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PRESS RELEASE

Aristotle University Hosts the EPICUR Governance Week 2026 Annual Meeting

Thessaloniki, 1 July 2026

With its focus firmly on the future of European education, the European University Alliance EPICUR held its official dinner yesterday, Tuesday, 30 June, at the Thessaloniki Officers' Club.

The event took place as part of the EPICUR Governance Week, a key week of meetings during which Rectors, academics, and senior representatives from the Alliance's 11 leading universities coordinate the next steps towards developing a shared European Higher Education Area.

The keynote speaker of the evening was the Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food, an alumnus of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and former Vice-President of the European Commission for *Promoting our European Way of Life*, with responsibilities that included education, Mr Margaritis Schinas. In his address, Mr Schinas highlighted the strategic role of the European Universities alliances as pillars of innovation, unity, and social cohesion. He also referred to the European Union's strategic vision for education and the common values that underpin it, placing particular emphasis on the human dimension.

Professor Kyriakos Anastasiadis, Rector of Aristotle University, opened the event by welcoming the participants and underlining the significance of hosting this meeting, which lays the foundations for the university of the future. Referring, among other things, to the names of both the European Alliance and the University that plays a central role in it and hosted this high-level meeting, he stated that from the Garden of Epicurus to Aristotle's Lyceum, and from there to EPICUR, Europe continues to be built through communities of knowledge, dialogue, and trust. He added that Europe's future will not be written only in parliaments and markets, but also in its universities.

As part of the opening session, participants heard a written message from the Greek Deputy Minister of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports and former Rector of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Professor Nikolaos Papaioannou. In his message, he praised the Alliance's contribution to the internationalisation of higher education as a pioneer in the reform of European higher education. Professor Pericles Mitkas, President of the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education and former Rector of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, also addressed the audience, focusing on the new opportunities that the initiative creates for European higher education institutions.

European Universities and the EPICUR Alliance

The European Universities initiative is one of the European Union's most ambitious higher education initiatives. French President Emmanuel Macron first presented the idea in 2017, and the European Council subsequently endorsed it with the aim of creating transnational university alliances that transcend the boundaries of national higher education systems. During the first pilot phase in 2019, the European Commission selected 17 alliances. Today, 73 European University Alliances bring together almost 650 higher education institutions from across Europe.

The EPICUR Alliance (European Partnership for an Innovative Campus Unifying Regions) was established in 2019 as one of the first 17 selected European University Alliances. Today, it brings together 11 universities from ten European countries: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; the University of Strasbourg (France); the University of Freiburg (Germany); the University of Haute-Alsace (France); the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany); the University of Southern Denmark (Denmark); the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (Austria); Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland); and, as incoming members, Roma Tre University (Italy), Pablo de Olavide University of Seville (Spain), and the University of Basel (Switzerland). The Alliance's geographical and academic diversity is both one of its greatest strengths and one of its greatest challenges.

EPICUR's fundamental vision is to create a unified European Academic Area where students, academic staff, researchers, and professional services staff collaborate without linguistic, geographical, or institutional barriers.

Photos are attached.

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