

Dear Professors Evaristo Ualla, Alice Freia, Arlete Ferrao, Nardi Sousa, Elga Carvahlo, Paulo Pedroso and your teams, I am happy to welcome you today at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. It is of particular importance that higher education institutions in our two continents, collaborate on such an important issue as is humanitarian action in relation to displacements and climate change –both very topical in the current global scene. I have been informed that colleagues from the Pedagogical University, University of Pungue and University of Rovuma in Mozambique, from the University of Cape Verde and University of Santiago in Cape Verde have been working productively, for the past year and a half, with their counterparts from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Lisbon University Institute (ISCTE) coordinating this European Erasmus+ project.

Our world is becoming increasingly interconnected and we have a lot to learn from each other and come up with integrative solutions that serve our institutions and society at large. The challenge in your case is to build capacity with regard to curriculum in the substantive aspects of humanitarian action, build research capacity of educators and students, enhance the pedagogical strategies of educators and strengthen community outreach and engagement. Our School of Education has a lot of experience in this area.

ISCTE has ties with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in programs of student and staff exchange and in conducting collaborative research projects. I am very pleased that we will also be forging relations with your Universities in Mozambique and Cape Verde.

I know that your first workshop took place in Lisbon and that there are pending summer schools in both Mozambique and Cape Verde. Athens is your second stop. Allow me thus to say a few things about the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. It was founded in 1837 and it is the oldest higher education institution of the Modern Greek State and it is the most well-established university in the country. It has played a decisive role in the production of knowledge and culture in the Modern Greek history. It is composed of nine schools (School of Natural Sciences, Philosophy, Medicine, Law, Theology, Economics and Political Sciences, Education, Physical Education and Sport Science, and Agriculture), and 41 Departments where study over 70,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Our University has adopted an extrovert policy and has been actively involved in contributing to the development of education in Europe as well as internationally, participating in international networks and cooperating with other academic institutions. Thus your project that builds bridges between Europe and Africa promotes further international collaboration and mobility.

Owing its size, besides the University campus, many of its buildings are dispersed into town. You are currently in the building housing the rectorate which was built in 1841 and was the second home of the newly founded university. You will be taking a tour of this heritage building in a short while.

Once more welcome and I wish you productive ten days. Have a very good time at our University and enjoy Athens that is particularly beautiful at this time of year.