

13 December 2018

Athens Exchange and the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce present the Roots program in Thessaloniki

In the framework of its official launch, the Roots program was today – Thursday, 13 December – presented to representatives of the business community of Northern Greece. The event was honored by the presence of the US Consul General in Thessaloniki, Gregory W. Pflieger.

Roots is an initiative of Athens Exchange, in collaboration with the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and with the support of the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC) and the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is aimed at promoting competitive and commercially viable business plans of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), primarily by facilitating their access to investment capital and familiarizing them with internationally accepted rules and best practices.

Speaking on the occasion of the presentation, Thessaloniki Mayor Yiannis Boutaris stated: *"The Roots initiative to support and strengthen local SME communities, but primarily to shape a mechanism for highlighting investment opportunities, which gives fresh impetus to an evidence-based growth path of small and medium-sized enterprises, constitutes the soundest way forward for the advancement, sustainability and prosperity of local society.*

In a constantly changing and demanding economic environment, which is seeking new paths and possibilities on account of the existing social and economic difficulties, all creative and entrepreneurial forces must remain alert, capable of adjusting actions and practices, so that they can continue to serve as a regulatory factor and balancing force in the local reality in Greece.

With its choices and stance, Thessaloniki Municipality has demonstrated in practice that it supports the city's entrepreneurship and strengthens collective efforts towards an outward-looking perspective, restructuring of the local labor market, and outreach to new investors. With a steady orientation and concrete steps in this direction, we stand ready to support any entrepreneurial activity capable of boosting job creation and fostering innovation, on the basis of the identified individual and collective needs of the local and national market, as these are being shaped by the new challenges and changes throughout Europe".

US Consul General in Thessaloniki, Gregory W. Pflieger addressed the presentation event, saying:

"I join Ambassador Pyatt in congratulating ATHEX and the Roots program team, along with American Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, for this innovative program that supports Greece's entrepreneurs and small and medium-size enterprises, a sector that we strongly support and highlighted at the U.S.

pavilion at the Thessaloniki International Fair. My team and I will continue to be advocates for the very strong and innovative entrepreneurial sector here in northern Greece".

Messrs. George Handjinicolaou, Chairman of Hellenic Exchanges – Athens Stock Exchange S.A., Simos Anastasopoulos, President of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, and Socrates Lazaridis, CEO of Athex Exchange Group, referred to the need to strengthen the capacity of innovative SMEs to access the capital market, the objectives and benefits of Roots, as well as the procedure for participating in the program.

The presentation was also attended by representatives of the program's Corporate Champions (Anastasia Nazidou, Director of the Branch Network of N. Greece, Thessaly, Epirus and Corfu, NATIONAL BANK OF GREECE, Alkis Alexandrou, Deputy General Manager, Agricultural Sector, PIRAEUS BANK) and Advisory Partners (Antonis Markou, Partner at DELOITTE, George Deligiannis, Senior Partner at GRANT THORNTON).

After an evaluation process, the companies that are selected for participation in Roots will be given access to training programs and workshops to help familiarize them with the various financial tools for raising capital and gain the know-how to develop competitive business plans, create an appropriate financial structure, adopt sound corporate governance practices, and acquire the necessary skills to effectively communicate their business proposals to investors.

The program constitutes a dynamically evolving collective initiative of the country's robust productive forces, which are sharing their experience and expertise in order to help the new generation of companies grow and innovate. The Corporate Champions that are already supporting the program are NATIONAL BANK OF GREECE, ELVALHALCOR, HELLAS GOLD, PAPASTRATOS, TEMES, TITAN and PIRAEUS BANK. The Advisory Partners that will begin assisting the companies in the program are GRANT THORNTON and DELOITTE. The training component of the program will be supported by experienced partners that include CFA Society Greece, Global Competitiveness Academy (GCA) and Arizona State University, along with a number of internationally acclaimed academics in the relevant sectors.

With the assistance of a mentor and an investment advisor, the companies will have the necessary guidance to help them develop and adjust the three program deliverables (Business Plan, Financial Structure and Investment Proposal), and reach the point of investment readiness. The Roots program will bring participants into contact with experienced professionals active in the market, as well as internationally acclaimed academics, through networking actions based on the dissemination of best practices.

The successful outcome of each investment proposal will be its ability to raise the capital necessary for its implementation, through the capital market, which is also the critical indicator of the proposal's real value.

The program is aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises that have an existing product or service characterized by innovation, a viable business proposal with growth potential and the capacity to attract investor interest.

SMEs can complete and submit their participation application on the program website (<https://www.roots-program.com/>) from **Friday, 14 December 2018**.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.roots-program.com>

Contact:

e-mail: roots@athexgroup.gr, **tel.:** 210 3366825

About Athens Exchange Group

Since its establishment in 1876, **Athens Exchange** has consistently participated in the country's financial and business developments.

Athens Exchange Group supports the development and organization of the Greek capital market. It operates the securities and derivatives markets, as well as the alternative market, while at the same time conducting the clearing and settlement of transactions.

Through its markets, Athens Exchange offers solutions and financing tools to businesses, and expands investor choice by providing a safe, stable and easily accessible environment that is fully in line with international practices and the European regulatory framework. The Group is also ISO 22301:2012 Certified for Business Continuity, for all its companies, including all its operations as well as the products and services it provides.

At a time when the role of stock markets in finding alternative ways of financing businesses, at a Europe-wide level, has become significantly enhanced, Athens Exchange Group has undertaken a series of initiatives to highlight the attractiveness of the Greek capital market and promote Greek companies among the international investment community.

The Group's shares are traded on the Main Market of Athens Exchange (Symbol: EXAE).

Summary information about ATHEX Group and its markets can be obtained by following this [link](#) or visiting the website at www.athexgroup.gr.