

DET NORSKE INSTITUTT I ATHEN
ΝΟΡΒΗΓΙΚΟ ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ
THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE AT ATHENS



The Norwegian Institute at Athens

[The Norwegian Institute at Athens](#) (NIA) was founded in 1989 as a foreign archaeological school pursuant to a decision ref. *No YIIIIO/APX/A3/2784/39, 29.05.1989* of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (then named the Greek Ministry of Culture) with a view to supporting Norwegian archaeological research in Greece and acting as a liaison between Norwegian academia, Greek scientific bodies and other foreign research institutions in Greece focusing on the humanities, social studies, and the arts, from antiquity to the present.

Firstly, [NIA](#) acquired legal status through the collaboration of four Norwegian universities, namely the Universities of Bergen (*Universitetet i Bergen – UiB*), Oslo (*Universitetet i Oslo- UiO*), Trondheim (*Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet – NTNU*) and Tromsø (*Norges arktiske universitet – UiT*). The administration and organization of the NIA was restructured as of 1 January 2021, adhering to a new action plan. More specifically, the University of Bergen is now the Institute's sole administrative and management body, while the University of Oslo makes annual contributions towards the NIA's operational costs and actions. In Greece, the NIA is a legal person in the form of a non-profit association and is subject to Greek legislation with regard to its tax and insurance obligations.

According to its [Statutes](#), the objects of the NIA are:

- to facilitate research by Norwegian experts in Greece on the scientific interests of the Institute, to foster the establishment of bilateral and international cooperation networks, and to promote contact between the two countries in the fields of the humanities, social sciences, and the arts;
- to carry out archaeological excavations and field research with the participation of Norwegian academics and students, in collaboration with the Greek State and the competent archaeological services;
- to support the teaching of Greek culture from the prehistoric to the modern era history, and to enhance the presence of Norwegian students and the organization of lifelong learning workshops;
- to broadly disseminate the results of archaeological and other research activities to the Greek and Norwegian general public through lectures, conferences, seminars and publications;
- to host Norwegian researchers from the broader tertiary education sector of Norway at its premises;

- to encourage cooperation with the other foreign archaeological schools and institutions in Greece with a special emphasis on the Nordic Institutes, the Nordic Library, and the Norwegian Embassy in Greece.

In this context, the NIA provides the Norwegian scientific community with the necessary infrastructure for obtaining excavation permits from the Greek Ministry of Culture, access to museums and collections, authorization to study and publish archaeological material, and, generally, for Norwegian researchers to network with the vibrant international academic environment of Greece.

Organization and facilities

The Institute has its own local [administration](#) in Athens, which is subordinate to the University of Bergen and is responsible for all local activities concerning the Institute and its services. The director of the University of Bergen appoints the Administrative Leader and one administrative adviser of the NIA, who reside in Norway, as well as local administrative/advisors of the NIA, who serve as the University's local representatives in Greece. The same authority also appoints the Institute's legal representative, who represents the NIA before the Greek authorities and affiliated institutions in Greece, as well as before Norwegian research institutes, on the basis of the relevant partnership agreements.

In 1992, the Institute was relocated from its original headquarters at 30, Erechtheiou Street to 5, Tsami Karatasou Street in the Makrygianni district, near the Acropolis Museum. The NIA's offices and reception area, lecture and seminar halls are housed in a fifth-story floor-through apartment, with balconies boasting a marvelous view of the Parthenon.



The NIA's Premises - The Seminar Room
(Photo by Paschalis Zafeiriadis)



The NIA's Library and Publications Showcase (Photo by Paschalis Zafeiriadis)

Research activity

Under Greek archaeology legislation, the Institute engages with the Department for the Supervision of Greek & Foreign Scientific Institutions and Coordination of International Cooperation & Organizations of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, which mediates for the issuance of [excavation permits](#), the study of archaeological material, free entry passes, etc.

At the academic level, the *Fagråd*, an academic [advisory body](#) of the Institute, has been operating since 2021, consisting of prominent members of the Universities of Bergen and Oslo whose work is pertinent to the Institute's research areas.



The NIA's Advisory Board Meeting at the University of Bergen in September 2023 (Photo by Ragna Valen)

Archaeological work

- The impetus for founding the Institute was the Norwegian excavation [project](#) in Tegea, Arcadia. In 1990, research began on the sanctuary of Athena Alea, an important site of the ancient and classical era, featuring a renowned, impressive temple. The Norwegian excavation began under the direction of Erik Østby, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Bergen and subsequently Director of the Norwegian Institute of Athens, unearthing a number of early religious buildings, ceramics and other artifacts and elements of religious activity dating back to 9th and 10th centuries BCE. This

research evolved into an international collaboration, with funding from the Scientific Council of Norway and Sweden and the US National Geographic Society, as well as the participation of the local Ephorate of Antiquities of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports.



Tegea Excavation (Photo by Erik Østby)

Over the course of the following decades, scientific activity continued at Tegea with surface surveys and excavations, under the direction of Knut Ødegård, Professor at the University of Oslo and subsequently Director of the Institute, and his team, in collaboration with the Arcadia Ephorate of Antiquities (Hellenic-Norwegian Excavations at Tegea, HENET, 2009-2013; Norwegian Arcadia Survey Part 1, NAS1, 1999-2007; Norwegian Arcadia Survey Part 3, NAS3, 2016-2018 under the direction of Mari Malmer). Norwegian research on Tegea also involved a field survey project directed by Hege Agathe Bakke-Alisøy – Norwegian Arcadia Survey, Part 2 (NAS2) 2009-2013.



M. Malmer in Action during the HENET Excavation Project (Photo by Knut Ødegård)

- Between 1993 and 2002, research was conducted at a smaller scale at the Byzantine fortress in Petropigi, near Kavala, in the Municipality of Nestos in Northern Greece, wholly funded by Norway and led by University of Oslo Professor Siri Sande.

- In 2018, an excavation was launched at Gourimadi, Karystos, in southern Euboea, unearthing architectural remains and portable finds dating from the Late Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age; the portable finds and the uniquely preserved architecture contribute to the better understanding of the early Aegean prehistory. The excavation, directed by Dr. Žarko Tankosić (Project Manager - Administrative Manager SapienCE, Department of Archaeology, University of Bergen) and co-directed by Dr. Paschalis Zafeiriadis (Advisor/Researcher, NIA-University of Bergen) and Dr. Theofanis Mavridis (Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology and Speleology), featured a large number of Norwegian and Greek student participants, who became acquainted with new excavation methods and the use of state-of-the-art digital technologies in archaeology, thus gaining excavation experience and significant transferable skills through systematic day-to-day training activities. The site was discovered as part of the NIA's systematic surface survey between 2012 and 2017 (Norwegian Archaeological Survey in the Karystia, NASK), under the direction of Dr. Žarko Tankosić.



The Site of Gourimadi (Photo by Zarko Tankosic)



The GAP Team in Action (Photo by Paschalis Zafeiriadis)

- Furthermore, in 2019, the NIA launched systematic archaeological surface surveys on uninhabited islands of the Lesser Cyclades ('SCIP', the Small Cycladic Islands Project) in collaboration with the Cyclades

Ephorate of Antiquities and under the direction of Dr. Dimitris Athanasoulis, the Director of the Ephorate, and the co-direction of Dr. Žarko Tankosić and Dr. Alex Knodell (Associate Professor of Archaeology at Carleton College, USA). The aim of this project is to document the landscape of these small islands by employing intensive, interdisciplinary surface survey techniques and incorporating them in the wider local and cultural environment, from the earliest signs of human activity to the present.



The SCIP Team Surveying the Island of Polyaiagos (Photo by Alex Knodell)

- SCIP follows up on previous research projects launched by the NIA in the Cyclades. In particular, (a) the excavations at the karstic complex at the Agios Ioannis-Cyclops caves on the island of Iraklia, conducted in cooperation with the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology and Speleology, under the direction of Dr. Theofanis Mavridis and Dr. Žarko Tankosić; and (b) the systematic surface survey project at Kastro Apalirou on the island of Naxos, in cooperation with the 2nd Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities/Cyclades Ephorate of Antiquities, under the direction of Dr. Dimitris Athanasoulis, Director of the Cyclades Ephorate of Antiquities, and Professor Knut Ødegård of the University of Oslo.

- In August 2022, archaeological research (excavation and geological) began at the Apidima cave in Laconia, one of the most important caves for Palaeolithic archaeology in Europe. The research, which is jointly directed by Professor Katerina Harvati (Centre for Early Sapiens Behaviour (SapienCE), University of Bergen – Department of Paleoanthropology, Institute for Archaeological Sciences and Senckenberg Centre for Human Evolution and Paleoenvironment, University of Tübingen) and Dr. Evangelos Tourloukis (authorized post-doctoral researcher, Palaeoanthropology Working Group, Institute for Archaeological

Sciences, University of Tübingen), aims to deepen the understanding of the highly important human remains found previously at this site, to study human evolution and the early mobility patterns of Homo sapiens and the first migrations out of Africa, as well as the co-existence of Homo sapiens and Neanderthal populations and, consequently, the possible exchange of genetic material between the two species.



The Apidima Cave Complex – View from the Sea
(Photo by Katerina Harvati)

- Finally, the NIA has conducted two underwater archaeology research projects. The first was carried out in the underwater area of the island of Ithaca (1999-2003) in collaboration with the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities, directed by Dr. Katerina Dellaporta and Dr. Marek E. Jasinski (Norwegian University of Science and Technology at Trondheim, Norway). The second concerned underwater research in the area south of the island of Naxos (2016-2018) and was conducted in collaboration with the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities, directed by Dr. Angeliki Simosi (then director of the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities) and Dr. Sven Ahrens (Norwegian Maritime Museum).



NIA Underwater: Angelos Tzompanides and Ekaterini Tagonidou Documenting Amphora Underwater
(Photo from The NIA Archive)



Sven Ahrens and Vasilis Glezos Examining a Ballast Pile at Panormos (Photo from The NIA Archive)

Support for Norwegian academics and researchers

- In order to serve its statutory objects, in 2021 the NIA established a [Research Affiliate Program](#) to host researchers carrying out work falling within the scope of the Institute's scientific interests (humanities and social sciences, the arts and cultural heritage studies). The program focuses on academics and researchers from Norway as well as those actively collaborating with the NIA. Researchers are able to stay in Greece with money from their research programs, use the Institute's headquarters (office spaces), take advantage of the opportunities provided (museum and archaeological site passes, permission to study archaeological material, use of the Nordic Library, lectures and publications, network of researchers from other foreign archaeological schools, universities, and institutions) and devote themselves to their scientific work.



Dr. Dimitris Athanasoulis Delivering a Lecture about the SCIP Project on January 25, 2023 (Photo by Paschalis Zafeiriadis)

- Moreover, the Institute makes its premises available for [scientific events](#) (lectures, conferences, workshops, seminars) organized by Norwegian academics and offers special prices and administrative and/or catering services, depending on the nature and needs of the event.
- Finally, with a view to strengthening Norwegian research into classics and humanities in Greece in

general, ‘[Athenæum](#)’, the Society of Friends of the Norwegian Institute at Athens, was founded in 2021 at the initiative of faculty from the University of Oslo, aiming to strengthen the Norwegian presence in Greece by annually providing a travel grant to MA and PhD students researching on topics relevant to ancient Greece.

Teaching and courses

In 1990, one year after it was founded, the NIA launched a course for classics students at Norwegian universities (*BA Kurs*) including lectures by Norwegian professors and guided tours of archaeological sites in Attica and the Peloponnese.



Professor Knut Ødegård in a Field Course with the Students of the BA Kurs in 2007 (Photo from The NIA Archive)



Professor Øivind Andersen, the founder of the NIA, Delivering an On-Site Lecture in the Archaeological Site of Eleusis (Photo from The NIA Archive)

Since then, the Institute has held seminars and a series of undergraduate and postgraduate courses of the University of Bergen and the University of Oslo, as well as other Norwegian universities, on

archaeology, ancient history, and philosophy. In 2023, the topics expanded to include art history, offered by the University of Bergen. The aim is to consolidate the presence of Norwegian professors and students at the Institute and to attract new subjects from the field of contemporary art and exhibition curation, cultural studies, papyrology, history of ideas and library science.

Conferences, lectures, publications

Throughout its history, the Institute has hosted numerous bilateral and international conferences, colloquiums, and seminars, as well as research-related exhibitions, whether organized by the Institute or Norwegian researchers/institutions.



Dr. Petra Pakkanen and Dr. Delia Tzortzaki at the Opening of the Travelling Exhibition “Greece Through the Eyes of the Travelers from the North” at the National Gallery, Nafplion, Greece (May 4, 2022; Photo by Paschalis Zafeiriadis).

Furthermore, in accordance with the archaeological law and its provisions on archaeological schools, the NIA maintains a scholarly series entitled Papers and Monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens, publishing the scientific work of the NIA associates following peer review.

The main event of the Institute’s public presence in Greece is the [annual report](#) on the activities of the previous year, presented by the NIA’s advisors, as well as a lecture by a Norwegian or other prominent academic.

Libraries

- The NIA and the Swedish, Finnish and Danish Institutes at Athens jointly contribute to the financing and management of the Nordic Library in Greece, and the NIA owns ¼ of its assets.

The Library was founded in 1995 and is located at 7, Kavalloti Street. It is based on the old collection of the Swedish Institute and is enriched with books



The Administrative Leader of the NIA in the 34th Annual Open Meeting in March 2023 (Photo by Costas Polyzos)

provided by the four Nordic institutes, which use it for their research activities. The library is open to Greek and foreign researchers, while the directors of the institutes assume its management on a rotating basis.

- Moreover, the NIA houses a very important collection of classics books at its premises. This is the personal library of Johannes Triantaphyllopoulos, the late professor of ancient law at the University of Athens and antiquities expert, who gifted his [collection](#) to the Norwegian Institute in 1990. The collection mainly consists of texts of Greek and Latin



The NIA's Library (Photo by Paschalis Zafeiriadis)

philology, ancient history, history of law, epigraphy, and papyrology. In fact, the papyrology collection is considered to be one of the finest collections in the broader region. Since 2022, it has been housed in a separate room at the Institute, drawing the attention of prominent papyrologists from other archaeological schools and the whole world.





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