



## Press Release

### Professor Phoebe Koundouri wins the prestigious ERC Synergy Grant

**Greece secures the competitive Synergy Grant of the European Research Council (ERC). This is the first ERC Grant won by an Economics Researcher in a Greek University!**

The Athens University of Economics and Business has secured the highly competitive ERC Synergy Grant program for the research project "Water-Futures", worth a total of 10 million euros, with main researcher of the project Professor Phoebe Koundouri, School of Economics, Director of Resees, Research laboratory on Socio-Economic and Environmental Sustainability.



The Athens University of Economics and Business is pleased to announce winning the highly competitive ERC Synergy Grant for the "Water-Futures" research project. **This ERC Synergy Grant and the first ERC Grant in Greece including research in Economics.** The research grant for the "Water-Futures" proposal from the European Union, amounts to a total of 10 million euros.

**The ERC's mission is to encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields. The sole criterion for selection is scientific excellence.** The aim here is to recognize the best ideas and confer status and visibility on the best brains in Europe, while also attracting talent from abroad.

**ERC grants are one among the most prestigious research grants in the world. ERC grantees have received seven Nobel Prizes.**

In the **ERC Synergy 2020** program, out of the 440 proposals submitted, 34 research teams were selected to be funded for an equal number of research projects, which aim to address important problems that concern the world and that extend to many scientific disciplines.

On this occasion, **Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner** for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *"The selected projects are excellent examples of bold*

*scientific thinking. Many of these endeavours will tackle pressing issues in specific areas such as health, the environment and climate. Others will push the frontiers of knowledge, creating new opportunities in ways that we cannot fully predict today. I'm proud that the EU, while taking firm action to tackle the immediate challenges posed by the coronavirus crisis, is also continuing to invest in our long-term future by supporting these exceptional researchers. By taking the long view, we are strengthening Europe's position as a global research powerhouse."*

**The President of the ERC, Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon**, commented: *"The ERC Scientific Council devised the Synergy Grants to offer a space where ambitious researchers could join forces to tackle multifaceted scientific challenges. Each of the new teams is aiming at nothing less than an important breakthrough. I am especially glad to see that so many European laureates look further afield to involve top scientists and scholars working in North and South America, Australia and Japan. Not only can this enrich ERC-funded projects, but it also gives a new dimension to global research cooperation involving European teams."*

The subsidized project, entitled "**Smart Water Futures: Designing the Next Generation of Urban Drinking Water Systems**" and the acronym "**Water-Futures**" is a collaboration between four internationally recognized researchers and their teams: **Professor Marios Polykarpou** of the University of Cyprus, who is also the Project Coordinator, **Professor Barbara Hammer** of Bielefeld University in Germany, **Professor Phoebe Koundouri** of the Athens University of Economics and Business in Greece, and **Professor Dragan Savić** of the KWR Water Research Institute in the Netherlands.

Prof. **Phoebe Koundouri** stated on the occasion of this important distinction: *"The ERC grant is one of the most prestigious scientific distinctions for a researcher and his/her academic institution. I am proud that we were able to bring such a distinction to Greece. Our ambition is to produce interdisciplinary research with a strong scientific impact and social footprint."*



Professor Dr. Phoebe Koundouri holds a PhD and MPhil in Economics and Econometrics from the University of Cambridge (UK). She is Professor in Economic Theory and Policy,

School of Economics, Athens University of Economics and Business (Greece) and she is the elected President of the European Association of Environmental and Natural Resource Economists [EAERE](#) with more than 1200 scientific member institutions from more than 75 different countries). Prof. Koundouri is listed in the most-cited women economists in the world, with 15 published books and more than 250 published scientific papers <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Blczbp4AAAAJ&hl=en>

Prof. Phoebe Koundouri is also the Founder and Scientific Director of the Research Laboratory on Socio-Economic and Environmental Sustainability ([ReSEES](#)) at the Athens University of Economics and Business and an affiliated Professor at the ATHENA Research and Innovation Center <https://www.athena-innovation.gr/en/home> where she directs [EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece](#) of the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#). She is also the co-chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Network Greece [UN SDSN Greece](#), chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the International Centre for Research on the Environment and the Economy ([ICRE8](#)) and chair of the scientific advisory board of the [European Forest Institute](#). Recently she has founded the think tank “European Cluster on Sustainability Transition”.

In the past, Professor Koundouri has held academic positions at the University of Cambridge, University College London, the University of Reading and the London School of Economics. She acts as an advisor to the European Commission, World Bank, EIB, EBRD, OECD, UN, NATO, WHO, numerous national and international foundations and organizations, as well as national governments in all five continents. Notably she is currently member of the drafting Prime-Ministerial Committee for 10-year development and recovery plan for Greece, as well as in the Climate Change Committee of the Greek Ministry of Environment and Energy. She holds a global leadership role in the UN SDSN for European Green Deal (EGD) implementation, Sustainable Shipping and Ports, 4-seas Blue Growth Initiative and is leading (together with Prof. Jeff Sachs) the Senior Working Group on Transformation Pathways for the implementation of EGD. She is also a member of the CEPR (Center for European and Policy Research) Network (RPN) on Climate Change <https://cepr.org/content/cepr-rpn-climate-change-researchers> and a Commissioner of the New Lancet Commission on COVID-19 <https://covid19commission.org/commissioners>.

Since 1997, she has coordinated more than 80 interdisciplinary research and deep demonstration projects and has attracted significant competitive research funding, while she has supervised about 30 PhD students. She co-coordinates the [EIT Climate KIC Accelerator](#) and is an important mobilizer of the European Innovation Acceleration Ecosystem. Professor Koundouri and her large interdisciplinary team (more than hundred researchers) have produced research and policy results that have contributed to shaping European policies. Over the last two decades, Professor Koundouri has given keynote and public lectures all over the world and received various prizes for academic excellence.

### **Smart Water Futures: Designing the Next Generation of Urban Drinking Water Systems (Water-Futures)**

United Nations predicts that by 2050, 70% of the Earth's population will be living in cities because of ongoing astyphilia. This will be a very big challenge and will put a significant strain

on water supply systems and water supply organizations. Traditionally, changes and improvements in the infrastructure of water distribution networks have been made mainly when cities had to deal with a crisis or some urgent needs and were rarely the result of proper planning. Urban water supply designers could not predict in the long run those uncertain and dubious factors that would affect urban development and their actual water supply needs.

***The key question, according to the experienced and interdisciplinary team of scientists in the project, is, "how can the provision of high quality water supply services be achieved in the future, given the climatic, economic and population pressures, as well as the deep uncertainty that characterizes them?" »***

The **Water-Futures** project aims to develop a theoretical framework for decision-making and promotion of urban water supply systems. The main goal is to make these systems socially equitable, cost-effective and environmentally sound, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. These next-generation water systems will use new technologies to integrate real-time monitoring and control, with long-term robustness and flexibility.

The results of the "Water-Futures" project will provide the theoretical and practical basis to enable various stakeholders, policy makers and administrators of these systems to make socially acceptable and fair decisions, which will balance short-term decisions taken algorithmically in real time, together with long-term decisions concerning the transition and planning of new infrastructure for the evolution of urban water distribution systems. In addition, the new scientific results will be applied to three exemplary studies presenting different types of systems: a mature and relatively stable system in the Netherlands, a mature and rapidly growing system in Cyprus and a relatively recent supply system in Mexico with high growth and specific challenges, which contain limited resources, intermittent supply and significant water loss due to leaks.

**Relative Press Releases:**

**ERC ANNOUNCES 34 NEW SYNERGY GRANTS:** <https://erc.europa.eu/news/erc-2020-synergy-grants-results>

**Watch the video - Highlighted research projects of the ERC 2020 Synergy Grant results**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=51&v=4N88GsmvI8&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=51&v=4N88GsmvI8&feature=emb_title)

**ERC Synergy Grant project examples 2020:** <https://erc.europa.eu/news-events/magazine/erc-2020-synergy-grants-examples>

**More Information :** [ERC website](#)

**Press release of the KWR Water Research Institute:**

<https://www.kwrwater.nl/en/actueel/erc-synergy-grant-smart-water-futures>

Press release University of Cyprus:

[http://www.ucy.ac.cy/pr/documents/Press Releases/2020/NOVEMBER 2020/ERCPOLYC ARPOU 05.11.2020.pdf](http://www.ucy.ac.cy/pr/documents/Press_Releases/2020/NOVEMBER_2020/ERCPOLYC_ARPOU_05.11.2020.pdf)

Eurekalert news:

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2020-11/bu-efw110520.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-11/bu-efw110520.php)

ATHENA RC press release: [https://www.athenarc.gr/el/news/stin-kathigitria-toy-opa-foivi-koyntoyri-mia-apo-tis-34-megales-nees-hrimatodotiseis-toy-erc?fbclid=IwAR0tX1a11ZtDpe0\\_bMn0RBuD434f3byNiiXG28OFNi3BXcvZpvA1r5WckAs](https://www.athenarc.gr/el/news/stin-kathigitria-toy-opa-foivi-koyntoyri-mia-apo-tis-34-megales-nees-hrimatodotiseis-toy-erc?fbclid=IwAR0tX1a11ZtDpe0_bMn0RBuD434f3byNiiXG28OFNi3BXcvZpvA1r5WckAs)

Website Prof. Phoebe Koundouri: [https://www.aueb.gr/en/faculty\\_page/koundouri-phoebe](https://www.aueb.gr/en/faculty_page/koundouri-phoebe)

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**PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE**

**ATHENS UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**

76, Patission Street, Athens, 104 34, Greece

Tel. : +30 210 8203216, +30 210 8203218

Fax : +30 210 8214081

E-mail : [pr-office@aeub.gr](mailto:pr-office@aeub.gr)

Website: <http://www2.aueb.gr/users/praeub/>