

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Charalambos Billinis, Rector of the University of Thessaly: “Focusing on the European Dimension of the University of Thessaly”**

**The Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas was welcomed by the University of Thessaly**

The Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas was welcomed by the Rector Charalambos Billinis, on Saturday 25/5/2024, at the University of Thessaly in Volos. In the framework of this visit, a tour to university facilities was realized and a meeting with the members of the Governing Council, Vice-Rectors, and Deans took place. Mr. Schinas was informed about the profile, the objectives, and the future prospects of the University of Thessaly, its facilities, its European funding as well as the establishment of the UTH Innovation - Technology Transfer Unit and Entrepreneurship Center. The meetings were attended by the members of the Governing Council; Prof. Ioannis Stefanidis, Efthimios Providas and Ioannis Anagnostopoulos, the Deans; Prof. Vasilios Dafopoulos and Eftihia Nathanail as well as the Head of UTH Innovation - Technology Transfer Unit and Entrepreneurship Center, Prof. Chrysi Laspidou.

After the meetings, the Rector Ch. Billinis stated the following: "It was a significative visit for the University of Thessaly, especially after the disasters that the region suffered last year, during which we focused on the European dimension of the University of Thessaly. Mr Schinas is a man who knows very well the Greek reality and at the same time the European one, so it is very useful to discuss with him actions related to the extroversion of the University of Thessaly. During our meeting I had the opportunity to discuss with him issues related to European funding, since our goal is to make the most of the opportunities that are given and to further increase the absorption rate. We also discussed issues related to mobility programmes for European students, the provision of suitable reception structures and the participation of our own students in mobility programmes. Finally, we placed great importance on how we can achieve the internationalization of the University of Thessaly based on the new legislative framework. In the foreseeable future we will work on these issues, in cooperation with the Vice-President of the Commission, whom I thank for his spirit of cooperation. Admittedly, Mr Schinas, as Commissioner, is concerned with the promotion of the European way of life, not with education. However, European civilization is based on Greek education and, therefore, the academic world, the university more specifically, is an ideal field of action for promoting the principles and values of European civilization and way of life. The reason why I was delighted upon the conclusion of our meeting with Mr. Schinas is because our consistent objective is to steadily improve the conditions, services and opportunities we provide to our students."

On his part, the Vice-President of the Commission, Mr.Schinas, thanked the Rector and his colleagues for the warm welcome and made the following statement: "We had the opportunity to discuss the European dimension of education and the place of the University of Thessaly in it, since the University is at a unique geographical location, being present in 5 cities and covering subjects that are particularly linked to European political priorities, such as health sciences, the agri-food sector and digital transition. In fact, all this is taking place in a region that is at the core of climate change, as we saw with last year's major natural disasters.

I leave feeling very optimistic for the future of the University of Thessaly. Since 2014, the University of Thessaly has received more than 80 million euros in Community funding, participates in competitive research projects, is a member of the European University Alliance and is among the 10% of European universities that have achieved this. So I believe that in the future it can play a significant role in the new pathway that we are opening for HEIs in the EU, which will lead to a common European degree."