

Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America,

Dear Guests and Colleagues,

Χριστός Ανέστη, Χρόνια Πολλά!

It is a special honor that our Institution, Ionian University, is here today, with you, in the city of New York. Today is an important day. A significant milestone in the historical and academic course of Ionian University. Today, the operation of its office in the United States of America officially begins. Here, in the premises of the always welcoming Orthodox Saint Spyridon Church.

Ionian University was founded in 1984. It is the academic descendant and successor of the first University of free Greece, the Ionian Academy, which was founded in 1824 and operated in Corfu for 40 years. Today it consists of 5 Faculties and 12 academic Departments, based in the islands of Corfu, Lefkada, Kefalonia and Zakynthos, being the only University in the region of the Ionian Islands. More than 12 thousand undergraduate students currently study at Ionian University, while more than 20 Master's Programs are offered.

Ionian University has been strategically developed on the basis of the uniqueness of the academic fields it covers. This characteristic is combined with the strong character of synergy between the different scientific fields that are treated at both teaching and research levels. This creates a strong, interdisciplinary academic environment, with a high degree of scientific interaction between all the members of the academic community, capable of responding to the complex requirements for the development, adaptation and updating of the study programs of all levels. The manageable size of our University, which ensures high levels of accessibility, strong communication and interaction among all the members of the academic community, also contributes to this direction.

In addition, the areas of education and research are compatible with the development and social dynamics of the Region of Ionian Islands. A world-wide famous part of Greece, which represents the basic physical space of Ionian University activities.

Following the demands of the modern “green and digital” era, our university has demonstrated significant progress in the context of digital transformation and sustainability, allowing the implementation and support of novel academic added-value services available to all the members of our academic community. However, strategically speaking, the continuous investment in quality, research excellence and internationalization are the three main pillars of the academic development of Ionian University.

The recent ranking of our Institution's internal quality assurance system in the highest category of full compliance is the culmination of an intensive and continuous effort to shape a quality educational university environment. Our perspective places the student at the center. Ionian University focuses on clearly defined learning objectives and outcomes and lays the foundations for a successful career path, negating any disadvantages created by the regional dimension of the University and its remote location.

In addition, as the only institution conducting basic and applied research in the Ionian Islands Region, Ionian University has also established the University Center for Research and Innovation, which currently hosts 6 research Institutes. Digital Humanities, Bioinformatics, and Natural Hazards Engineering represent a typical example of the research scope of the Center and its underlying units. They aim to support and implement interdisciplinary research primarily for promoting production, economy, and social engagement not only in the Region of Ionian Islands, but also at national and international level. Additional details for the research potential of Ionian University will be provided later by the Director of the center, Prof. Panayiotis Vlamos.

In the last three years, Ionian University has also demonstrated a strong commitment to internationalization, the third strategic development pillar I mentioned before. Among others, our recent relative attempts include a network of strong partnerships that have been developed with Universities in Europe, Africa, but also in the United States of America. Focusing particularly on the USA, we should underline that these partnerships are today considered to be best practices at national level and are presented as such and supported at the highest political level in Greece. Examples include the ongoing collaborations with Johns Hopkins University, Texas Medical Center, Ohio State and George Mason University. We are very happy to see representatives from these academic partners here today.

Additionally, we should underline another strong advantage that contributes to the strengthening of our international partnerships: the unparalleled attractiveness of the Ionian Islands and the successful organization of many international conferences and summer schools every year.

All the above efforts and continuous collaborations, combined with our active participation in the Pharos Summit initiative of the Hellenic Ministry of Education that took place at the end of 2022 and brought together academic institutions from Greece and the USA led us to the realization of the need for the systematic presence of Ionian University in the USA. Following this realization, a few months ago, we made the decision to create an administrative hub for our university here, in New York City. We welcome - and at the same time we warmly thank - the Orthodox Church of Agios Spyridon for its immediate and positive response to our request for collaboration towards this significant academic step. Now, taking advantage of the new Greek legislation, Ionian University is the first Greek University which established a branch abroad, here, in the United States of America. At the same time, US state Universities are proceeding with the establishment of corresponding academic nodes in Greece.

We must also mention that the office here, in the premises of the Orthodox church of Agios Spyridon, also has a strong symbolism. The relationship between Saint Spyridon (the patron saint of Corfu) and the city of Corfu, the physical academic nest of Ionian University.

Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Father Gregory, we deeply thank you for making us feel like home.

Εξοχότατε Αρχιεπίσκοπε Αμερικής Ελπιδοφόρε, Πάτερ Γρηγόριε, σας ευχαριστούμε από καρδιάς που μας κάνετε να νιώθουμε σε αυτόν τον χώρο σαν το σπίτι μας.

Dear Guests,

As our colleague, Vice-Rector Prof. Elias Yarenis will mention, in 2024 Ionian University will celebrate a very important anniversary. 2 hundred years from the foundation of the academic ancestor of our university, the historical Ionian Academy. At the same time, Ionian University, always within the framework of its institutional and academic role, makes continuous and systematic efforts to substantially strengthen its footprint in the prosperity and development of the Region of Ionian Islands, but also of Greece. Offering in terms of innovation, increasing the competitiveness, improving the quality of life, and highlighting new development prospects. With a variety of research, educational and networking efforts, such as the recently founded Ionian Hall of Science, an initiative of our university, which aims to connect scientists from the Ionian islands that live and work around the world, thus offering new collaboration dynamics.

Today's opening of the Ionian University office in the city of New York is a foundation and an important milestone in this organized effort. Thank you very much for your presence here today, on such an important day for Ionian University.