

## Press Release

### Professor Christina Papageorgopoulou wins the prestigious ERC Consolidator Grant

#### Democritus University of Thrace has secured the prestigious ERC Consolidator Grant for groundbreaking research in the Study of the Human Past!

Democritus University of Thrace is delighted to announce that Christina Papageorgopoulou, a leading researcher in Biological Anthropology, has been awarded a highly competitive European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant. This prestigious grant, valued at 2 million euros will support cutting-edge research over the next five years.



The Consolidator Grant is awarded by the **European Research Council (ERC)**, an institution dedicated to promoting **scientific excellence** in Europe. It provides substantial funding to outstanding researchers with a proven track record of excellence, enabling them to consolidate their research teams and pursue ambitious projects that push the boundaries of knowledge.

**Out of 2,130 candidates, the European Research Council (ERC) has selected 308 researchers for this year's Consolidator Grants. Among them are two Greeks who will conduct their research in academic institutions in Greece. Worth in total €627 million, the grants are part of the EU's [Horizon Europe](#) programme.**

President of the European Research Council Prof. **Maria Leptin** said: *“The new Consolidator Grant winners represent some of the best of European research. It is disappointing that we cannot support every deserving project simply due to budget constraints; around 100 proposals identified as excellent in our rigorous evaluation will be left unfunded. Can Europe afford to let such talent go unrealised? We need to collectively advocate for increased investment in research and innovation. Our shared goal must be to ensure that no brilliant idea goes unfunded in Europe, and no promising career is left unfulfilled.”*

**Iliana Ivanova**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *“I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the brilliant researchers who have been selected for ERC Consolidator Grants. I'm especially thrilled to note the significant*

*increase in the representation of women among the winners for the third consecutive year in this prestigious grant competition. This positive trend not only reflects the outstanding contributions of women researchers but also highlights the strides we are making towards a more inclusive and diverse scientific community."*

The Rector of DUTH **Prof. Dr. Fotis Maris** noted: *"Congratulations to Prof. Papageorgopoulou, her success is a unique distinction. This distinction radiates throughout our University as it is the first of this magnitude in its history. At the same time, it brings all researchers of DUTH closer to excellence and demonstrates the potential we have as an academic institution. It is important to note that it was awarded to the field of the humanities, securing significant funds for innovative, high-level research"*.

**Prof. Christina Papageorgopoulou**, who was funded in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities for the study of the human past (category SH6-The study of the human past), expressed her enthusiasm, stating: *'I am honoured to receive ERC funding, which will provide invaluable support for our research. This funding recognises the importance and quality of the scientific research carried out at the Democritus University, which meets the ERC's requirements and commitment to promoting innovative research in Europe. "*

The research project **"CityLife: A bioarchaeological study of 1,800 years of resilience and adaptation to urbanity"** focuses on urbanisation, one of the most important historical transitions in human history. Through a multidisciplinary approach, Christina Papageorgopoulou and her team together with excellent scholars from Europe and the USA will explore how humans tried to adapt to and shape an urban environment across time. The core of the research project is the study of life in antiquity, mainly in Thessaloniki, one of the most important cities in the Mediterranean region, with a continuous urban signature from its foundation until today. By focusing on this, the CityLife project aims to go beyond the traditional boundaries of research.

Today almost 60% of the world's population lives in urban environments, but we do not know in depth the mechanisms and behaviours that people have developed to successfully adapt to life in cities. The historic urban centres are tangible reflections of the transformation towards urbanity. They include the social and technological steps humanity has taken in this direction and the persistent challenges it has faced, as urban environments have been places where poverty, social inequality and disease find fertile ground.

The CityLife research team will study the phenomenon of urbanization through an anthropocentric lens, analyzing bioarchaeological, genetic, paleodietary, demographic, historical and archaeological data. **The main objective of the project is to investigate the interaction of social, biological, environmental and historical processes that led to the universal prevalence of urban living.** Through an integrated interdisciplinary approach, the CityLife project delves into the biological and social impact of pandemics, the economy, religious influences and the social organisation of urban societies. The data produced will not only enrich our understanding of the past but will also provide valuable insights for addressing the challenges of urban life in the present and the future.

Christina Papageorgopoulou is a Professor at the Department of History and Ethnology and Director of the Laboratory of Physical Anthropology at the Democritus University of Thrace. She completed her PhD studies at the University of Basel (Switzerland) and holds a Master's degree from the University of Florence (Italy). In the past, she worked at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, the University of Basel and the University of Zurich. Today she directs an interdisciplinary team of researchers at the Democritus University of Thrace, active in the fields of palaeodiet, palaeodemography, palaeogenetics, 3D digitisation and imaging and new computational tools. Christina Papageorgopoulou has published scientific articles in leading international journals (e. g. CELL, PNAS) and has coordinated interdisciplinary research projects winning competitive funding (e. g. BIOMUSE (<https://biomuse.eu/> ECHOES <https://echoes.he.duth.gr/>). Her laboratory is a leading research facility distinguished for scientific excellence and significant contributions that have shaped our knowledge of human life in the past (<https://anthropologylab.classic.duth.gr/>).

To date, the European Research Council has awarded funding to 15,019 proposals in all categories of Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grants, while Greece has been awarded 92.

Results of ERC Consolidator Grants 2023 are published [here](#)

Komotini, 23 November 2023