

OPEN LETTER TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS

The National Technical University of Athens Assembly of September 6th, 2013

The professors and employees of the National Technical University of Athens have decided to stand up with our heads high, instead of remaining idle and hopeless. We will do everything in our power to deliver the Technical University as it is today and even improved, to the next generations, as it has been delivered to us...

Dear parents, dear students,

We, the professors and employees of the National Technical University of Athens, welcome you to the largest and oldest Technical Institution in the country. We congratulate you, students and your parents who supported you, as we know well how hard you have worked to make your dream come true, to study in a good, public, internationally prestigious Greek University.

Today at our University, while we are preparing to begin the academic year, to register fresh undergraduate and postgraduate students, to say farewell to its successful graduates, to start the new curriculum, to open its classrooms and laboratories, something strange and dramatic happened.

The government announced that they suspend 550 of our administrative employees, that is 65% of our administrative staff. At the same time, they announce the labour reserve of 40% of the professors in the next year. To put it in a nutshell, it seems they want to reduce the size of the university in half. Our economic potential has already been reduced more than half, the funds for classes, buildings, libraries, salaries. At the same time, they have laid off the contract professors, they have been refusing for years to appoint the newly elected lecturers and professors, while our Schools have been bleeding from retirements. Even worse than that, they have recently seized 30 million euros from the research reserves, money that had not been given to us by the government, but we had ensured ourselves, the professors, young researchers and our management, through European or Greek research programmes. Money, that is, that we had brought here and which we recycled on studies, on scholarships, on educational and research infrastructure.

And yet, the government does not want to reduce the size of the National Technical University in half, as they have increased the number of admissions of undergraduate students! They are planning something much worse: half of the administrative employees, half of the professors, with tiny budgets will have to educate thousands of students. How will that happen? Obviously, classes will be reduced, academic textbooks will cease to be free of charge, libraries will be closed (we possess the best technical library in the country), secretariats will dissolve, buildings will be left without maintenance (we possess some of the best university infrastructure in the Balkans, in Athens, an excellent technological-cultural park in Lavrion and an important research centre in Metsovo-Epirus), our pioneering web centre will dissolve, laboratories will be closed and postgraduate programmes will cease to exist.

Briefly, the National Technical University of Athens is being pushed into becoming a post-secondary training institution, a vocational training institute, with easy and fast-to-get certificates, for a future of certain unemployment, with few impoverished workers and

professors who will not care about how to teach but only about how to survive. Then you will be asked to pay tuition fees. This will not happen in the distant future, it is happening now.

Dear parents, dear students,

Under these circumstances, we have decided that we cannot function anymore, we cannot endure the downfall anymore. We cannot wait until our next colleague is fired, until it is our turn to be fired, until we do not have a computer, an office, a classroom, an auditorium, a research laboratory. Until the six out of the nine historic academic Departments of the National Technical University of Athens cease to exist, until our students are forced to pay tuition fees to get their education. We cannot imagine how it is possible that our colleagues, who on September 16th will be made redundant, young people with children, with other laid-off and unemployed members in their families, will work with a smile, just before they pick up their things from their offices for the last time, at the secretariats of the Schools registering our students. We cannot imagine how it is possible that the professors who know that in a few months they will suffer the same fate, will find the courage to teach in the auditoriums, will stand upright and dignified as academics. And you will say: Greece already has one million of unemployed citizens, Athens has forty thousand homeless people in the streets, one third of households lives under the poverty line, the salaries of those lucky enough to get paid are reduced in half or a third. Yes, this is the reality. You are also in the same condition, any parent of you can be unemployed, any home can be in danger of being auctioned, your paycheck is not enough, your children's education is at risk. You do not know if and how they will manage to graduate with a degree.

We know that, too, we are people just like you, with families, with small children or with children who study. We grew up in the same streets, at the same school desks. We have been serving a great academic Institution with history, with prestige. We have received from our professors a Technical University of knowledge, scientific vanguard, innovation, research, democracy and dignity. If you shut your ears for a while to the low-level domestic media and search for the international rankings, you will see how high the National Technical University of Athens stands worldwide. You will see how important its courses are, how recognized its professors are globally, how its postgraduate students excel in European and American universities, how high the standards of our Greek engineers are.

Therefore, for all these reasons, dear parents and students,

The professors and employees of the National Technical University of Athens have decided to stand up with our heads high, instead of remaining idle and hopeless. We will do everything in our power to deliver the Technical University as it is today, and even improved, to the next generations, as it has been delivered to us. We remember something else, too: During two major and critical times of History –the War and the Dictatorship- the flame of the Institution's emblem, Prometheus shone in the darkness. The Greek people took that flame in their hands and won. We do not forget and ask you to come here, with us, to stand by us in the noble struggle we begin.

The National Technical University of Athens Assembly of September 6th, 2013