

➤ Much needed targeted State improvements at the Delphi Forum

During the highly successful 3rd Delphi Economic Forum, our Economia Group organised a session on the topic of “Antidotes Against the Greek Malaise: Quick Wins and Best Practices for Systematic Public Sector’s Reforms”, which was moderated by its director, Mr Antonis Papagiannidis.

The panellists stressed the importance of administrative reform and suggested that poor implementation turns compliance into a voluntary act, wasting opportunities to improve. Reform oversight and very lax application mitigate progress, especially in the absence of strict measurable criteria to attest to the achievements, after years into successive memoranda.

Prof. Michael G. Jacobides emphasised the importance of administrative reform, and the fact it only exists on paper, given the lack of data on units and their KPIs (key performance indicators), which still have the power to transform the administration and politics alike, shifting the debate on facts and achievements, rather than on announcements and intentions, which can easily mislead. Getting started in an open and iterative process of KPI establishment, can help us revisit what we offer to citizens and who helps improve our real living standards.

Dr Dionysis R. Rigopoulos exposed that the current structure in the Public Sector (all units and people within each organisation) is not digitally mapped. If the government hadn’t rejected the 2016 proposal of the Open Technologies Alliance, we, the people, would have “our common home and our common enterprise” accurately depicted, with cost centres for every single organisational element. This infrastructure is a sine qua non for e-governance, reforms, and detailed expenditures’ control.

Mr Michail Bletsas used the examples of digital signatures (applied only within the ministry of digital policy), of digital payments (which often must be supplemented by additional payments on the spot), and of the potential digital ID for every citizen, to demonstrate that no reform can be considered successful, as long as its implementation remains partial or local.

Mr Leonidas Christopoulos focused on the impact of “three keys” for reforms: The importance of managers (clarifying that a good clerk won’t necessarily become a good manager), financial decentralisation to local government (local budget funded exclusively by local taxes), and the quality of the public-sector workspaces.

Mr Vasilis Kontozamanis stressed the magnitude of missed opportunities from not organising healthcare systematically. He gave examples of new equipment which remains idle without the necessary staff, and highlighted significant unrealised gains from electronic prescriptions and from remotely accessible medical data for each patient.

A question from the audience on the number of civil servants drew a sharp and consensus response, that it’s not an issue of employee numbers but what you do with them. On a similar note, we cannot speak of layoffs as a means to reduce num-



bers but potentially as a way to improve the mix and punish malpractice. To consider future directions, we sorely need a detailed map, which will be able to pinpoint not only shortages and redundancies but also successes and failures. This will be able to guide the necessary transfers, hirings or layoffs.

The sense was that Transparency, Accountability, and Participatory Governance may be able to transform our country’s health by first reforming the public sector and next by helping assess its political leaders’ success. This can lead to the creation of trust and confidence between the people and their country’s leadership, and break this dangerous vicious circle.

➤ Greece in the post-programme era

Greek and foreign politicians, policy makers, academics, and representatives of IMF, EU, ECB, ESM recently exchanged views and ideas in closed doors for Greece’s future after the end of the ongoing Economic Adjustment Programme in August 2018.

The general agreement was that the country will need a new pact with the international partners, but the content of this agreement, its financing and conditionalities became the field of many different and controversial views and ideas.

Common ground was the feeling that political and social risks have not vanished and that in spite of fiscal successes there are still major uncertainties to be faced. Among them, the health of the banking system was mentioned, as well as the risk for the sustainability of the structural reforms.

There was no common conclusion if Greece has to secure or not a precautionary funding line to face the many difficulties after the end of the Programme, but there was a common ground that the IMF should continue to be involved in collaboration with the European Commission. However, the major issue of the debt restructuring or reprofiling, though agreed by the Eurogroup, stayed wide open with the IMF’s permanent position of non-sustainable debt on the table.

There were many doubts expressed on the degree of Greek ownership of the legislated measures and many fears on a possible overturn due to the pre-election period. That is why the participants insisted that all sides involved –government and opposition parties’ institutions– should leave behind the blame game of the past years and walk together the path of consensus for a sustainable growth period, much needed by the Greek people.