

Bridging Chinese and Western Cultures, Linking the Belt and Road Network ——Journey in Greece under the Erasmus Programme

In September 2024, I had the honor of representing the Ng Teng Fong · Sino Group Belt and Road Research Institute of Hong Kong Chu Hai College to participate in the three-month European Union Erasmus+ Global Mobility Project at the University of West Macedonia (UoWM) in Greece.

Why Greece?

Ancient Greece and ancient China are two ancient civilizations that have shocked the world and influenced the progress of human civilization. When discussing the development of Eastern and Western civilizations with scholars and professors from Greece, we can always find many common topics. Quoting a favorite movie of mine, “My Big Fat Greek Wedding”, where the first-generation Greek immigrant, also the protagonist's father, often says, “Give me an English word, I'll tell you a Greek root!” That's right! This is the pride of the Greek people.

Greek civilization has propelled the development of world civilization. Greece is not just about myths and temples; it also encompasses philosophy, art, ancient theaters, Roman markets, as well as thinkers and educators like Socrates who existed concurrently with Confucius and Mencius. Not to mention the brilliant history brought about by Alexander the Great, who once dominated the continent of Asia and Europe."



What have I done in Greece?

In this mobility project, in addition to conducting research on Belt and Road specific countries in collaboration with the UoWM, we were taking the opportunity during our spare time to convey authentic and comprehensive Chinese culture, striving to become a messenger of Chinese and Western cultures.



1. Let the World Understand Hong Kong, China

In my first week at the Erasmus Project Office, I received an invitation to share Chinese culture with international students in the international student class from around the world. During the session, I also introduced the concept of “One Country, Two Systems” and promoted our Research Institute's Master's programme on Belt and Road studies. I warmly invited the international students to come to Hong Kong for further studies and enroll in our Master's programmes at the Institute.



2. Let Chinese Resonate in Greece

At UoWM, I was honored to accept an invitation from Professor Stavroula, who had a similar professional background as me, to recite in Chinese excerpts from the novel “The Garlic Ballad”, a novel by the Nobel Prize in Literature winner Mo Yan. I felt proud at that moment. I am proud that China has a truly indigenous Nobel Prize winner in Literature.

@Here please allow me to be on behalf of my 1.4 billion Chinese people to read the abstract of The Garlic Ballads written by the Chinese writer Mo Yan who gained Nobel Prize in Literature.



3. Comparative Study and Sharing of Chinese and Western Poetry

The extracurricular lives of students at the UoWM are diverse and vibrant. The Book Lab is a reading club, and during the Asian Literature Week, I was invited by a professor responsible for reading activities from the Floria campus to share Chinese literature online with the faculty and students who love reading throughout the University. From comparative studies of Chinese and Western poetry to the Four Great Classical Novels and the Hong Kong Chinese literary master Jin Yong, I spoke for nearly two hours. This was also an excellent opportunity to showcase our cultural confidence and exchange with the West, which must not be let down the expectations of the professors at the Research Institute.



4. Exchange Extended Beyond Greece

During the exchange programme, I had the privilege to meet Professor Ewelina, a distinguished scholar from Poland. She is an expert in technology innovation and global finance research. We discussed Chinese technology, and I showcased to her the technological advancements in China's new energy vehicles.

She greatly admired how rapidly the Chinese economy has developed over the past few decades, even questioning herself why China can achieve this while European countries cannot.

When she saw the demonstration I gave her on the battery swapping, digital solutions, and autonomous driving technology of Chinese new energy vehicles, she was astonished. At the same time, I also felt the immense strength of our motherland behind us, bringing us pride and joy

5. Greek Heritage, Worth Learning From

November is the month of university graduation ceremonies in Greece. I attended several graduation ceremonies and thesis defenses. Greeks place great importance on family heritage and education. At these events, one-fifth of the attendees are graduates, while the rest are their relatives and friends. Even during doctoral thesis defenses, family members are invited to cheer and support the candidates.



December is the month of holiday in Greece. I had the privilege of being invited to a local teacher's home on the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. The harmonious and friendly atmosphere of the Greek family gathering, along with the warm embraces and cheek kisses exchanged between family and friends when the New Year's bells rang, made me feel especially warm and moved.



Reluctant Farewell to Greece

Before my departure, Professor Stavroula's students collectively bid me farewell. Despite the freezing temperatures, their fiery embraces warmed the atmosphere! As we parted ways with reluctance, I warmly invited them to come to Hong Kong for study or work in the future.

To express my feelings, I would use a Greek word, “harmolipi”, which translates to a mix of joy and sorrow. The joy of reuniting with family back home; the sorrow of parting ways after our shared experiences.

One teacher remarked, “Nina, we don't seem like new friends of just two months but more like old friends reunited.” How true is that? The ancient civilizations of Greece and China resonate with each other, and the friendship between the people of China and Greece runs deep and enduring!

The collaboration and exchange between our institute and the University of West Macedonia hold profound significance, contributing to the establishment of an academic stronghold.



Endnote

The Erasmus Programme (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is an EU-funded education, training, youth, and sports initiative aimed at promoting academic exchange and cooperation in Europe and globally. Originally launched in 1987, the programme is named after Erasmus of Rotterdam, a Dutch Renaissance humanist who advocated education, freedom of thought, and cross-cultural understanding.

Sharing by:

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