# University of Patras. Department of Theatre Studies – Theatre Laboratory of Drama and Speech (European Program)

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# EUNICoast Program

**EUNICOAST | GROUP 1 | IDENTITIES, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

### Introduction

*From the Handbook presentation of EUNICOAST we read that: “European Universities are a flagship initiative of the European Commission, aimed at “supporting and enabling universities to adapt to changing conditions, to thrive and to contribute to Europe’s resilience and recovery”.*

Current preoccupations with questions on globalization, internationalism, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism as well as international trade and the flow of global capital are part of education at the university level nowadays. The flow of information from global media, the interconnectivity of our cultural experiences including cross art education and production, and the increasing number of people crossing national borders as immigrants, tourists, refugees and itinerant workers and researchers are issues that the world is facing today. As Benedict Anderson’s discusses ‘the “end of the era of nationalism,” … is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time’ (Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed., London: Verso, 2006:3). The value of “belonging”, besides the political power that each nation can employed within its own sphere of influence, it raises awareness to core aspect of human spices identity common to all, the body.

The human body is the primer means of being in the world and communicating (non -verbally). In education the body is examined through an individual or interdisciplinary approach at university studies in subjects such as history, biology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, neuroscience, communication studies, aesthetics and artistry etc. Furthermore, language like the code of all cognition is a relational code, a creative function of the brain and precisely from this fact and its recursive property derives its novelty and its freedom (Fuster, J.M., 2013, The Neuroscience of Freedom and Creativity: Our Predictive Brain. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). However, to embody the world holistically demands autonomy and intentionality and an indispensable and integrated dynamic network among an active brain-body (Maturana, H. R., and F. J. Varela. 1980. Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living. Dordrecht: D. Reidel). The total person through its corporeal knowledge is engaged to the living world and aims at the acquisition of knowledge and meaning (G., Colombetti, 2010. “Enaction, Sense-making and Emotion.” In Enaction: Toward a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science, edited by J. Stewart, O. Gapenne, and E. A. Di Paolo, 145–164. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

Performances nowadays suggest a complex web of relationships between corporeal, linguistic, visual, and aural levels of signification and are activating both the performers and the audience to acknowledge the singularity of each art included and related in its broader interdisciplinary context for creating, understanding, and appreciating its meaning in education and in life.

### Research

PhD, Master’s and LLL programs in Ancient Greek Theater offered by the University of Patras, addressed to an international audience, especially researchers who are interested in obtaining global and valid knowledge on the ancient theater, and in deepening in a scientific way. In our research proposal we suggest that Ancient Greek Theatre as a collaborative and collective art form can reinforce academic freedom and institutional autonomy and strengthen the European identity. Through Theatre Studiesresearch and innovation is strengthening, as well as gender equality, inclusiveness, diversity and equity notions that are discussed and experienced in situ in higher education environments. Also, Theatrical Praxis is and can advance knowledge and enable talent circulation, trigger a deeper level of transnational institutional cooperation and affect lifelong learning in higher education. Besides the theoretical approach in research, we support the Practice as research. Art practices in academic environments draw on a variety of creative methodologies that might be incorporated into interdisciplinary research projects as methodological innovations, providing new perspectives on and extending existing knowledge as well as materializing a different kind of knowledge practice. Practice as research provides valid knowledge and an empirical research process through the arts that leads to an arts-related outputby drawing on an interdisciplinary approach.

Based on the [2003 UNESCO Convention](https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention) that emphasizes the need to safeguard cultural expressions for future generations, our suggestion is via the Ancient Greek Theatre Studies. Teaching and learning Ancient Greek Drama at university level is creating a global theoretical and practical common ground and knowledge were knowing and understanding, is inclusive. That kind of intangible cultural heritage that embraces all aspects of theatre, its theory and practices, and various expressions on life issues can function as an alliance for approaching and appreciating today’s world. Moreover, the Ancient Greek Theatre is a collaborative art form that bonds different identities and expresses human thoughts, feelings and behaviors that function in communities by combining text, voice, movement, visual elements and technology, to express life issues. As Greeks we recognize Ancient Greek Theatre, its Theory and Practices, Then and Now, as part of our cultural identity but also, we believe that this kind of knowledge and practices that asks for creativity, reception and appreciation can offer a common ground and language that activates human expressiveness, and reflects on current contemporary ethics and morals, which can promote European Values.

Key Objectives:

* Reinforce academic freedom and institutional autonomy, while promoting European identity.
* Foster gender equality, inclusiveness, diversity, and equity in higher education.
* Encourage innovation through practice-based methodologies, advancing knowledge through interdisciplinary collaboration.

### 2. COINCIDENCES

The University of Patras’ focus on Ancient Greek Theatre aligns with several existing educational and research programs among EUNICoast universities. To initiate dialogue, Patras can organize a virtual roundtable discussion with representatives from the consortium to explore specific collaboration opportunities. This could include joint workshops, shared research projects, and integrated curricula focused on interdisciplinary approaches to cultural heritage and sustainability.

* **Cultural Heritage and Maritime Studies**:

The emphasis on Ancient Greek Theatre as a cultural and educational tool aligns with the strengths of multiple EUNICoast partners:

* **University of the Azores and University of Dubrovnik:** These institutions focus on preserving coastal and Mediterranean cultural identities, creating synergy with Ancient Greek Theatre's exploration of shared heritage.
* **Université Le Havre Normandie (ULHN):** By integrating maritime and port-centric research with broader cultural studies, ULHN opens avenues to examine connections between ancient seafaring societies and contemporary coastal identities. Collaborations with CNRS and INERIS further enhance interdisciplinary project potential.
* **University of the Balearic Islands (UIB):** With expertise in Fine Arts and cultural heritage, UIB bridges traditional and modern art forms, contributing to innovative theater studies and the integration of technological elements in performances.
* **University Svoboden Universitet BFU (Burgas Free University):** BFU's programs in Business, Humanities, and Engineering offer valuable insights into integrating digital technologies and business practices in theater production and cultural management.
* **Stralsund University of Applied Sciences (HOST):** HOST's practical programs in mechanical engineering and computer science enrich the technological dimensions of theater, including stage design, lighting, and interactive performance technologies.
* **West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin (ZUT):** Renowned for digital education and technology, ZUT provides expertise in creating virtual platforms for theater education and performances, fostering innovative approaches to contemporary theater.

This shared commitment to cultural preservation and technological advancement enables collaborative initiatives that intertwine dramatic arts with broader heritage and sustainability studies.

* **Interdisciplinary Education**:
  + The University of Patras’ interdisciplinary approach—combining history, psychology, aesthetics, and communication studies—aligns with similar cross-disciplinary methodologies employed by other institutions, such as Stralsund’s integration of technical and social dimensions in sustainable tourism.
  + ULHN’s Teaching and Research Units in Sciences and Technology, Arts and Humanities, and International Affairs further align with Patras’ educational goals, enabling joint interdisciplinary curricula.
* **Theatrical Praxis and Lifelong Learning**:
  + The concept of lifelong learning through theater complements existing initiatives that emphasize inclusivity, gender equality, and diversity. For example, collaborative platforms for cultural exchange at the University of the Azores and University of Dubrovnik can integrate Ancient dramatic performances and workshops, potentially focusing on shared cultural narratives and contemporary global themes such as migration and resilience, to deepen engagement and experience and embody today’s world issues.
  + ULHN’s expertise in logistics and technology can support innovative dissemination of theatrical education and performances.
* **Community Engagement**:
  + Theater’s potential to engage local communities supports ongoing social resilience and cultural exchange programs across EUNICoast universities. This can strengthen networks and foster shared practices in cultural identity preservation. Collaborative theater workshops and performances can be integrated into local engagement initiatives at Szczecin University and Dubrovnik, with a focus on developing performances that engage communities in addressing contemporary challenges such as migration, resilience, and climate change.

### 3. COMPLEMENTARITY

The University of Patras contributes unique strengths that complement other EUNICoast universities’ initiatives:

* **Cultural Heritage**:
  + The Ancient Greek Theatre’s focus on collective identity and archetypal behaviors complements University of Sassari’s work on comparing approaches to cultural heritage preservation in coastal regions. Specific collaborative projects could include joint performances that depict shared cultural narratives, workshops on the use of theater in heritage preservation, and comparative studies of dramatic traditions in different coastal regions to highlight universal and local themes in cultural identity. Joint research and performances can illuminate shared historical narratives and ethical frameworks.
  + ULHN’s maritime and cultural identity research offers additional dimensions to these collaborations, especially through its interdisciplinary focus and historical connections to port-centric development.
* **Interdisciplinary Research**:
  + Patras’ integration of corporeal, linguistic, and visual elements aligns with Stralsund’s interdisciplinary approaches, providing a platform to merge theatrical expression with digital storytelling and multimedia tourism experiences.
  + ULHN’s research labs, including collaborations with CNRS and INERIS, can facilitate cutting-edge studies linking theater, logistics, and sustainable cultural practices.
* **Inclusivity and Diversity**:
  + The proposed teaching and research in theater align with Szczecin University’s focus on urban resilience and community-centered initiatives. Collaborative projects could explore how Ancient Greek Theatre can serve as a medium for addressing contemporary social issues, such as migration and cultural integration.
  + ULHN’s focus on international affairs and global collaboration complements these efforts, broadening the scope of inclusivity.
* **Education and Digital Innovation**:
  + Digital platforms at institutions like Stralsund and Dubrovnik can incorporate virtual performances and educational content on Ancient Greek Theatre, creating a shared resource for students across EUNICoast universities.

### 4. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The integration of Ancient Greek Theatre into the broader EUNICoast initiative reveals opportunities to address gaps and enhance collaboration:

* **Fragmented Curricula**:
  + While Patras’ focus on theater is robust, it could be more explicitly tied to digital and sustainable practices emphasized by other institutions. Examples of such integrations include using virtual reality (VR) tools to recreate ancient theatrical performances, developing online platforms for collaborative scriptwriting and rehearsals, and leveraging digital archives to connect historical research with contemporary artistic practices. Collaborative courses combining theater with digital media, sustainable tourism, and renewable energy themes could create synergies.
* **Limited Access to Specialized Programs**:
  + Offering joint virtual workshops and courses in Ancient Greek Theatre would make the program accessible to students at all EUNICoast universities. These workshops could adopt a creative approach to strands of the theater medium such as acting, the chorus, movement, speech and singing, masks and scenery, as well as costumes and technology. They could also include analysis of tragedies and comedies for a deeper understanding of the role each performing element plays in crafting meaning (drawing on Aristotle’s notion of techne) and enacting feelings, emotions, and achieving rich katharsis.

Potential platforms for hosting this kind of theoretical and practical knowledge include Moodle for asynchronous learning, Microsoft Teams or Zoom for live interactive sessions, and collaborative tools like Miro or Padlet for brainstorming and project development. Existing infrastructures, such as the University of Dubrovnik’s digital economy expertise or Stralsund’s interdisciplinary platforms, could be leveraged to enhance the virtual learning experience. These workshops can emphasize learning outcomes and benefits, such as fostering awareness, inclusivity, and collectivity among participants. Existing infrastructures, such as the University of Dubrovnik’s digital economy expertise or Stralsund’s interdisciplinary platforms, could be leveraged to enhance the virtual learning experience. This could include modules on performance techniques, the use of technology in theater, and its role in cultural resilience.

* **Research Hubs and Shared Resources**:
  + Establishing interdisciplinary research hubs that include theater studies alongside marine science, cultural preservation, and sustainable engineering could foster deeper collaborations. Patras’ expertise in theater can be a focal point for cultural aspects in these hubs.
* **Community Collaboration**:
  + Theater workshops and performances could be integrated into community engagement programs, such as those led by Szczecin and Dubrovnik. These could include participatory projects where local communities co-create theatrical productions addressing local and global challenges.
* **Broader Thematic Integration**:
  + Linking Ancient Greek Theatre to global themes such as climate change, migration, and social justice can align with the interdisciplinary goals of the consortium. For instance, theatrical narratives could explore these issues to foster awareness and dialogue.

### Proposed Collaborative Actions

1. **Joint Workshops and Performances**:
   * Partner with universities like Dubrovnik and Sassari to host joint theatrical events that combine cultural heritage and contemporary themes. As a first step, establish a planning committee with representatives from each university to outline the scope and format of these events. Develop a timeline that includes initial brainstorming sessions within three months, followed by pilot events such as digital performances or workshops within the first year. This phased approach ensures concrete outcomes while allowing for adjustments based on collaborative input.
2. **Digital Resources**:
   * Collaborate with Stralsund and Szczecin to create virtual platforms for theatrical education, allowing for hybrid participation across institutions.
3. **Integrated Curriculum Development**:
   * Develop interdisciplinary programs that merge theater with tourism management, sustainability, and digital innovation.
4. **Community-Based Initiatives**:
   * Implement theatrical workshops that engage local communities in exploring shared cultural identities and contemporary challenges.

By leveraging its expertise in Ancient Greek Theatre, the University of Patras can serve as a cultural cornerstone within the EUNICoast consortium, enhancing the impact of its educational, research, and community engagement initiatives. The University of Patras, through its focus on Ancient Greek Theatre, directly contributes to the goals of the EUNICoast initiative by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and promoting shared European values. By engaging in Joint Activities, such as performances and workshops, the university provides a platform for cultural and artistic exchange that resonates with the Joint Mission Statement of creating resilient and inclusive communities. The development of digital tools for theatrical education aligns with the Memorandum of Understanding, supporting operational frameworks that leverage modern technologies for accessibility and sustainability. Furthermore, Bilateral Mobility Agreements facilitate the exchange of expertise among students and academics, ensuring a dynamic flow of ideas and collaborative innovation. Through these efforts, the University of Patras exemplifies its commitment to the foundational principles of EUNICoast, paving the way for enduring partnerships and progressive educational frameworks.