

## PRESS RELEASE

# Pfizer and National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF): Powerful Alliance towards “Advancing Science”

23.10.2019

The official commencement of the '**Advancing Science**' program was announced today, Wednesday, October 23, by **Pfizer and the National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF)** at a press conference held at the Amphitheater of the NHRF.



The “**Advancing Science**” program aims at supporting research and young scientists in the field of Health and reversing brain drain, and it is based on two pillars: a) the establishment of **Pfizer Fellowships** for the **financial support of the post graduate students of the “Bio-entrepreneurship” Postgraduate Program** and (b) the establishment of **Pfizer fellowships** for the implementation of health research. This program is a result of the cooperation and MoU agreement between Pfizer and the NHRF that started on September 9, 2018.

In particular:

### ***a) Pfizer Fellowships for the financial support of postgraduate students of the post graduate program “Bio-entrepreneurship”***

This is the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program “Bio-entrepreneurship” which is being developed in collaboration with the Institute of Chemical Biology (ICB) of the **National**

**Hellenic Research Foundation** and the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology of the **University of Thessaly**.

The program aims at linking academic education with entrepreneurship and preparing future executives for a career both in Greek and foreign biotechnology enterprises. This interconnection is achieved through skills development in business management along with specific knowledge in producing innovative products and value-added services.

The Pfizer Fellowship will be awarded to three (3) students per year for the next 3 years (2019 -2021) and will cover the full tuition of the Program (4,500 €).

Eligible applicants for the Pfizer fellowship are the candidates who have already been selected for attending the Postgraduate Program "Bio-entrepreneurship" according to the selection criteria defined in the call for applications. The call for applications is announced in spring of each calendar year and closes in the last ten days of September. The Candidate Evaluation Committee consists of individual members of the Special Interinstitutional Committee of the post graduate program "Bio-entrepreneurship" (7-member-committee)

### ***B) Pfizer Fellowships for Health Research***

The second pillar of the Pfizer-NHRF collaboration is to enhance research and promote health sciences through the establishment of a Pfizer Fellowship to implement health research.

Eligible candidates to apply for the Pfizer Fellowship are all PhD candidates or postdoctoral researchers who are interested in collaborating with the NHRF and have chosen to engage in the wider health sector, in relevance to the NHRF research activities and meet the criteria determined by the NHRF call for applications.

The Pfizer Fellowship will be awarded to two (2) doctoral or postdoctoral researchers, annually for the next 3 years (2019-2021). The amount of each fellowship will cover the employment of the PhD candidate in the NHRF. The duration of the fellowship is a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years.

The Candidate Evaluation Committee consists of 3 members and more specifically, the individual members holding the following positions within the NHRF:

- The Director of NHRF
- The Director of the Institute of Chemical Biology (ICB)
- The President of the Committee of the Institute of Chemical Biology (ICB) or the Academic Tutor of any other potential research team/structure implementing research in the health sector.

The selection criteria for both Pfizer Fellowships (financial support for postgraduate students in the "Bio-entrepreneurship" MSc and PhD or PostDoctoral candidates), are based on academic excellence, contribution to research activity and social sensitivity. In particular, the criteria are: Degree = 10 credits, motivation letter = 25 credits, selection committee interview = 25 credits, and economic and social criteria as set out in Government Gazette issue B/10 May 2018 Nr. 1625 on the conditions and selection procedures for the award of undergraduate scholarships by the State Scholarship Foundation (IKY).

Finally, the student and academic community, as well as anyone interested, are informed through press releases in the media, postings on the NHRF website and on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).

The total amount of the above Pfizer Fellowships (post graduate program "Bio-entrepreneurship" and Pfizer Fellowship) amounts to EUR 125,000.

**Deputy Minister of Research & Technology** (Corinthian MP), **Dr. Christos Dimas**, who participated in the press conference, in his short address, said inter alia:

*"Investing in Research and Innovation is a main strategic priority for a new socially, economically and environmentally sustainable new development model, based on knowledge and utilization through the production of high added-value products and services. For us, the goal is for Greece to become a Research and Innovation Hub in the coming years. We, therefore, support any synergy between private and public entities that move in this direction and help to reverse brain drain. Our country is in need of initiatives that will bring a new, productive model, and on our part we will contribute to this by any possible means."*



On the occasion of the beginning of the cooperation, **Dr. Vassilis Gregoriou, Director and Chairman of the Board of the NHRF**, said:

*"The National Research Foundation is one of the largest research centers in the country and during more than 60 years of operation, has contributed a lot in Greek research. Today, is an important day for the National Hellenic Research Foundation. Today, we are able to announce the launch of a partnership we have been planning with Pfizer for about one year. At this point, I would like to thank Pfizer for being a significant helper for a better and healthier future for all. People in Pfizer believe, like we do, that by linking health research with entrepreneurship we can achieve many more than the obvious goals: building the right mindsets for young researchers' career prospects, bringing research results closer to society and providing an incentive to reverse brain drain. I think that this kind of synergies and partnerships can make us all a little more optimistic about the future of our society and our country in general."*



For his part, the **President and Managing Director of Pfizer Hellas, Mr. Zacharias Ragousis**, proceeded with the following statement:

*"For us in Pfizer, science research and promotion are the means to achieving our goal: to innovate, to change the lives of patients. This aims at the research and scientific community, but also at society as a whole. The program of financial support, which we are pleased to announce today, gives talented people the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, stay in our country, complete their studies and research, as well as provide the know-how in the development of innovation in Greece. In NHRF, we have found a reliable ally with the same sensitivities and targeting. We are happy to cooperate with them because it is a guarantee of quality research management and reliability."*

The **Director of the Institute of Chemical Biology, Dr. Alexandros Pintzas** noted, inter alia:

*"The Institute of Chemical Biology (ICB) of NHRF operates as an innovation pole in Chemical Biology on the basis of the interdisciplinary-innovation-excellence triangle. ICB aspires to play a cutting-edge role, unique at national -yet important and international-level, in research on the discovery and development of medicine and biotechnological products. In Greece, there is no institute with similar capabilities that combines cutting-edge biological research and organic and pharmaceutical chemistry for a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to disease prevention and treatment. The ICB/NHRF individual*

*development goals include: working closely with pharmaceutical companies and enhancing the Institute's activities in the field of education/training. In this context, ICB/NHRF researchers created the groundbreaking Postgraduate Program "Bio-entrepreneurship" with corresponding colleagues from the Department of Biochemistry & Biotechnology of the University of Thessaly. Today's launch of the partnership between us and Pfizer, a significant pharmaceutical company, marks a welcome development and investment for the future."*

The **Deputy Director of the "Bio-entrepreneurship" Program, Dr. Zografos Spyros**, underlined:

*"Bio-entrepreneurship is an innovative postgraduate program, with the collaboration of an academic and a research institution, namely the University of Thessaly and the National Hellenic Research Foundation. It is the first and unique postgraduate program in Greece, which aims to enhance the skills of the bio-scientist graduates of the Greek higher education system, by adapting them to the modern market needs. The post-graduate program seeks to establish a strong link between higher education and the skills required in biotech enterprises. Undergraduate students get in touch with true entrepreneurship and understand the operation of business and the active role of executives in achieving innovation and international competitiveness. Counting just a few years since its establishment, **the career of Alumni is the highest recognition of the Program. 54% of our graduates work in private biotechnology companies, while 20% work in academic research programs. The Pfizer Fellowships are a vote of confidence in our vision to contribute to the need of staffing existing and new knowledge-intensive businesses in areas where the country has a comparative advantage.**"*



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**Relative information****National Hellenic Research Foundation**

The **National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF)** is one of the largest research centers in the country. It is a private, non-profit legal entity founded in 1958 and overseen by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) of the Ministry of Development and Investment. The NHRF is an institution for the modernization and development of Greek science and society, with a pioneering research project that ensures scientific progress, encourages extroversion and promotes the country's international presence. A special feature of the Foundation is the co-existence of Humanities and Science, which is an important asset in securing an interdisciplinary approach in a variety of research fields putting the NHRF at the level of similar internationally renowned overseas agencies such as the CNRS.

Today, the NHRF is comprised of the following Research Institutes:

- Institute of Historical Research (IHR / NHRF)
- Institute of Chemical Biology (ICB / NHRF)
- Institute of Theoretical and Physical Chemistry (TPCI / NHRF)

Health issues are among the key research priorities of the ICB/NHRF, which contributes decisively to the development of research on the treatment of degenerative diseases with emphasis on cancer and aging, as well as the development of new drugs and individual therapies against them. At the same time, the TPCI/ is developing new knowledge in the broader field of materials and photonics, with applications in the field of health. The two NHRF Institutes of Science have been established in their respective fields, while concurrently, in the context of the Foundation's strategic choices, they are actively exploiting the potential for synergies offered by their spatial and scientific proximity.

## About Pfizer Inc: Breakthroughs that change patients' lives

At **Pfizer**, we use science and our global resources to improve health and wellness at every stage of life. We work to set standards in quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and production of medicine. Our diversified portfolio of health products includes organic medicines, small molecule medicines, vaccines, as well as many of the world's most popular personal hygiene and care products.

Pfizer's partners in both developed and developing countries deal with the promotion of good health, prevention, treatment and treatment of diseases that are a challenge for us today. Being in line with our responsibility as a world-leading bio-pharmaceutical company, we work with government and local agencies to improve access to reliable, affordable healthcare worldwide. For over that 150 years, Pfizer has been working to make a difference for everyone who relies on us.

To find out more about our commitments, please visit [www.pfizer.gr](http://www.pfizer.gr).

## Postgraduate Program in "Bio-entrepreneurship"

"Bio-entrepreneurship" is the first postgraduate program in Postgraduate Studies in Greece, organized by Higher Academic Institution and, in particular, the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology of the University of Thessaly along with a research center, namely the National Hellenic Research Foundation, through its Institute of Chemical Biology.

The goal of the "Bio-entrepreneurship" is to link academic education with business practice. Thus, the program prepares its postgraduate students for a career in the biotech business world. Students gain knowledge of the biochemical processes used to produce useful and commercially viable products and services, while improving their skills in financial science and business management, essential for any successful business venture.

The "Bio-entrepreneurship" is the only postgraduate program in Greece that combines student education in distinct, yet, complementary fields of life sciences and finance to promote entrepreneurship. The program includes courses on student familiarization with research and technology with business applications in the fields of: medicine and health, food and nutrition, environmental biotechnology and biochemical and molecular diagnostics combined with courses in business unit management process management skills: introduction to entrepreneurship, legal framework for bio-enterprises-accreditation, funding sources and research, business plan design and implementation.