



Αριστείδου 1 & Ευριπίδου 2 • 10559 Αθήνα | 1 Aristidou str. & 2 Evripidou str. • 10559 Athens, Greece **T.** +30 210 9220 944 • **F.** +30 210 9220 143 • **E.** secretariat@ethaae.gr • www.ethaae.gr

Accreditation Report for the Postgraduate Study Programme of: Environment Technologies in Environmental Law

Department: Environmental Engineering
Institution: Democritus University of Thrace
Date: 25-11-2024.





Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of **Environment Technologies in Environmental Law** of the Democritus University of Thrace for the purposes of granting accreditation

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I. The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the postgraduate study programme of **Environment Technologies in Environmental Law** of the Democritus University of Thrace comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

Prof. Thomas Panagopoulos (Chair) University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal

2. **Prof. Theodore Stathopoulos**Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

3. **Prof. Konstantinos Salonitis**Cranfield University, Cranfield, UK

4. **Emeritus Prof. Ioannis Botsis** École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Lausanne, Switzerland

5. **Ms. Despoina Boulogiorgou**, PhD Candidate University of West Attica, Athens, Greece

II. Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review and assessment of the PSP Environment Technologies in Environmental Law of the Democritus University of Thrace, the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) reviewed a multitude of materials provided by the Hellenic Authority of Higher Education (HAHE), which included background information and guidance on the review and accreditation process, detailed material and data related to the programme under evaluation, such as the programme accreditation proposal and associated appendices.

The programme review was conducted via teleconference, organized and coordinated by HAHE and the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH). The schedule and agenda of the review were as stated below.

Monday, 18/11/2024:

- a) Preliminary private meeting of the EEAP. Discussion of the programme under review; assignment of writing parts of the draft accreditation report to the members of the EEAP.
- b) Welcome meeting and short overview of the PSP with the Vice Rector: Prof. Marirena Grigoriou and the Head of the Department of Environmental Engineering Prof. Spyridon Ntougias, the Director of the PSP Ass. Prof. Konstantinos Christoforidis, the PSP OMEA member: Prof. Ioannis Nikolaou, MODIP staff: Mrs. Styliani Gkavaki: Presentation of DUTH quality assurance policy, current status and future developments, as well as presentations and discussion of PSP history, academic profile, current status and future developments, strengths and areas of concern, degree compliance to the quality standards for accreditation, internal procedures, course examinations, review of students' progress, course/instructor evaluations, etc.
- c) Meeting with PSP teaching staff and administrative staff member (Ms. Thaleia Ioannidou, PSP Secretary): Discussion of facilities and learning resources.
- d) Private debriefing meeting (EEAP members only).

Tuesday, 19/11/2024:

- a) Meeting and discussion with PSP Environment Technologies in Environmental Law teaching staff members Prof. Dimitrios Komilis, Prof. Georgios Sylaios, Prof. Paraschos Melidis, Prof. Konstantinos Tsaggarakis, Ass. Prof. Stamatis Zoras, Ass. Prof. Konstantinos Elmasidis, Assis. Prof. Evangelia Kostenidou, Assis. Prof. Anastasia Tasopoulou.
- b) Meeting and discussion with eight (8) current PSP students.
- c) Meeting and discussion with eight (8) recent PSP graduates.
- d) Meeting and discussion with employers and social partners: Mr. Tasos Karagiannidis (Intergeo, Head of Project Implementation Department), Ms. Sofia Tsakiridou (Municipality of Dramas), Ms. Loukia Efthimiou (District court Magistrate), Mr. Alex Stavridis (Sunlight recycling, Production Manager), Mr. Ioannis Glarakis (Regional

Association of Solid Waste Management Agencies of Central Macedonia), Mr. Polychronis Dardampounis (Head of Financial & Sustainable Development of AKRITAS Anonymous Company), Ms. Konstantina Keridi (ESG Coordinator of AKRITAS Anonymous Company

- e) Private debriefing meeting (EEAP members only): Discussion of the outcomes and findings of the PSP virtual visit; preparation of oral report.
- f) Closure meeting with the Head of the Department of Environmental Engineering, PSP Director and Steering Committee faculty, QAU President and staff, and IEG faculty members: Informal, oral presentation of the PSP key findings and clarifications.

Wednesday 20/11/2024 to Saturday 23/11/2024:

Draft report writing. EEAP virtual meetings. Review and finalization of PSP accreditation draft report.

Throughout the review and evaluation process, the EEAP was in close communication with the University QAU staff, which were very accommodating in providing additional information requested by the EEAP. The EEAP found that the Department and the PSP administration, as well as the faculty, staff, current students, and recent graduates interviewed were eager and helpful in our discussions, providing valuable additional information.

III. Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The postgraduate study programme (PSP) Environment Technologies in Environmental Law is organized and offered by the Department of Environmental Engineering of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), located in Xanthi. The programme was initially established and started with the academic year 2013 (Official Gazette 2013: B 634 20/03/2013) and was reestablished in 2018 (Official Gazette 2245/B/15 06 2018). In 2022 became 100% distant learning (Official Gazette 2 B 7016 31/12/2022).

The PSP is part of the strategic planning of DUTH and aims at the further promotion of knowledge, the development of research and the arts, the satisfaction of the educational, research, social, cultural and development needs, in the high-level specialization of graduates in theoretical and applied areas of the Environmental Engineering area.

The purpose of this interdisciplinary program is to impart the necessary knowledge to graduates of theoretical schools, who, deal with issues related to the protection of the environment and environmental legislation and to contribute to the understanding of the interrelationships between persons of different disciplines. In addition, the postgraduate programme will contribute to:

- (1) Development and support of communication between persons of different disciplines (applied science, law) working in environment related issues for more effective implementation of legislation.
- (2) Creation of specialized scientific potential in the academic subjects of the postgraduate programme.
- (3) Promotion of scientific research in the field of the postgraduate programme, in accordance with international rules and international specifications.

The master degree offers a comparative advantage to every candidate for administrative positions in Local Government Organizations, Administrative Organizations, legal and judicial services, political planners, and in EU services or international organizations, due to the increasing interest of the international and European community in environmental legislation.

The postgraduate programme targets to the understanding of the interrelationship requirements between technosphere, ecosphere and legislation. In order to achieve the goals of the legislation, the application of technologies is required, which are the subject of technicalities referred to a wide range of natural, chemical and biochemical processes. Therefore, the familiarization with the corresponding technical terminology, the limits and specifications of the available technologies that can be applied to achieve the objectives of the legislation, taking as well into consideration the economic component are of great significance..

Teaching in the PSP is provided by faculty and teaching staff of the Department of Environmental Engineering (DUTH), as well as external specialized scientists from academic and research Institutions. Specialized technical staff and administrative staff assist the PSP.

The programme has set at forty (40) the maximum number of admitted students per academic year. In the academic year 2023-2024. Most of the current students and recent graduates the EEAP interviewed stated that the PSP was among their first choice.

The PSP consists of a minimum of three (3) academic semesters study, resulting in level 7 Diploma of Postgraduate Studies. There are no study tracks/specializations. To graduate, the student must have successfully completed a total of 90 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (60 ECTS for coursework and 30 ECTS for the required thesis). There are no elective courses offered. Lectures for the first semester (4 courses) and second semester (4 courses) are given remotely and synchronously. Attendance in lectures is mandatory and final examinations are administered remotely. The EEAP found that the number of courses offered cover advanced, as well as new topics and technologies in the PSP focus on environmental protection, risk and pollution.

The PSP prepares graduates for careers in both the private and public sector of the economy, such as water and energy industry, environmental services, consulting companies, as well as public bodies. There are strong links to the society, which is key priority of the PSP, the Department, and the Institution.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND QUALITY GOAL SETTING FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit should be in line with the quality assurance policy of the Institution and must be formulated in the form of a public statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study programmes offered by the academic unit.

Indicatively, the quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP), its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's improvement.

In particular, in order to implement this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

- a) the suitability of the structure and organisation of postgraduate study programmes
- b) the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education level 7
- c) the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP
- d) the appropriateness of the qualifications of the teaching staff for the PSP
- e) the drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality goals for the improvement of the PSP
- f) the level of demand for the graduates' qualifications in the labour market
- g) the quality of support services, such as the administrative services, the libraries and the student welfare office for the PSP
- h) the efficient utilisation of the financial resources of the PSP that may be drawn from tuition fees
- the conduct of an annual review and audit of the quality assurance system of the PSP through the cooperation of the Internal Evaluation Group (IEG) with the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)

Documentation

- Quality Assurance Policy of the PSP
- Quality goal setting of the PSP

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit is in line with the quality assurance policy of the institution. The department's vision and mission statement incorporate quality assurance aspirations. The quality policy statement of the academic unit clearly outlines its commitment

to implement a quality policy promoting the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP). Additionally, the purpose and field of study are clearly defined. Finally, the quality manual clearly indicates how it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's improvement.

The EEAP noticed the positive and constructive relationship between OMEA and the institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) in both the introductory meeting and the feedback one.

The EEAP concluded that the study programme's structure and organisation are well organised and considered. Current students interviewed by the EEAP expressed satisfaction with the programme however they were not aware of the quality assurance system and the provision for their input to be considered. Although the quality policy is communicated during the induction of the programme, and it is available online, the department does not seem to have an open discussion channel with the students on such matters.

The available academic faculty is well-experienced and qualified to support the PSP. Appropriate faculty are identified for the courses to ensure minimal disruptions for the course delivery.

A quality manual exists outlining the drafting, implementation, and review of specific annual quality goals for the improvement of the PSP.

The programme is unique within the Greek academic universe, which according to past years' recruitment figures, it is healthy and sustainable.

The programme, thus, is consistent with the quality assurance requirements of HAHE, goal setting, and the academic unit's endeavour to achieve excellence in teaching and delivery.

II. Analysis

The quality goals are set and revisited annually, as clearly stated. QAU sets KPIs in collaboration with the department's general assembly. These are communicated to all faculty members, recorded, and followed up as needed. The graduates of the PSP are well received in the labour market. This indicates that the PSP graduates are well-educated in the programme and suitable for employment in various sectors. Student responses to surveys of course quality are satisfactory. Students could also be more actively informed and engaged in the quality assurance processes of the PSP programme. The engagement with stakeholders could be further reinforced, through the establishment of a Stakeholders Advisory Board.

III. Conclusions

The PSP on Environmental Technologies in Environmental Law of the Democritus University of Thrace has a well-defined quality assurance policy and complies fully with the HAHE requirements of Principle 1. However, this PSP would benefit from engaging students and stakeholders proactively in participating in the quality assurance processes of the programme. Additionally, establishing a Stakeholders Advisory Board with participants from both local, national and international stakeholders from diverse disciplines and business domains can further enhance the programme's offering and map it to what the market needs.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Quality assurance policy and quality goal setting for the postgraduate study programmes of the institution and the academic unit	
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 1 the EEAP recommends the following:

- R1.1. Actively inform and engage the students in the quality assurance processes of the PSP programme.
- R1.2. Establish a Stakeholders Advisory Board.

PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PRORAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, THE DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES SHOULD BE ASSESSED. THE ABOVE DETAILS, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

The academic units develop their postgraduate study programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the research character, the scientific objectives, the specific subject areas, and specialisations are described at this stage.

The structure, content and organisation of courses and teaching methods should be oriented towards deepening knowledge and acquiring the corresponding skills to apply the said knowledge (e.g. course on research methodology, participation in research projects, thesis with a research component).

The expected learning outcomes must be determined based on the European and National Qualifications Framework (EQF, NQF), and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7. During the implementation of the programme, the degree of achievement of the expected learning outcomes and the feedback of the learning process must be assessed with the appropriate tools. For each learning outcome that is designed and made public, it is necessary that its evaluation criteria are also designed and made public.

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

- the Institutional strategy
- the active involvement of students
- the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market
- the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for level 7
- the option of providing work experience to students
- the linking of teaching and research
- the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the PSP by the Institution

The procedure of approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Documentation

- Senate decision for the establishment of the PSP
- PSP curriculum structure: courses, course categories, ECTS awarded, expected learning outcomes according to the EQF, internship, mobility opportunities
- Labour market data regarding the employment of graduates, international experience in a relevant scientific field
- PSP Student Guide
- Course and thesis outlines
- Teaching staff (name list including of areas of specialisation, its relation to the courses taught, employment relationship, and teaching assignment in hours as well as other teaching commitments in hours)

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The EEAP was generally satisfied with the development and delivery of this PSP on Environmental Technologies in Environmental Law of the Democritus University of Thrace. The programme is well designed and covers a broad selection of topics in the field of Environmental Technologies and Environmental Law, including but not limited to Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Ecosystems, Assessment of Environmental Risks, Crise Management in the case of floods, fires and the like, addressing not only the technical but also the economic, social and political aspects of these phenomena. Special features of this programme are that students admitted must just have an undergraduate degree in any area, e.g. Engineering, Technology, Law, Education, Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Economics etc.; there are no courses to give a general common ground to the students; nor are there any elective courses addressing specific interests of some students. Clearly, the research component of the program is minimal, consisting only of very few students opting to carry out their third semester project on a research topic rather than carrying out a bibliography on a particular area related to this program. There is minimum overlapping with the content of program courses or any similar undergraduate courses.

The percentage of students graduating from this programme (in the order of above 85%) is good and consistent with some other similar programmes. The grades of the students are rather high – typically in the order of 80 to 95%. The delivery of the programme has been successful and quite critical for its development, particularly since the year 2023, when legislation was introduced allowing the program to be offered 100% remotely, notwithstanding the general concern of the EEAP panel about the remote learning, particularly for courses involving critical experimental or field work and technical visits. Nevertheless, there was no evidence of student participation in the curriculum development, although no complaint has been expressed to the EEAP in this regard when talking with the students, graduates and stakeholders, some of whom have been recent or non-recent graduates from this PSP.

II. Analysis

The EEAP was impressed by the success of and the high demand for this program due, among other things, to the hard work, efforts and dedication of the Director and the faculty members teaching in this PSP. This success can also be attributed to the extreme flexibility of the program considering that all courses and the project are offered remotely. This may also be due to the recent natural disasters (fires, floods, etc.) that took place in Greece. These disasters contributed to people's awareness of the significance of knowledge regarding crisis management in such instants.

In addition, it is also remarkable to mention that the numerous stakeholders interviewed by the EEAP panel expressed a very positive opinion of the programme and the technical and professional skills of the programme graduates both in depth and breadth. These stakeholders have known - or worked with - the graduates or have taken the programme themselves.

Finally, the EEAP discussed the possibility of formal development of an External Advisory Board and suggested including in its membership the stakeholders of the programme output, for

instance senior government or industry officials and other experts from academia and technology to advise the PSP administrators regarding the strategic development of this programme, potential curriculum enhancements, research, technological and socioeconomic needs and the like.

III. Conclusions

The PSP on Environmental Technologies in Environmental Law of the Democritus University of Thrace is highly successful and complies fully with the HAHE requirements of Principle 2. However, this PSP could be enhanced and enjoy even higher success with the formal establishment of an External Advisory Board providing critical input on issues such as curriculum evolution — enhancement of case studies and fieldwork experience, as well as better employability.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and approval of postgraduate study	
programmes	
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 2 and to improve an already excellent programme, the EEAP recommends the following:

- R2.1. Establish and publicize an External Advisory Board made of senior government/industry officials to advise the programme administrators regarding the strategic development and enhancement of this programme.
- R2.2. Establish a formal process for the active participation of students in the curriculum development of the programme.
- R2.3. Consider the possibility to offer one or two elective courses to serve students better by reflecting their particular interests.

PRINCIPLE 3: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS. THE ASSESSMENT METHODS SHOULD REFLECT THIS APPROACH.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation, their self-evaluation, and their active participation in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes.

The student-centred learning and teaching process

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs by adopting flexible learning paths
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods aiming at improvement
- regularly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as documented especially through student surveys
- strengthens the student's sense of autonomy, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teaching staff
- promotes mutual respect in the student-teacher relationship
- applies appropriate procedures for dealing with the students' complaints
- provides counselling and guidance for the preparation of the thesis

In addition

- The academic staff are familiar with the existing examination system and methods and are supported in developing their own skills in this field.
- The assessment criteria and methods are published in advance. The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary is linked to advice on the learning process.
- Student assessment is conducted by more than one examiner, where possible.
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and conducted in accordance with the stated procedures.
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.
- The function of the academic advisor runs smoothly.

Documentation

- Sample of a fully completed questionnaire for the evaluation of the PSP by the students
- Regulations for dealing with students' complaints and appeals
- Regulation for the function of academic advisor
- Reference to the teaching modes and assessment methods

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

A student-centered approach in teaching, learning, and assessments of students is implemented in the PSP Environment Technologies in Environmental Law at DUTH. Students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on courses through questionnaires, distributed

electronically every semester. Each student is assigned an Academic Advisor to provide guidance and support throughout their tenure at the programme. Discussions with the students indicate a respectful and satisfactory interaction with the academic staff.

The teaching staff strives to provide resources for the understanding of course material, through class notes, published data in the literature and practical examples. The programme is 100% on-line also including courses with a laboratory component. The written examination consists of multiple-choice questions, developmental questions and a practical project component. Oral examination is also offered to the students.

Numerous projects are conducted, often in collaboration with other universities and industries. For the Diploma project, students choose from a list of announced projects, and subsequently, a project is assigned and executed during the last semester and before graduation. The students are also encouraged to propose a diploma project themselves.

The EEAP noted that there is no official student representation in the quality assurance processes for the programme and students must rely on direct communication with teaching staff. Student complaints, support and related services are available through the University.

There are no official student clubs (e.g. athletic, musical), and the department does not participate in ERASMUS+ program attributed due to the 100% on line course delivery and examinations.

II. Analysis

Drawing from the information provided to the EEAP, the presentations and discussions with the academic staff, students and stakeholders, several key observations can be made regarding the PSP Environment Technologies in Environmental Law at DUTH.

There are no significant concerns regarding the interaction between students and staff. Students consistently receive equitable and respectful treatment, fostering a positive educational environment. The library and IT sources are readily accessible to students, who are actively encouraged to utilize these facilities for study purposes and to seek guidance from their academic staff as needed.

The projects assigned to students seem to effectively hone their technical and soft skills. The proposed diploma projects provide students with ample opportunities to work on and specialize in topics of particular interest. Overall, students receive adequate support, ensuring they can continue their studies with confidence.

The EEAP can state that the PSP Environment Technologies in Environmental Law at DUTH is good and well appreciated by the students and stakeholders. However, there are areas that can be enhanced to ensure an academic curriculum of the highest level for students' academic and professional pursuits.

III. Conclusions

The PSP on Environment Technologies in Environmental Law at DUTH demonstrates a strong commitment to student-centered learning, with positive interactions between students and

staff and student fostering deeper engagement. Equally important, and as pointed out by all external stakeholders, the programme claims high-quality graduates with important and contemporary knowledge on environmental technologies and the current legal framework of their applications. This is a good indication of the attention and care that the programme gives to its students. The programme, however, could be improved by introducing an elective component and courses with laboratory components. The PSP will also benefit by comparing its program and activities with other similar ones abroad.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Student-centred	learning,
teaching, and assessment	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	Х
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 3 the EEAP recommends the following:

- R3.1. Officially introduce student representation in the quality assurance processes.
- R3.2. Add elective courses on the curriculum and propose on-site laboratory courses.
- R3.3. Promote group projects.

PRINCIPLE 4: STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AND CERTIFICATION.

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, THESIS DRAFTING, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

All the issues from the beginning to the end of studies should be governed by the internal regulations of the academic units. Indicatively:

- the student admission procedures and the required supporting documents
- student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression
- internship issues, if applicable, and granting of scholarships
- the procedures and terms for the drafting of assignments and the thesis
- the procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and for the assurance of the progress of students in their studies
- the terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility

All the above must be made public in the context of the Student Guide.

Documentation

- Internal regulation for the operation of the Postgraduate Study Programme
- Research Ethics Regulation
- Regulation of studies, internship, mobility, and student assignments
- Degree certificate template

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The selection process for students is detailed in the Internal Operating Regulations of the PSP. The Department, on dates determined by the Assembly, issues a call for expressions of interest, announcing open positions for the admission of graduates to the PSP.

The selection criteria for candidates include: (1) Relevance of undergraduate studies, (2) Overall average grade of the Bachelor's degree, (3) Detailed grades in undergraduate courses relevant to the PSP programme, (4) Grade and relevance to the subject of the Diploma project, (5) Relevant postgraduate studies, (6) Adequate knowledge of a foreign language, (7) Knowledge of additional foreign languages, (8) Relevant research or professional activity of the candidate relative to the PSP subject, (9) Recommendation letters, (10) Publications and authorship activity.

Every year, during the first week of October when classes begin, the Director of the PSP organizes an informative online meeting with incoming students. Professors who teach in the PSP also participate in this meeting. Its aim is to provide incoming students with information about the subjects of their studies, employment opportunities, as well as essential details

about the structure and characteristics of the study programme (credit units, ECTS, expected learning outcomes), which are detailed in the study guide.

Assessment of performance in courses can be conducted through written or oral examinations, assignments, presentations, or a combination of these methods, exclusively remotely. The terms and criteria for assessment in each course are communicated to the students at the beginning of the course by the respective instructor or course coordinator.

The rules and regulations that have been developed and included in the PSP programme guide considering admission, progression, recognition and degree award to students are adequate.

PSP does not participate in student mobility programs (European and international).

II. Analysis

There are sufficient documents that accurately describe the required procedures for participation in the PSP, the rights and obligations of the students, the assessment requirements, and the completion of their thesis work.

The EEAP recognizes the effective organization of the PSP and acknowledges the quality of the regulations that promote the academic culture and the value of knowledge.

III. Conclusions

The rules and regulations that have been developed for this PSP guiding admission, progression, recognition and degree award to students are considered adequate.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Student admission, progression, recognition of postgraduate studies and certification	
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 4, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R4.1. Promote interaction and cooperation with similar university programs abroad.

PRINCIPLE 5: TEACHING STAFF OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THEIR TEACHING STAFF, AND APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THEIR RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

The Institution should attend to the adequacy of the teaching staff of the academic unit teaching at the PSP, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the appropriate staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training- development, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences, and educational leaves-as mandated by law).

More specifically, the academic unit should set up and follow clear, transparent and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff for the PSP and offer them conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching and research; offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff; encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research; encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies; promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit; follow quality assurance processes for all staff (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training, etc.); develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.

Documentation

- Procedures and criteria for teaching staff recruitment
- Employment regulations or contracts, and obligations of the teaching staff
- Policy for staff support and development
- Individual performance of the teaching staff in scientific-research and teaching work, based on internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g. Google Scholar, Scopus, etc.)
- List of teaching staff including subject areas, employment relationship, Institution of origin,
 Department of origin

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The criteria and recruitment procedures for faculty members and Collaborating Teaching Staff (CTS) are outlined in the Greek State laws. Democritus University of Thrace, being a public university, must adhere to strict regulations, akin to all Greek public universities. The EEAP found that the teaching staff of the PSP on Environment Technologies in Environmental Law have excellent qualifications to teach the courses offered by the programme. The workload of teaching staff is high but there is extra compensation for teaching at this PSP. This workload proves to be challenging and demanding, allowing only limited time for research activities. However, research activities and publication in international journals is overall satisfactory.

It is also interesting to mention that each course in this program is taught by a team of faculty members, each specializing in the particular topic(s) of the portion of the course they teach. The course evaluations are very good and the percentage of student participation is satisfactory. The student satisfaction of the quality of teaching became clear during the meetings of the EEAP with the students and graduates of the programme.

II. Analysis

The Department and the University have recently established teaching awards on a yearly basis. Such awards are expected to boost the morale and to encourage the professorial staff to enhance their teaching skills to serve better the student interests.

Academic counselling has been activated and the maximum number of students per advisor is 3, which is extremely good. As also verified by the students and graduates the EEAP met, the faculty members teaching in the programme are very enthusiastic about teaching their subject matter.

Although this PSP is not research oriented, the teaching staff has very good research profiles with most of them having excellent research output. This should be presented in the university's web pages.

III. Conclusions

Faculty members have excellent qualifications and they are highly capable to teach the topics they are assigned to teach and their teaching is enthusiastic. Students appreciate their teachers' efforts and this makes the program very successful.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Teaching staff of postgr study programmes	raduate
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEA Panel has no specific recommendation relative to adherence to Principle 5.

PRINCIPLE 6: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMME. THEY SHOULD –ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARING AND STUDENT SUPPORT, AND – ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, NETWORKS, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources and means, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, so as to offer PSP students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as the necessary general and more specialised libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, IT and communication services, support and counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g. whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance proves -on the one hand- the quantity and quality of the available facilities and services, and -on the other hand- that students are aware of all available services.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Documentation

- Detailed description of the infrastructure and services made available by the Institution to the academic unit for the PSP, to support learning and academic activity (human resources, infrastructure, services, etc.) and the corresponding firm commitment of the Institution to financially cover these infrastructure-services from state or other resources
- Administrative support staff of the PSP (job descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities)
- Informative / promotional material given to students with reference to the available services
- Tuition utilisation plan (if applicable)

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

Although, the PSP is currently delivered 100% remotely, the EEAP noted that the Department of Environmental Engineering and the PSP have building and laboratory facilities adequate for their mission. All spaces are easily accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The human resources of the PSP consist of the Teaching and Research Staff, which includes 11 Professors, 4 Associate Professors, and 3 Assistant Professors. Additionally, there is 1 member of the Laboratory Teaching Staff, as well as at least 5 Scientific Collaborators (postdoctoral researchers or doctoral degree holders) who contribute to both the educational and research activities of the PSP and the Department of Environmental Engineering. The administrative staff of the PSP comprises 1 member (technical support), while the department has 3 administrative members. The Coordinating Committee of the PSP consists of 5 Teaching and

Research Staff members from the Department of Environmental Engineering. The personnel of the PSP is also supported by specialized personnel from the central services of the DUTH.

The main service for supporting learning and academic activities is the network of libraries within the institution, especially the Library of the Polytechnic School. Education is supported by an online learning management system. Each course has its own virtual classroom where various materials, announcements, and bibliographic resources are posted.

Through the Employment and Career Structure (DASTA), students of all levels and recent graduates are offered the opportunity to explore their future career environment and, at the same time, acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to compete more effectively in the professional field.

II. Analysis

The needs of all students are considered, including factors like their employment status, and disabilities they may have. The PSP provides all the learning resources, student support personnel and services necessary to serve the PSP. The careful coordination among all Offices and Services necessary for the successful administration of the PSP is evident.

III. Conclusions

The EEAP has concluded that the PSP has carefully considered and planned all aspects of university resources and student support necessary for the programme.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Learning resources and	student
support	
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEA Panel has no recommendation relative to adherence to Principle 6.

PRINCIPLE 7: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

INSTITUTIONS BEAR FULL RESPONISBILITY FOR COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND USING INFORMATION, AIMED AT THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES, IN AN INTEGRATED, EFFECTIVE AND EASLILY ACCESSIBLE WAY.

Institutions are expected to establish and operate an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, teaching staff, course structure and organisation, teaching and provision of services to students.

Reliable data is essential for accurate information and decision-making, as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Effective procedures for collecting and analysing information on postgraduate study programmes and other activities feed data into the internal system of quality assurance.

The information collected depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the Institution. The following are of interest:

- key performance indicators
- student population profile
- student progression, success, and drop-out rates
- student satisfaction with their programmes
- availability of learning resources and student support

A number of methods may be used to collect information. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Documentation

- Report from the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) at the level of the Institution, the department, and the PSP
- Operation of an information management system for the collection of administrative data for the implementation of the PSP (Students' Record)
- Other tools and procedures designed to collect data on the academic and administrative functions of the academic unit and the PSP

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The DUTH has established and operates an information system for the management and monitoring of data concerning students, academic staff, programme structure and organization, teaching and provision of services to students and the academic community.

The QA and OMEA analyse the answers through special digital platform, provide the results to the academic staff for action on their activities in teaching if necessary.

On-line information systems are used for the collection of data about students' satisfaction on the courses, content and examinations.

The University's electronic services are satisfactory and the data seems reliable, essential for accurate information and decision making as well as for identifying areas of smooth operation and areas for improvement. Only 5 KPI are monitored.

II. Analysis

From the presentations and discussions with the staff, it appears that there are procedures for collecting and analysing information on teaching, study programmes, project work and other activities. The data is fed into the internal system of QA, as evidenced by information that was also provided on student population profile, student progression, student satisfaction with the programme, availability of learning resources, and student support. The procedures seem to work well, but some enhancement may be necessary. For example, tracking the career paths of PSP graduates is necessary, and more KPIs should be established and be easily accessible.

A number of methods are used for collecting information, but further effort is required to ensure that both students and staff are involved in providing and analysing this information and planning follow-up activities. The student progression data is collected and becomes visible through the e-class and digital grade platforms.

The course evaluation questionnaire includes 18 questions that students are asked to answer every semester to provide information about the academic staff's teaching performance. The participation of the students is about 60% (winter semester) and about 30% (summer spring semester), which can be improved. The data from the course satisfaction surveys is systematically analysed, as evidenced by the information provided, and communicated for use by OMEA for further programme improvement.

The graduates' employability seems to be excellent although, the number of graduates is so far small.

III. Conclusions

The PSP Environment Technologies in Environmental Law at DUTH has established procedures to collect data, analyse and communicate the results to the relevant bodies. The provided data were presented in graphs, demonstrating trends and allowing direct interpretation and comparisons. The KPIs are limited. More detailed data relevant to the analysis and evaluation related to the availability and accessibility of resources (equipment, social services, IT facilities, etc.) were not easily accessible.

Panel Judgement

Principle 7: Information management	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	Х
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 7, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R7.1. Improve the information system regarding the employability and carrier path of the graduates.

R7.2. Enhance efforts to improve students' participation to the evaluation of the programn	ne	
R7.3. Establish a clear KPI system and make it easily accessible.		

PRINCIPLE 8: PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES IN A DIRECT AND READILY ACCESSIBLE WAY. THE RELEVANT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, OBJECTIVE AND CLEAR.

Information on the Institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public.

Therefore, Institutions and their academic units must provide information about their activities, including the PSP they offer, the intended learning outcomes, the degrees awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures applied, the pass rates, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Information is also provided on the employment perspectives of PSP graduates.

Documentation

- Dedicated segment on the website of the department for the promotion of the PSP
- Bilingual version of the PSP website with complete, clear and objective information
- Provision for website maintenance and updating

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The Department has a presence on the Internet via a complete website (https://env.duth.gr/en/home/ - last access 23rd November 2024), which provides comprehensive information in Greek and English about its operation and activities. The website details the postgraduate programmes offered, the study guide, the degrees awarded and the Quality Assurance Policy for the PSPs.

The Department's website is organised into sections that facilitate easy navigation for visitors. All essential information regarding the Department, including postgraduate studies, announcements, activities, research activities of faculty members, and contact information, is available in separate tabs.

The PSP has a dedicated micro-site offered in both Greek (https://lawmaster.env.duth.gr/ last access 23rd November 2024) and English (https://lawmaster.env.duth.gr/en/description/) language. The English micro-site is not as complete as the corresponding Greek one. A specific section is dedicated to the teaching faculty members and staff, providing however only their names. Such webpage should be linked back to the department's website with additional information on faculty contact details, research interests, links to their CVs, and the courses they currently teach.

The PSP has already graduated numerous students. However, there is no specific webpage in the PSP micro-site on the programme's alumni. Additionally, there is no alumni-focused webpage on the Department's webpage.

II. Analysis

The department's website is well-designed and structured, making it easy for visitors to find the information they need. The clear segmentation of information into different sections enhances user experience and ensures visitors can quickly navigate the relevant content. However, the PSP micro-site does not seem to be regularly updated. Nevertheless, the PSP micro-site provides an overview of the programme, including detailed descriptions of the courses and assessment procedures.

III. Conclusions

The PSP on Environment Technologies in Environmental Law at DUTH demonstrates a strong commitment in providing complete information concerning its PSPs via its website. The programme itself has a dedicated micro-site that is accessed by the department's website. The PSP complies fully with the HAHE requirements on Principle 8. However, such public information can be further improved by regularly updating both language versions of the programme. Additionally, the department's webpage and the PSP micro-site can be used as a basis for linking with the alumni of the department.

Panel Judgement

Principle 8: Public information concerning the postgraduate study programmes	
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 8, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

- R8.1. Regularly update the PSP micro-site
- R8.2. Establish a dedicated section for alumni on the department's website.

PRINCIPLE 9: On-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC INTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE AUDIT AND ANNUAL INTERNAL REVIEW OF THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THEM, THROUGH MONITORING AND POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS, WITH A VIEW TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The regular monitoring, review, and revision of postgraduate study programmes aim at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

The above comprise the evaluation of:

- a) the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date
- b) the changing needs of society
- c) the students' workload, progression and completion of the postgraduate studies
- d) the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students
- e) the students' expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme
- f) the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question Postgraduate study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Documentation

- Procedure for the re-evaluation, redefinition and updating of the PSP curriculum
- Procedure for mitigating weaknesses and upgrading the structure of the PSP and the learning process
- Feedback processes concerning the strategy and quality goal setting of the PSP and relevant decision-making processes (students, external stakeholders)
- Results of the annual internal evaluation of the PSP by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), and the relevant minutes

Study Programme Compliance

Findings

The self-assessment of the programme is based on procedures and continuous improvement of the level of educational offerings along with supporting the learning environment, ensuring the current character of the programme, and the strategic goals of the Institution. Factors considered for the assessment include the student's workload, students' expectations, and the assessment of the students. Also, scientific and technological developments, societal and job market needs, as well as national, European, and international policies are considered. The PSP Director collects all requests for changes to the programme.

The annual report of self-assessment is submitted to MODIP for review, and recommendations are shared with the general faculty assembly.

Decisions for programme improvements are made at the end of the academic year and are implemented by the beginning of the following academic year.

II. Analysis

Through the process of internal review and continuous improvement plan, the positive aspects of the programme are reinforced by adding new topics based on scientific and technical developments and the progress in the field. The collected information is analysed, and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. There is a strategically designed consideration for improving courses using the course evaluations by students. Programme weaknesses are addressed when problems are identified in students' evaluations. The PSP is reviewed and revised but without the direct involvement of students and other stakeholders.

III. Conclusions

The self-assessment procedure of the programme is well established, but should involve more systematic participation of the students and the external stakeholders.

Panel Judgement

Principle 9: On-going monitoring and period evaluation of postgraduate study programmes	lic internal
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

To enhance adherence to Principle 9, the EEA Panel recommends the following:

R9.1. Involve more systematic participation of the students, alumni and external stakeholders.

PRINCIPLE 10: REGULAR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES SHOULD REGULARLY UNDERGO EVALUATION BY PANELS OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HAHE, AIMING AT ACCREDITATION. THE TERM OF VALIDITY OF THE ACCREDITATION IS DETERMINED BY HAHE.

HAHE is responsible for administrating the PSP accreditation process which is realised as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by panels of independent experts. HAHE grants accreditation of programmes, based on the Reports delivered by the panels of external experts, with a specific term of validity, following to which, revision is required. The quality accreditation of the PSP acts as a means for the determination of the degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and Institutions must consistently consider the conclusions and the recommendations submitted by the panels of experts for the continuous improvement of the programme.

Documentation

 Progress report of the PSP in question, on the results from the utilisation of possible recommendations included in the External Evaluation Report of the Institution, and in the IQAS Accreditation Report, with relation to the postgraduate study programmes

Study Programme Compliance

I. Findings

The PSP on Environment Technologies and Environmental Law does not have an external evaluation. Following the instructions of HAHE to this Principle, the EEAP utilised the IQAS Accreditation Report (10th of January 2019) of the Democritus University of Thrace and the 2016 external evaluation. The Department provided a detailed response about the previous external evaluations and the PSP has taken into consideration those relevant recommendations and provided a detailed response to the measures of improvement and the sector responsible for the implementation of all recommendations for the PSP.

II. Analysis

The members of the teaching staff of the PSP are aware of the importance of the external evaluation and its contribution to the improvement of the PSP. A procedure for the utilisation of the outcomes of the external evaluation is in place and responsibilities for the implementation of the recommendations is a very good practice of the Department. The recommendations from the previous external evaluations were addressed in a very good manner and a detailed action plan was implemented.

III. Conclusions

The recommendations from the previous external evaluations were addressed.

Panel Judgement

Principle 10: Regular external evaluation of postudy programmes	ostgraduate
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEA Panel has no specific recommendation relative to adherence to Principle 10.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I. Features of Good Practice

- The faculty and staff are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and fully dedicated to their mission.
- The programme addresses an area of need in Greek society, both locally and nationally.
- Student satisfaction is high.

II. Areas of Weakness

- KPI are missing for monitoring quality assurance.
- Limited mobility of students, faculty and other scientific personnel.

III. Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

- Establish and publicize an External Advisory Board made of senior government/industry officials to advise the programme administrators regarding the strategic development and enhancement of this programme.
- Establish a formal process for the active participation of students in the curriculum development of the programme and the quality assurance processes of the PSP.
- Establish a clear KPI system and make it easily accessible.
- Consider adding elective courses on the curriculum, on-site laboratory courses and group projects.
- Promote interaction and cooperation with similar university programs abroad.
- Improve the information system regarding the employability and carrier path of the graduates and establish a dedicated section for alumni on the department's website.
 Regularly update the PSP micro-site and enhance the English version of the PSP on the website.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: 3 and 7

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: none

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: none

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	Х
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname Signature

- 1. Prof. Thomas Panagopoulos
- 2. Prof. Theodore Stathopoulos
- 3. Prof. Konstantinos Salonitis
- 4. Emeritus Prof. Ioannis Botsis
- 5. Ms. Despoina Boulogiorgou