

PRESS RELEASE

GROWTH AWARDS | Seven years standing alongside the entrepreneurship that makes progress, reality

Six (6) Greek companies, distinguished for their commitment to progress, demonstrating adaptability in the face of strong modern challenges, with a firm focus on sustainability, innovation, and the return of growth dividends to society, are this year's **Growth Winners**, announced today at the **Growth Awards 2023**. The institution, established by **Eurobank** and **Grant Thornton**, marks **seven (7) years of presence in the Greek market** and rewards the best business practices, highlighting companies that excel for their contribution to the progress, modernization and improvement of the domestic business landscape.

The ceremony, addressed by the **Minister of Economy and Finance**, Mr. Kostis Hatzidakis, was announced by the **CEO of Eurobank**, Mr. Fokion Karavias and was honored by the presence of the **Minister of Labour and Social Security**, Mr. Adonis Georgiadis. The **6 Growth Winners** were announced by the Chairmen of the **20-member Growth Awards 2023 Committee**, Mr. George Zanias, **Chairman of the Board of Directors of Eurobank** and Mr. Vassilios Kazas, **Managing Partner of Grant Thornton**.

The six (6) Growth Winners:

- **Cenergy Holdings**
- **EPIROTIC BOTTLING INDUSTRY - VIKOS S.A.**
- **BARBA STATHIS**
- **Rontis Hellas**
- **UNI-PHARMA SA**
- **Start Up / Scale Up | Hack The Box**

The **Minister of Economy and Finance, Mr. Kostis Hatzidakis**, said: *"The Growth Awards are an institution of excellence for Greek businesses. And this is important in the effort we all make to support Greek businesses!"*. Mr. K. Hatzidakis also noted that *"the economic data itself prove that Greece is a country that has become much friendlier to business: The high growth rates. The impressive increase in Foreign Direct Investments. The record in 2022 in exports. The reduction of unemployment by almost seven percentage points. The continuous upgrades of the country's credit rating, most recently by Standard & Poors"*. Finally, Mr. Hatzidakis presented the main axes of the government's economic policy, which is based on fiscal stability: *"Improving the business environment, emphasizing the sectors of the Greek economy which are more competitive, incentivizing businesses to grow and boost innovation, supporting the green and digital transition of businesses, as well as the actions for a quantitative and qualitative workforce strengthening, are essential for us to move forward with sustainable growth!"*.

The **CEO of Eurobank, Mr. Fokion Karavias**, in his opening remarks said: *"Today, it is technological innovation that will largely determine global leadership. Europe can do significantly more to encourage research, to link universities with production, to provide incentives to attract talent on a global scale and to support 'European champions'. Without the necessary scale, the EU will not be able to stand up to the American or Chinese competition, the latter benefiting from unlimited state support"*. Mr. F. Karavias pointed the actions taken by the Bank in this context, noting that *"at Eurobank, in addition to the investments in digital technology, we support the growing ecosystem of start-ups, through our "egg" business accelerator"* and **announced the creation by the Bank of a special unit to support start-ups through specialized banking services and financing**.

The **Chairman of the Board of Directors of Eurobank, Mr. George Zanias**, said: *"The evolution of a competitive entrepreneurship model is now more relevant than ever before. A dynamic entrepreneurship is a*

driving force to achieve a steady rise in investment in the coming years, which constitutes a sufficient condition for a multi-level upgrade of the Greek economy, and the creation of a sustainable growth model within an environment of intense volatility and global challenges. **Growth Winners** represent exactly this dynamic: **They practice the optimal, choose to evolve by pioneering, and adapt on time to overcome adversity and manage major changes** such as the climate change and the digital transformation of the economy. Eurobank has been a long-standing supporter of healthy entrepreneurship with a firm commitment to innovation and to shaping conditions leading to collective prosperity for all."

In his statement, **Mr. Vassilios Kazas, Managing Partner of Grant Thornton**, stated the following: "This year marks the 7th consecutive year of the Growth Awards initiative. We launched Growth Awards at a difficult time for Greek entrepreneurship. We rewarded companies that emphasized on sustainability and green transformation, while demonstrating their resilience to the climate change challenges and their adaptability to the ground-breaking changes brought about by artificial intelligence and digital advancements. Companies that build wealth for society, create new added-value jobs and demonstrate their social responsibility. We will continue to reward and support all the efforts that contribute to sustainable entrepreneurship."

The event included a discussion between Mr. Markos Veremis, **Partner at Big Pi Ventures Capital, Chairman of SEV's Innovation Committee**, and Ms. Eve Psalti, **Senior Engineering Director - Azure AI, Microsoft, Seattle, USA**, on the topic **Artificial Intelligence - Opportunities, Risks and a brave new world**. As noted, among others, by the keynote speaker, Ms. Eve Psalti, while discussing with Mr. Marko Veremis, although AI technology has been around for the last 30+ years, Generative AI has come dynamically to the forefront in the last 18 months, changing the landscape of how we live and work, especially with the introduction of ChatGPT. "Each new technology offers opportunities such as improving productivity, automating repetitive tasks and saving costs" she said, while highlighting concerns about the responsible use of AI and the need to ensure user experience.

In addition, as part of the event held at Megaron, The Athens Concert Hall and moderated by the journalist **Niki Lympiraki**, Grant Thornton presented the results of its analysis of Greek business today. The annual survey reflects the expectations of Greek entrepreneurs for the future of their businesses, while, at the same time, it highlights potential obstacles and multi-faceted challenges they are to address. Commenting on the findings of the survey, **Mr. Manolis Michalios, Grant Thornton Partner and Head of Assurance**, stated the following: "Despite current challenges, it is important that companies are not distracted by the ever-changing conditions, but instead, realize how crucial it is for them to invest in innovative solutions in order to strengthen their extroversion and competitiveness."

The awards were presented by the **Minister of Labour and Social Security**, Mr. Adonis Georgiades, and **members of the Growth Awards 2023 Committee**.

The event was attended by representatives of the government, distinguished businessmen and academics and senior executives of Eurobank and Grant Thornton.

*The selection of the winners is made through a process developed in three (3) phases, in accordance with the detailed provisions of the relevant Notice. During the first (phase) information is extracted through the published financial statements for more than **8,000 companies** operating in Greece, based on key financial indicators and qualitative characteristics. Then (during the second and third phases), the qualified companies that applied for participation are evaluated on the basis of specific qualitative criteria and six (6) Growth Winners are selected, of which one (1) winner is included in the special category Start-Up / Scale-Up.*