



## Press Release

Athens, 15 February 2023

### **The first Professional Master's Degree Program in “Infrastructure and Construction Project Management” offered by the National Technical University of Athens and GEK TERNA Group is becoming reality**

With the key objective to accommodate the optimal preparation, professional competence and modern specialization of the young generation of engineers who will be invited to lead and implement infrastructure and construction projects in the future, the **National Technical University of Athens**, one of the leading higher educational institutions in Greece, and **GEK TERNA**, the largest purely Greek infrastructure, concessions, construction and clean energy corporate group, have joined forces in order to create and offer the first **Professional Interdepartmental Master's Degree Program entitled “Infrastructure and Construction Project Management”** .

The evolution of modern infrastructure projects, which require new and specialized skills in addition to technical knowledge, as well as the need to connect scientific knowledge with the labor market and the ever-increasing challenges that young engineers are asked to meet after graduation, make such a multi-level postgraduate program absolutely necessary to be established and subsequently be offered by the National Technical University of Athens. The objective of the program is ambitious as it will facilitate the country's efforts to acquire a new generation of engineers, ready to implement the infrastructure projects which are about to come.

In this context, the Master's Program facilitates the fully aligned specialization of young engineers in the administration and management of infrastructure and construction projects, via the application of new technologies, the familiarization with modern scientific concepts and via the utilization of techniques related to all stages of a construction project's life cycle. In addition, the Program aims to cover all aspects of the infrastructure and construction sector and highlight not only the technical, but also the economic, environmental, legal and social dimension of infrastructure and construction projects, starting from initial planning, and up to their implementation and operation.

The Master's Program, which will start by next autumn, is by the School of Civil Engineering, National Technical University of Athens – NTUA, in partnership with the School of Mechanical Engineering, NTUA and the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, for the interdisciplinary coverage of the subjects it includes. The Professional Interdepartmental Master's Degree Program entitled “Infrastructure and

Construction Project Management is financed entirely by GEK TERNA Group for an initial 5-year period with a total amount of half a million euros.

The Postgraduate Program will include three academic semesters, i.e. two semesters of courses, lectures, technical visits and one semester for the preparation of the postgraduate thesis. Upon successful completion of the studies, graduates will be awarded a Postgraduate Studies Diploma (PSD), equivalent to a Master of Science (MSc) degree.

At the special event held today for the presentation of the Professional Interdepartmental Master's Program "Infrastructure and Construction Project Management", the Minister of Infrastructure & Transport Mr. Kostas Karamanlis, representing the Prime Minister, stated the following: *"For the first time, the Greek State has overcome decades of inaction and has finally brought the private sector and the scientific community so close together. Furthermore it was our government that created the appropriate framework for such a partnership. Congratulations should be therefore awarded: First of all to the Minister of Education, Niki Kerameos, who succeeded in putting into practice what we have been saying for years now: the connection of the labor market with the Greek University. To the National Technical University of Athens for its initiative and for this so well structured Master's degree. It is certain that its graduates will be immediately absorbed by the labor market. Accordingly, warm congratulations are also due to GEK TERNA, as it has been the first corporation in Greece to make use of this potential provided by the new law, for the benefit of young scientists but also overall for the benefit of the Greek construction sector. I would urge other companies operating in cutting-edge industries – such as construction, energy, technology - to embrace this possibility, as the benefit is multi-faceted. Both for young people, whose degrees will gain even more value, and for businesses that will be able to employ highly qualified personnel. And of course, for the Greek University itself, which is of high standards and deserves to be strengthened and contribute towards the Greek economy even more".*

The Minister of Education and Religion Ms. Niki Kerameos noted the following: *"One of the main challenges at the Ministry of Education in the past 4 years was how to bring the education system and the labor market closer together. Professional postgraduate degrees are one of the tools we use to bridge this gap, which is found around the world, between education and market. Our other initiatives, such as industrial PhDs, have a similar aim, meaning the possibility of a PhD candidate to focus his/her research not on a theoretical issue but on a practical problem of an industry or a company. Likewise, we have established a full legislative framework for spin-off companies, start-up companies, providing for paid internships along with insurance coverage and also with academic recognition depending on the duration. All these initiatives, like the professional postgraduate degrees we are discussing today, have one goal: how to bring universities, the labor market, education and the real needs of the national economy closer together."*

Referring to the partnership between the National Technical University of Athens – NTUA and GEK TERNA Group, Mr. Andreas Boudouvis, Dean of NTUA, emphasized the importance of the first Professional Master's Program in our country, noting the following: *"The collaboration of a leading technological university with one of the most successful business groups in the country, with multiple business activities of international scope, is exemplary in nature and of great importance. NTUA as an academic body and GEK TERNA as a funding body and provider of cutting-edge professional know-how, cooperate in the context of a postgraduate*

*program for the enhancement of knowledge offered to qualified engineers. This program places an emphasis on enhancing both technical and management skills, as well as on their connection with the professional community in infrastructure and construction project management. The precursor of the Program was the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the NTUA and the National Infrastructure and Construction Industry Council (NICIC). The Program is the first of its kind in Greece within the new institutional framework for universities, it has been designed in close collaboration with experienced academics and professionals and looks forward to attracting the interest of young engineers with high performance requirements. In addition, it aspires to become a catalyst and pilot of similar actions that will lead to the utilization and retention of the scientific workforce in combination with the staffing of businesses, thus serving the broader development of the country".*

At the same time, the Deputy Dean of the National Technical University, Mr. Evangelos Sapountzakis, underlined the following: *"The major contemporary challenges for the construction and infrastructure sector, such as the economic uncertainty, the higher construction costs, declining profit margins, the growth rate of technology, climate change and environmental challenges, among others, demand strictly rational decision-making (based on the principle "value for money") and demonstrate or even validate the necessity of the Professional Interdepartmental Master's Program entitled "Infrastructure and Construction Project Management". The targeted specialized education of young engineers in the field of administration and management of projects via application of new technologies, the familiarization with modern scientific concepts and via the utilization of techniques related to all stages of a construction project's life cycle, will provide the graduates of the Program with the critical know-how and the self-confidence to become the future leaders of the infrastructure and construction industry. Graduates will be able to have a clear professional orientation and also aim at further developing and combining their technical and administrative skills. The country's leading technological university and the largest Greek infrastructure and construction group guarantee via the above program the achievement of this ambitious goal."*

Furthermore, the President of the Hellenic Construction Industry Council (HCIC), Mr. Sergios Lambropoulos, spoke about the possibilities of the new legislative framework and the role of HCIC in the successful collaboration between the higher education institutions and the large corporate groups which are active in the field of industry and infrastructure. In this context, Mr. Lambropoulos stated the following: *"In order to achieve its goals, the Master's Program must a) attract the interest of young engineers with the necessary qualifications that will be able to meet the program's high requirements, b) accommodate the participation of experienced industry executives (engineers, lawyers, economists) in order to systematically analyze to postgraduate students cases of successful application of scientific knowledge but also of project failures. This should be on top of the high level of modern scientific knowledge provided by the NTUA, and c) request from the entire infrastructure and construction industry to embrace this effort from the very beginning and recruit the graduates of the Program".* Mr. Lambropoulos also emphasized that *"the education of Greek engineers in project management must be strengthened in two areas: a) via an interdepartmental course in Project Management that will be created in undergraduate engineering studies i.e. on the level of each university. By this manner students from each Department of Engineering will be able to select the above project*

*management course, and b) via an option provided to the public sector engineers, along with an obligation, that will allow them to deepen their scientific knowledge and improve their skills".*

The Chairman and CEO of GEK TERNA Group, Mr. George Peristeris, underlined the complexity of modern infrastructure projects and the industry's need to recruit its staff from a new generation of engineers with multi-level knowledge and training: "For many years now at GEK TERNA Group we have summarized the philosophy of our business activity in the following two axes: Investing in Greece – Investing in the Future. Today, more than any other time in the past, we feel that our corporate principle has finally found its most actual dimension. This is the way we view it: we do not make a donation to the National Technical University of Athens; instead we are making an investment in the future of our industry and our country. We invest in the most realistic depiction of our future, i.e. the younger generation, our children. Truly believing in higher education in Greece and its ability to shape the country's future generation of scientists, provided that the right means and tools are in place, we decided to join forces. Through this synergy with the National Technical University of Athens, we are launching a whole educational program targeting the support and development of a new generation of engineers. We wish to offer knowledge, resources and tools to this generation so it can shape the future, and not just manage it or cope with it. Through our plan of actions and initiatives we identify this new generation as a "Multi-skilled Generation".

Finally, from the position of a young engineer, Ms. Eugenia Eleftheriou, an honors graduate from the National Technical University of Athens, Greece, spoke about the challenges that the new generation of scientists have encountered in the construction world and shared her experiences as follows: *"This particular postgraduate program is especially important for young engineers. It provides them with the necessary qualification to deal with the ever-increasing demands of the construction industry. More specifically, based on my recent experience abroad, I realized that Greek young engineers have critical thinking and deep knowledge in the field of studying a project. But they lag behind when it comes to practical knowledge. University education in Greece is not directly linked to the labor market. A new engineer, who starts a career by being placed in a construction site, can easily realize this gap. A good master's degree must offer, in addition to an in-depth scientific knowledge, the skills to apply this knowledge in the professional arena. In addition, it is very important that the educational system offers the well performing students the opportunity to attend a postgraduate program for free. Given the high tuition fees and cost of living, it is not easy for everyone to invest in graduate studies. In my opinion, Greece needs to possess professional graduate study programs of high-quality standards such as this Professional Interdepartmental Master's Program. The economy on the other hand needs projects with a high impact, as well as growth and investments. The construction industry is still facing some of the issues that arose during the ten-year crisis, which created a gap in labor force and experienced engineers, but at the present time the industry can restart. The issue of the labor force requires a central policy applied by the state, but the need for well-trained engineers can be met by actions such as Professional Interdepartmental Master's Program "Infrastructure and Construction Project Management"*".

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