenge-based education. Humanity now faces global problems, so our search for solutions must reach out to partners beyond Europe's borders.**
- **Broadens the definition of student mobility to include exchanges and study visits which take European students outside Europe or bring students from around the world to European universities.**
- **Supports equitable research partnerships on an Innovation Agenda.**

Recognition, also, of the important role played by Universities internationally is reflected in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2020, the only global performance tables that assess universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

NKUA, for instance, achieves high positions and distinctions in individual goals of economic and social development, **confirming the significant impact it has as a University on improving social welfare, economic development, tackling social inequalities, education and health.**

Alongside the crucial research on covid-19, we could also present many examples of research programs and clinical trials that are now taking place international with the participation of our University's Clinics and Laboratories.

One important element of NKUA internationalization strategy was the implementation and monitoring of a certified Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). The Quality Assurance Unit of our University applies this specific (IQAS) in the field of Teaching, research and other related academic activities, and its administrative efficiency and effectiveness. **Our IQAS is certified by Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA), and it is in compliance with the HQA Quality Standards, as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).** The Accreditation Procedure of the IQAS was carried out by the HQA and was an

external evaluation process based on specific, pre-defined, internationally accepted, and pre-publicized quantitative and qualitative criteria and indicators and took place between October 13 and October 19, 2018. The result, as reflected in the multi-page report of the committee, was excellent for the National and Kapodistrian University, as it received the highest possible rating ('fully compliant'). All undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programs of National & Kapodistrian University of Athens correspond to the academic level declared and the qualification awarded. This assertion may be supported by:

- (a) the reports of the external evaluators,
- (b) the detailed information on objectives set and learning results, as they are reflected in the study guides of the Departments
- (c) the full alignment with European and International Standards (ECTS system),
- (d) the standard acceptance of NKUA graduates in postgraduate and doctoral studies not only in Greece but also abroad, and finally
- (e) the graduate`s professional success and social advancement wherever they finally reside.

Last but not least, we should mention that during this crisis, it's vital that universities nurture their international connections, looking out for all members of the higher education community on a global scale.

Universities that still focus on their international partnerships and continue their relationship building during this time might find the transition back to normal operations a lot smoother.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The important research work produced daily in University laboratories and clinics, in University Hospitals and other university structures is our guide to an even more extroverted and productive research

among Universities, within society and facing its needs, as it happened during this pandemic.

Universities could build bridges for strategic cooperation among countries and that work offers the background for Strategic Communication, especially in complex issues such as pandemics or refugee flow and geostrategic conflicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Internationalization has been a cornerstone goal of the ten-year strategic plan of our University. Especially for research Universities like ours, internationalization is reflected in dealing with the impacts of interlinked 'global challenges'. Coronavirus has disrupted the way in which universities have been traditionally operating. According to the United Nations, the pandemic has brought the largest disruption of education systems in history. For the first time in years, universities had to cope with such a multidimensional and indeterminate threat, which has evidently negatively affected the international mobility of students. Nevertheless, our University has met the challenge of the pandemic efficiently. **International relations, cooperation agreements and academic networks operate as catalyst for a more internationalized University.**