



# **Refugees in Greece and Germany.**

## **An Epochal Challenge**

### **III. German – Greek Media Dialogue**

**6 - 8 May 2016**

**European Cultural Centre, Delphi, Greece**

## **Program**

### **Background / Leading questions:**

Since 2014 Greece is among the most important transit countries for refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Since the Summer of 2015 Germany is the most important recipient country of refugees in Europe. With the closure of the so-called ‘Balkan route’ in March 2016 refugees are now concentrated at Greece’s northern border.

The flow of refugees is transforming both countries. The issue of absorption capacity and its limits is being raised in Athens and Berlin. Equally, the deportation of refused asylum seekers is on the agenda. Greece is being told by EU member states to better safeguard its external borders. Some even threaten Greece with exclusion from the Schengen area. Austria introduced in February 2016 a quantitative limit of admissible refugees. Solidarity and burden sharing among EU partners are being called for and – mostly – refused.

In Greece and Germany administrative institutions are reaching the limits of their capacities. Without the commitment of civil society in both countries many of the tasks such as services, welfare and accommodation for refugees would not be possible. The level of voluntary assistance provided by citizens in both Greece and Germany is unprecedented. This is all the more remarkable in Greece as the country is confronting the consequences of a six-year recession and deep spending cuts in public administration and social services.

The current debates of the refugee crisis in Greece and Germany are also characterized by the concern how to address the migration challenge. Unease is spreading among citizens that the influx of such a high number of migrants overburdens state institutions and society.

Doubts about the unity of Europe are increasing when the continent illustrates that decision makers are incapable to jointly solve the refugee crisis. Individual member states seek unilateral solutions and refuse to commit to common approaches. The president of the European Council, Mr Donald Tusk, said in January 2016 that Europe as a political integration project would fail, if sustainable solutions are not quickly identified.

Does the European Union stand at a crossroads? Will people in need again have to be separated by barriers, border fences and national egoisms? What role and responsibility does the media in Greece and Germany play when reporting and interpreting the events? These questions will be addressed at the **III. German-Greek Media Dialogue of the Southeast Europe Association (SOG) in Delphi, Greece.**

Short statements (10 minutes) by experts to stimulate discussion among the participants will kick off the different panel sessions. The **conference language** is **English**. The bilateral dialog is held under Chatham House rules.

**Participants:** 30 media representatives and experts from Greece and Germany.

**Conference Committee:**

Prof Dr Heinz-Jürgen Axt, Dr Jens Bastian, Dr Hansjoerg Brey, Dr Claudia Hopf.

**Friday, 6 May 2016, 18:00 – 20:00 hrs**

**Panel 1: Refugees and national policy responses**

- Refugees: From where, how many, what motives, what goals?
- How do political authorities and societies in Greece and Germany react?
- Challenges for public administration in both countries

**Moderator:** Prof Dr Heinz-Jürgen Axt, University of Duisburg/Essen / Southeast Europe Association

**Inputs:** Dr Jan Schneider, Head of Research Unit, The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, Berlin

Prof Vassilis Karydis, acting Greek Ombudsman, Athens

Helge Tolksdorf, Director, Department EU Enlargement, Southeast Europe, Turkey, German Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy, Berlin

*Dinner at the European Cultural Centre*

**Saturday, 7 May 2016, 09:00 – 10:30 hrs**

**Panel 2: European policy responses and alternative options**

- Competences and responsibilities at the European level
- „Welcome culture” against „Over burdening“
- Initiatives of the EU, member states and other agencies to the refugee crisis

**Moderator:** Apostolis Fotiadis, Journalist, Athens

**Inputs:** Dimitris Skleparis, ELIAMEP, Athens

Alexandra Stiglmayer, European Stability Initiative, Brussels

Ms Georgia Spyropoulou, jurist, Athens (t.b.c.)

*Coffee break*

**11:00 – 12:45 hrs**

**Panel 3: Between Engagement and Over burdening: Municipalities and civil society**

- The capacity of Greek municipalities and civil society mobilisation
- Dublin rules and registration when mass migration occurs
- The capacity of municipalities in Germany: Reception, services and accommodation

**Moderator:** Dr Claudia Hopf, Southeast Europe Association, Munich

**Inputs:** Nikos Kostopoulos, Secretary of municipal administration, Mytilini

Birgit Zoerner, City councillor, Head of the Department of Social Affairs of the City of Dortmund

Dorothee Vakalis, NAOMI refugee initiative, Thessaloniki

*Lunch*

**15:00 – 16:30 hrs**

**Panel 4: Can the situation flip? Extremists and populists gaining ground**

- Right wing extremist positions – What can we learn from empirical research?
- Attacks against refugees, reception centres and citizens
- Political consequences: Right wing populists and elections

**Moderator:** Dr Jens Bastian, Independent economic consultant, Athens

**Inputs:** Matthias Quent, University of Jena

Tassos Teloglou, Journalist, Athens

Christos Katsioulis, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Athens

*Coffee break*

**17:00 – 18:30 hrs**

**Panel 5: The role and responsibility of media**

- How do the media address and communicate the refugee crisis?
- Information, advocacy and credibility of the media with a challenging issue
- Visualizing the issue: Which newsfeeds transport visual impressions?

**Moderator:** Maria Petrakis, President, The Foreign Press Association of Greece, Athens

*19:30 hrs Bus transport*

*20:30 hrs Dinner: Tavern 'Skeletovrachos', Galaxidi*

**Sunday, 8 May 2016**

After breakfast          Excursion to the Archaeological Museum of Delphi (guided tour)

13:00 hrs                  Bus transfer to Athens (airport)