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**PRESS RELEASE**

**A University in Transformation: The Rectorate's Report on the First  
Year of Administration at Aristotle University**

**Thessaloniki, 22 June 2026**

"One year ago, we assumed responsibility as the Rectorate for the administration of Aristotle University at a historic moment, on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of our University. The fortunate coincidence of this administrative transition with the beginning of our second century obliges us to redefine our mission and embark on a new beginning.

Not because Aristotle University is lagging behind—it is, after all, the leading public university in the country and one of the most important universities in Southeastern Europe—but because an institution of such significance must continuously redefine its role, especially at such a historic juncture, in a world that is changing at unprecedented speed. Artificial intelligence, digital transformation, the internationalization of education, the mobility of scientists, emerging social needs, and demographic challenges require new tools, new policies, and above all a new mindset.

For this reason, the first year of our administration was not simply another year of management. It was a year marked by intensive initiatives and collective effort aimed at laying the foundations for a more internationalized, more digital, more outward-looking, more student-centered, and more influential university for the country.

***The University of the Second Century***

We believe that the major challenge facing the Greek public university is not merely its survival, but its ability to assume a leading role. A public university is not only an educational institution; it is also a source of national strength through its production of knowledge, research, innovation, culture, and social mobility.

For this reason, our strategy was built around a central objective: to transform Aristotle University into a truly international, innovative, and sustainable public university of the twenty-first century; into a university that competes on equal terms

with major European institutions; into a university that produces not only knowledge but also opportunities, that translates academic excellence into social and developmental outcomes; into a university aligned with the generation of its students.

### ***The Largest Internationalization Initiative in the Institution's History***

Internationalization constituted the central strategic choice of our first year. Encouraged by the success of the country's first English-taught Medical Degree Programme, which became a genuine model for higher education throughout Greece, we embarked on an unprecedented expansion of our international academic activities.

Nine new English-taught undergraduate programmes are currently in the final stage of accreditation and are expected to begin operating in the next academic year. They will be followed by seven additional programmes, six of them taught in English, as well as Greece's first French-language undergraduate programme.

At the same time, three new dual master's programmes are being developed with Texas A&M University, the University of Nebraska, and Western University in Canada. In parallel, we are developing four joint undergraduate programmes with universities in the United States and one additional programme with a European university.

Internationalization, however, is not limited to academic programmes. We signed the Magna Carta Universitatum in London, strengthening the institution's international presence. We undertook the organization of the global Scholars at Risk Conference in Thessaloniki in 2027. We developed new international partnerships and strategic alliances.

Most importantly, we transformed internationalization from an isolated activity into a central institutional policy. In today's world, the goal should not be limited to brain gain; it should focus primarily on brain circulation—the continuous exchange of knowledge, ideas, students, and scholars between Greece and the wider world.

### ***The University of the Student Experience***

Our second major priority was student welfare. From the outset, we articulated a clear position: student welfare is not an administrative service. It is a policy of equal opportunity. It is the University's tangible responsibility toward its students.

For this reason, we adopted a holistic approach that will enable the transition from a university that transmits knowledge to a university that provides a meaningful student experience.

We adopted regulations governing the operation of student residences, recorded eligible residents as well as occupied and vacant rooms, signed occupancy agreements with students, and launched the renovation of all residence facilities and equipment with funding from the Special Account for Research Funds (ELKE), INEDIVIM, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, and private sponsors.

Our objective is the complete upgrading of living conditions in Aristotle University's student residences. In addition, plans for the construction of new student residences through public-private partnerships are progressing for students enrolled in both Greek-language and international programmes.

The full renovation of the two Student Club buildings is also under way through the use of the Club's reserves. A Student Support Centre is being established in the lower Student Club building, bringing together all student support services in one location.

The same facility will also host and support volunteer student groups across all areas of activity.

Particularly significant is the launch of an EU-funded project to improve accessibility for our students. Through this initiative, thirty-five specialist professionals have already been recruited, transforming accessibility from a general principle into an organized service staffed by qualified experts.

A similar initiative supported the launch of a project for the University's Psychological Support Centre through the recruitment of five specialist professionals. This enhancement responds to the contemporary need for meaningful psychosocial support services within universities.

We also introduced the Student Barometer, a system of rolling surveys among students designed to record their needs, academic conditions, and the trends that shape the daily relationship between the University and its students.

In this way, we are establishing an interactive relationship between the administration and the student body that allows the Rectorate's policies and initiatives to adapt to their characteristics and evolving needs.

### ***Digital Transformation***

What might once have been a priority has now become an existential necessity: digital transformation. Technology is no longer an option; it is a prerequisite for sustainability.

For this reason, we proceeded with the digital upgrading of University operations, including electronic secretariat services, the pioneering design of the modern open-source UniverSIS academic information system, the development of new educational platforms, and the pilot introduction of artificial intelligence and immersive-cube technologies into the educational process.

Another important intervention in our digital transition was the design, preparation, and implementation of examinations using tablets. Supported by substantial funding from the Ministry of Digital Governance, this initiative represents one of the most significant reforms in Greek higher education.

Tablet-based examinations have already achieved exceptionally high levels of satisfaction among both students and faculty members, allowing us to aspire to become a European benchmark for examination practices.

We also developed and launched Aristomate, a comprehensive mobile application that provides dozens of digital services and includes a panic button feature. A corresponding application for University personnel is currently under development.

### ***Academic Programme Activities***

As part of our continuous effort to strengthen the quality of studies and student-centred learning, we proceeded with the rationalization and standardization of the procedures governing the review, establishment, modification, and accreditation of academic programmes.

This intervention, fully aligned with the current regulatory framework, was designed to improve the preparation of academic units for programme establishment and accreditation, simplify procedures, and reduce administrative burdens.

The reorganization of the process was based on three principal pillars: eliminating redundant and repetitive reviews of the same documentation by different services;

processing applications in parallel whenever possible instead of through time-consuming sequential review; and introducing clear and binding deadlines for every stage of the review process.

We also strengthened cooperation and coordination among the involved services and committees and created a shared digital cloud environment, ensuring immediate access to application files, joint monitoring of progress, and more effective data management.

The use of predefined digital templates significantly simplified file preparation. Secretariats and academic coordinators now have a clear understanding of the required documentation, reducing resubmissions, corrections, and requests for clarification and allowing departments to focus on the academic content of their programmes.

The legal compliance review process was strengthened through the support of legal experts and additional personnel. Application files are now more complete, resulting in a more effective evaluation process.

Quality assurance procedures were reinforced through the timely provision of observations and close collaboration with academic units before matters are submitted to the Senate. Reviews are completed more rapidly, thereby strengthening transparency and efficiency.

The Senate now examines only those applications that have successfully completed all previous stages of review, enabling it to focus on issues of strategic importance for postgraduate education and contributing to faster decision-making.

Postgraduate programme accreditations continue with diligence, care, and considerable success. We significantly expanded the institution of Named Chairs by adding three new chairs to the two already in operation, while six additional chairs are currently being established and several others are under development.

These initiatives aim to enhance departmental curricula and introduce new fields of knowledge, thereby strengthening connections with society and the labour market.

We supported our participation in the EPICUR Alliance, in which Aristotle University played a pivotal role through the development of the innovative VURS (Virtual University Registrar System), a Virtual Campus Management System that enables seamless communication and data exchange among participating universities.

In addition, Aristotle University became the first institution to implement the European Student Card (ESC), a unified digital identification tool that allows students to verify their academic status securely throughout the European Union and significantly facilitates mobility and studies abroad.

Our University has integrated its entire active student population into the European Student Card system, and more than 7,000 students have already completed its issuance and activation.

The Centre for Lifelong Learning is also undergoing a process of modernization through a new strategic framework that places strong emphasis on lifelong learning and professional development, in line with contemporary societal and labour-market needs.

## **Research and Innovation**

Research lies at the heart of Aristotle University's identity. Our initial objective was to restructure the Special Account for Research Funds (ELKE) in order to further improve

the support services provided for the University's research activities. As a first step, we redesigned ELKE's organizational structure, giving priority to its research mission rather than its administrative and financial management functions. At the same time, we are designing a new structure that will enable personalized services for researchers through ELKE staff capable of responding directly and efficiently to their needs.

The project *"Excellence Strategy of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki"*, with a total budget of €11.87 million, was successfully completed. In parallel, ELKE provided additional funding to support the installation of the new and significant research and laboratory equipment acquired through the project.

As part of our efforts to promote technology transfer, innovation, and the social impact of research, three new spin-off companies were established. At the same time, we supported all initiatives undertaken by the Technology Transfer Office and WALK, which aim to connect students and researchers with entrepreneurship, industry, and innovation.

We also supported the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at Aristotle University, with the ultimate objective of creating a working environment that enables researchers to carry out their work under optimal conditions. Through this initiative, we aim to make Aristotle University an attractive environment for research activity, contributing not only to the return of Greek researchers and the mitigation of brain drain but also to the attraction of international researchers.

The RESCOM financial and administrative management information system, developed by ELKE at Aristotle University, continues to undergo constant improvement and modernization in order to provide reliable and user-friendly services. The success of this long-standing effort was once again confirmed through recent agreements for the transfer of expertise to the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Academy of Athens.

For the first time, €5.75 million from ELKE reserves were allocated to the upgrading of University infrastructure, based on priorities identified by the academic departments. These investments support lecture halls, libraries, and facilities facing urgent structural needs due to building deterioration. In addition, €1.35 million was allocated in 2026 to strengthen the University's regular budget, representing an increase of more than 35% compared with previous years.

At present, the research activities of our University community are supported through cash-flow facilities exceeding €20 million. In practical terms, these funds represent investments made by ELKE to accelerate and facilitate research. Given ELKE's ongoing and enhanced contribution to infrastructure improvements and the strengthening of educational and research activities, we decided to adjust the retention rate applied to certain categories of research projects.

As a result, a long-standing request for reciprocity will be fulfilled for the first time, as 1% of each project's budget will be returned to the academic department of the principal investigator. At the same time, this measure will strengthen ELKE's financial support for the University's infrastructure and operational enhancement programme.

### ***The Aristotle Innovation Forum***

A landmark moment in the University's outward engagement was the creation of the Aristotle Innovation Forum. The Forum demonstrated Aristotle University's pivotal role within Greece's innovation ecosystem.

It was not merely a conference. It was a statement that a university can serve as a meeting point for science, technology, public policy, entrepreneurship, and society.

More than 450 scientists from 26 countries and 14 Greek institutions participated in the Forum, reflecting its international reach and significance. Feedback collected through participant surveys confirms the success of the event, with overall evaluations averaging 4.5 out of 5 across all key indicators of the Forum experience.

### ***Infrastructure, Campus, and University Property***

No strategy can be implemented without strong infrastructure. During the first year of our administration, we designed a comprehensive programme for the upgrading of the University's facilities and building stock.

Projects worth €47.5 million were included in the National Development Programme. We launched a plan—currently under implementation—for the energy upgrading of the majority of buildings on the central campus. Preparations are under way for the energy renovation of the Central Library, while supplementary works related to the energy upgrading of the Faculty of Philosophy have been completed.

We also initiated studies for the renovation of the School of Education buildings near the Archaeological Museum and launched procedures for the maintenance of facilities belonging to the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment at the Forest Botanical Garden in Phoenix, as well as the buildings of the School of Fine Arts on the Thermi campus.

Additional studies have begun for the construction of new facilities for the Department of Informatics in Thermi, the expansion of infrastructure at the School of Physical Education and Sport Science in Thessaloniki, the upgrading of facilities and operations at the School's Serres branch, the improvement of the School of Agriculture facilities at the University Farm and the gradual relocation of its laboratories, the upgrading of facilities in the Pertouli and Taxiarchis forests, support for the Kolchiko facilities, support for the facilities of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, and the enhancement of infrastructure across all remaining academic departments of the University, as will soon be finalized through the Rectorate's Strategic Plan, which is currently under development.

The upgrading of the central campus is also progressing through a comprehensive programme for green and sustainable development, including a redesigned spatial plan, extensive tree planting, smart infrastructure solutions, and environmentally responsible interventions.

Similar initiatives are being implemented on the University's other campuses in Thermi, Kalamaria, and Kalandra.

Particular emphasis has been placed on Kalandra, where work has begun to transform the site from a seasonal summer camp into a year-round University campus capable of hosting educational activities from all academic departments.

At the same time, support and upgrading initiatives have begun for both the University Childcare Centre and the University Sports Centre.

Finally, an important contribution to the institution is the ongoing comprehensive recording of University property assets, including both horizontal and vertical

property ownership. This initiative includes the investigation and regularization of all pending legal matters, as well as the digitization of relevant data to facilitate future planning and development.

### ***Institutional Reorganization***

During the first year, we completed the revision of the University's organizational structure and resubmitted it to the Ministry of Education. We also drafted a new Internal Regulation, which is currently in the final stage of preparation before being released for public consultation.

These are interventions of fundamental importance that will enable the University to operate with greater efficiency, flexibility, and transparency.

We also strengthened the role and operation of the University Property Management and Development Company through a new organizational framework and Internal Regulation, which will be implemented following approval by the Board of Administration.

The objective is to establish a modern governance model and ensure that the full annual financial benefit generated by the company is returned to the University.

### ***Communication and Outreach***

The University's strategic commitment to outward engagement was also reflected in the performance of its social media platforms, whose total reach and visibility achieved exceptionally high levels, approaching ten million views and interactions.

Within the same framework, we completely redesigned the University's central website, transforming it into a modern information portal for students, researchers, prospective students, and international visitors.

Designed according to contemporary international standards of functionality, accessibility, aesthetics, and information management, the new website significantly enhances the institution's digital presence.

The creation of Auth Radio represents an effort to provide a new platform for the activities, people, and initiatives of Aristotle University, while strengthening both the sense of community and the University's public presence.

As the first exclusively academic radio station in Greek higher education, Auth Radio aims to serve as a permanent platform for highlighting the University's activities, people, research initiatives, and everyday life.

At the same time, it creates a meaningful channel of communication between the University and society, expanding engagement with students, alumni, the city of Thessaloniki, and the wider public.

The organized welcome event for first-year students at the Palais des Sports in October 2025 marked a new approach to the student experience, emphasizing students' first contact with the University and facilitating their smooth integration into academic life.

This initiative reflects a broader understanding: a university is not merely a place of lectures and examinations, but a community in which students can feel that they belong.

### ***Institutional Memory and Operational Enhancement***

We also implemented important initiatives related to the organization and institutional functioning of the University.

The development of guidelines for access to the archives of the Aristotle University Senate forms part of a broader effort to make better use of the institution's historical memory and facilitate access to University records.

Within the same framework, we secured funding for the creation of the University Art Gallery and initiated the digital documentation of works of art that had previously been stored in the basement of the new Faculty of Philosophy building.

In addition, we updated the regulations governing graduation ceremonies. Although practical in nature, this intervention ensures that one of the most important milestones in a graduate's academic journey takes place in a manner that reflects its significance.

### ***Aristotle University in Society***

During the first year of our administration, Aristotle University signed dozens of new strategic agreements, including partnerships with the Academy of Athens, the National Hellenic Research Foundation, the National Observatory of Athens, the Municipality of Thessaloniki, and numerous international academic and research organizations.

At the same time, we resolved several long-standing issues, including matters concerning the Pertouli Ski Centre and AHEPA University Hospital.

Through the initiative of the new Rectorate and the Board of Administration, a long-standing issue concerning the operation of the Pertouli Ski Centre was resolved in a clear and transparent manner after many years. This issue had created persistent challenges in the management of the University Forest.

Following the signing of the Programmatic Agreement governing the Pertouli Ski Centre and the reciprocal benefits it secures, Aristotle University aims to use these opportunities to open the forest more broadly to society, strengthen education and research, promote the dissemination of academic knowledge related to forest ecosystems, and contribute to sustainable local development.

As a direct result of these efforts, our students will once again carry out their compulsory field training in the Pertouli University Forest this summer for the first time in two years.

Equally significant was the resolution of the long-standing issue between the University and the State concerning AHEPA Hospital. Through a thirty-year extension of the operating concession to the Ministry of Health, accompanied by commitments to preserve the Hospital's University character and its role within the National Health System, a stable framework has been established for the future.

The agreement also supports plans for the development of a biomedical cluster, the conversion of the unfinished paraplegic rehabilitation building into a Rehabilitation Centre, the creation of an international biomedical research centre, and the renovation and upgrading of the School of Medicine facilities.

### ***The Next Day***

The first year was only the beginning. We laid the foundations of our strategic programme and began changing both the agenda and the culture within and beyond

the institution. We shifted public discussion away from managing problems and toward shaping the future.

We demonstrated that a public university can be academically strong, socially valuable, internationally engaged, and technologically innovative at the same time.

Significant challenges still lie ahead: completing our internationalization strategy, upgrading infrastructure and energy performance, constructing new student residences, advancing digital transformation, strengthening research from the undergraduate level onward, developing new partnerships, and further connecting the University with society and the productive sector.

For all of us, the second century of Aristotle University has begun.

It has begun with confidence, ambition, faith in our people, faith in our students, and faith that knowledge, research, and education remain the most important investment in the future of our country.

***Let us continue this journey together."***

### **The Rectoral Authorities**

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***We kindly request that this event be published, broadcast, and covered by the media.***