



Law 5094/2024 introducing higher education reforms

On 8 March 2024, the Hellenic Parliament enacted Law 5094/2024, signaling a significant shift in Greece's higher education landscape. Beyond structural changes to public universities, the new legislation introduces for the first time a framework for non-state universities, aiming to enhance Greece's status as a regional education hub offering expanded opportunities for Greek students and academics while attracting international talent and investment in education, technology, and research. The implications of this pivotal development are briefly set out below.

What's new: introducing non-State universities in the Greek education market

Starting from academic year 2025-2026, the Law allows for the establishment, organisation, and operation of University-Legal Entities (ULEs) granting higher education degrees. ULEs seeking licensing must be affiliated with a higher education institution (the "Parent Institution") that:

- operates within the EU, EEA, Switzerland, or a GATS member country;
- offers programs across all three higher education cycles, among which at

least one program of first cycle of higher education; and

- is listed in the national register of recognised foreign higher education institutes by the Hellenic National Academic Recognition and Information Center (HNARIC or ΔΟΑΤΑΠ in Greek).

Control of the Parent Institution over the ULE must be established through either:

- a. an absolute majority share in the ULE's capital and management bodies; or
- b. an education agreement ensuring full control over all aspects of the ULE's operation, including degree awarding.

As per the Law, University-Legal Entities (ULEs) are:

- Non-profit entities exclusively dedicated to providing higher education services.
- Comprising either three faculties, each offering at least one undergraduate program, or one faculty with at least one program at any level if the parent institution ranks in the top 20 of international university rankings.
- Required to obtain licensing for establishment and operation, submitting extensive documentation and a guarantee of €2,000,000 per application, plus €500,000 for each additional faculty beyond the standard minimum of three. Application review incurs a fee of €600,000. The guarantee and fee amounts are reduced by 50% for ULEs envisaging establishment outside the Attica Region, the Regional Unit of the Attica (Saronic) Islands and the Regional Unit of Thessaloniki.
- Authorised by the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports (MoE) to confer degrees exempt from academic recognition requirements, provided they are listed in the National Registry of Foreign Recognised Academic Title Types maintained by the HNARIC.
- Supervised by the MoE, with oversight assistance from the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education.
- Subject to potential revocation of their establishment and operation licences or other administrative sanctions for violations of applicable laws.
- Decisions by the MoE on licensing and licence revocation, as well as sanctions are appealable to the Supreme Administrative Court (Council of State) and the Administrative Court of First Instance, respectively.

What's next?

Looking ahead, the recent reforms in higher education are set to reshape the higher education landscape in Greece. Despite ongoing controversy about the Law's compliance with constitutional norms, the potential for market accessibility is reportedly already attracting attention from various stakeholders. It will be interesting to see not only how the Council of State responds to potential challenges, but also how political pressure from an apparently ever widening pool of potential newcomers will shape the framework in the months and years to come. Stay tuned for updates from a higher education market on the brink of substantial reform!

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