

Developing philanthropy and Strengthening Civil Society in Greece

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Abstract

In her paper, Ms. Phocas explores the emerging trend of grantmaking institutions that aspire to be strategic and developmental. Her aim is two-fold: first, to present the vast scope and diversity of models within which philanthropic activities are conducted and, second, to explore the possibility of creating a not-for-profit grantmakers' association in Greece. The author suggests that such a support structure will provide a platform and the leadership for networking, coordination, advocacy, education for philanthropic public benefit organizations, the private sector, and individuals, and will respond to the need of strengthening civil society.

Ms. Phocas offers a brief assessment of civil society and the foundations sector in Greece, and then a brief assessment of recent trends in the way philanthropy operates including a typology of the umbrella organizations. She argues that there is a need to go beyond strengthening the engagement of the grantmaking sector in community development and civil society, and that Greece's philanthropic actors need to better adapt to the current worldwide trends if they hope to improve their work and to win increased citizen support and civic participation.

Based on the above analysis, she proposes the implementation of a mapping study on the potentials of establishing a grantmakers association in Greece. She offers a set of recommendations on how to move in this direction:

- Examine whether the grantmakers community is favorable towards such a scheme and ways it would be sustainable.
- Conduct interviews with main stakeholders;
- Undertake a comparative study regarding the experience of other countries with donors' support institutions (structure, membership, role, financing etc);
- Look to international umbrella organizations (e.g. WINGs, EFC) for advice on establishing membership associations;
- Connect with other practitioners around the globe (e.g. through the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society's network and listserv or the Synergos' Institute's Senior Fellows program) to tap into knowledge and experience with newly founded institutions of philanthropy.

The author also emphasizes the importance of promoting public awareness among Greeks about organized philanthropy and recent institutional trends. Some initiatives that could help toward that direction include: facilitating the participation of young emerging leaders in training seminars and fellowships on organized philanthropy and community foundations in order to increase the Greek pool of knowledge in this arena; organizing a conference in Athens to discuss the role of philanthropy and ways it can help to strengthen civil society; and encouraging coverage of philanthropy in the Greek press.

Finally, Ms. Phocas proposes that since community foundations have proven to be an excellent and flexible vehicle towards building strong civil societies in many countries, that a feasibility study on the potential of adapting the community foundation concept in the Greek context could be examined either in the context of creating a grant makers association or independently.

To request the full version of the paper, please click [here](#).

