

Greece Chairs OECD Meeting on Tourism

The OECD meeting on tourism policies for sustainable and inclusive growth, which marked the occasion of the 100th meeting of the Tourism Committee, took place on October 2-3, 2017. The event was chaired by Greek Minister of Tourism Elena Kountoura, and it was the first time that Greece assumed chairmanship of an OECD meeting on tourism. The event supported the future policy agenda of OECD members, drew attention to major advances made in the implementation of effective tourism policies and programs, and facilitated open discussions about long-term objectives for sustainable and inclusive tourism growth and development and how a forward-looking whole-of-government approach can help in achieving these. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the world economy, playing a key role in job creation, export revenue and domestic value added, and directly contributing 4.1% of GDP, 5.9% of employment and 21.3% of service exports on average in the OECD area.

Speaking on Greece's successful bid for the chairmanship, OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría pointed to Greece's role as a long-time, active member of the organization's Executive Committee and its standing as a world-renowned destination. The Greek National Tourism Organization expects a record-breaking 30 million international visitors to Greece in 2017—a growth rate of 7% on the previous year. Of these, 900,000 are expected to be from the U.S.



Papastratos Goes Smoke-Free in Aspropyrgos

Papastratos is preparing its Aspropyrgos plant to begin production of IQOS smoke-free products. With €300 million invested to convert the cigarette plant into one manufacturing tobacco sticks for the IQOS smokeless product, the move is creating 400 new jobs and retraining Greek workers in the new technology. Preparations are expected to be completed by the end of 2017, with commercial production commencing in the new year.

A wholly owned subsidiary of New York-based Philip Morris International, Papastratos is the leading Greek tobacco company and was named Most Admired Company in Greece by Fortune magazine in 2016.

4TH NTUA PROGRAM TO SUPPORT BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS

November marked the beginning of the fourth "Entrepreneurship in Action" program, ran by the Laboratory for Investments Applications (EPEFA) at the Faculty of Economics of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The program is co-sponsored by the Entrepreneurship Club and the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, with the support of a number of top Greek enterprises. The program promotes entrepreneurship and innovation by giving university graduates the right tools and know-how and empowering them to turn their ideas into reality. The six-month program comprises 115 hours of lectures and workshops by top academics and business leaders on topics that include economics, financing, investment, marketing, sales, branding, business strategy, law and tax for business, and developing a business plan. A €3000 prize will be awarded to the best business plan, as selected by an appointed committee.

More info: <http://epefa.econ.uoa.gr>



Thessaloniki Showcases Its Role as Gateway to the Balkans and Europe

On the occasion of World Maritime Day 2017, on September 27, the European Parliament Office in Greece and TIF – HELEXPO co-hosted a conference titled "Connecting Ships, Ports and People – Thessaloniki's Gate". The conference highlighted the city's role as a gateway to the Balkans, Southeast Europe and beyond, and showcased the countless opportunities that the maritime economy can generate for the city, as well as the multiple benefits the Port of Thessaloniki and regional logistics infrastructure can offer stakeholders. The organizers aim to establish World Maritime Day in Thessaloniki as an annual meeting of key Greek, European, and international players in maritime economy. The conference was held with the support of the City of Thessaloniki and the Region of Central Macedonia and was organized by The Blueprints, the non-profit group Young Entrepreneurs of Thessaloniki (YET), and MADE, the innovative platform for communications strategies. Every year, World Maritime Day, which is an official United Nations day, provides an opportunity to focus attention on the importance of shipping and other maritime activities and emphasize different aspects of the International Maritime Organization's work.



CLAIM for Clean Water

Beginning in November 2017, testing will commence on a system for breaking down microplastics in water using visible light and ultraviolet sun rays, for implementation in homes and wastewater treatment plants. Developed at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden as part of an EU H2020-funded project, the system uses specially designed membranes to speed up photocatalytic oxidation, a degradation process that can normally take several years. Nearly every beach in the world is reportedly contaminated by microplastics, which are also ingested by marine life, making their way into the food chain with direct adverse consequences to human population. The project is titled CLAIM—Cleaning Litter by Developing and Applying Innovative Methods in European Seas—and involves 19 partners from across 13 EU countries as well as Tunisia and Lebanon, all coordinated by the Hellenic Center for Marine Research (HCMR) in Greece. In addition to developing this new system, CLAIM will also deploy floating booms at river mouths in Europe to collect visible plastic waste; and ferry routes in Denmark, the Gulf of Lyon, the Ligurian Sea and Saronikos Gulf will be used to test a plastics measuring system that could be later deployed on shipping vessels. The project will be completed in 2021.

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NY GALA RAISES MORE THAN \$2 MILLION FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAMS IN GREECE

The Hellenic Initiative's 5th Annual Gala, held on September 29, 2017, at the New York Hilton, raised over \$2 million to be invested in entrepreneurial programs in Greece. Funds raised at the Gala are also used to support Greek NGOs that foster economic development opportunities and provide crisis relief for underserved communities and groups in Greece, particularly children. Over the years, The Hellenic Initiative has distributed over \$3.7 million in direct crisis relief and invested more than \$8 million in economic development. The largest Greek Diaspora fundraising event, the Gala was attended by over 900 guests from the U.S. Canada, Europe, and Australia this year.