Greece takes one step closer to licensing non-State universities

Earlier this year, the Hellenic Parliament enacted Law 5094/2024, which paved the way for the introduction of non-State universities in the Greek education market and established a framework intended to address the peculiarities pertinent to their organisation and operation. Joint Ministerial Decisions no. 7363/2024 and 7341/2024, most recently published in Government Gazette 5460/B/01.10.2024, are the latest, long-awaited, concrete step towards the licensing of non-State universities.

What's new?

Joint Ministerial Decision no. 7363/2024 sets forth the procedural details in relation to the guarantees required for the installation and operation permits. Besides the guarantee amounts, which had already been quantified in Law 5094/2024, it specifies eligible issuing institutions, the guarantees' required validity and forfeiture events. The standard application review fee amount of €600,000 is confirmed, as well as its increase by €200,000 for any faculty in excess of the standard (1) or (3) faculties per application.

Ministerial Decision no. 7341/2024 addresses the qualitative criteria required of University Legal Entities to be eligible for licensing, focusing on high academic standards. Crucially, it determines the university rating agencies of international repute for the academic year 2025-2026, namely a) Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), b) Times Higher Education (THE) and c) Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), whose ratings will determine the universities – ranked among their top twenty (20) – eligible for licensing with a single Faculty offering an academic program of a single educational cycle. Finally, the period of submission of applications for the academic year 2025-2026 is scheduled between 2nd January 2025 and 1st March 2025.

One step closer to the constitutionality review?

The hype around the issuance of the Ministerial Decisions is not so much justified by their subject matter, but rather because it formally kicks off the first licensing period of the non-State universities' framework, bringing closer the prospect of its constitutionality review, discussed at length prior to the adoption of L. 5094/2024. While the Ministerial Decisions' procedural subject matter does not necessarily appear opportune for an admissible challenge against the same on constitutionality grounds – aside perhaps from the choice of university rating agencies, which are set to shape the landscape of elite universities eligible for a single Faculty licensing – they were long awaited as the necessary step towards this initial licensing period. Regardless of risks inherent to such a novel procedure touching upon a rather sensitive area for affected stakeholders such as public universities and prominent academics, the window is hence forth open for foreign educational institutions wishing to explore the Greek higher education landscape.

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