

GREEKS ABROAD

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Young members of New York's Greek community celebrating the National Day of 25th March (New York, April 2006)

The emigrant Hellenism constitutes - demographically - almost another Greece. Citizens of Greek origin live today in more than 140 countries around the world. The emigrant Hellenism of the countries overseas (Australia, USA, Canada, New Zealand) holds a ruling position, so much for historical reasons (the first Greek emigrants in the countries overseas appeared in the ends of the 18th century), as for the particularly large population (the evidences of relevant reports estimate the population of the Hellenism in the countries overseas in the amount of 6 million people, approximately).

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Greeks abroad are an active and dynamic element of their new countries, while today's immigrants, students, businessmen, academics, politicians, artists, scholars, are thriving everywhere.

The opportunities for employment in the developed countries and the narrowness of the Greek market, as well as the occurrence of internal incidents related or not to international circumstances, have been the main reasons for the mass migration phenomenon. In a short historic reference, migration's first appearance occurred in the 18th and 19th century, with the first formation of the first Greek communities in Italy, Austria-Hungary, Black sea countries, North Balkan countries, England, France and Egypt, as a result of the Turkish occupation.

Since 1900 until 1915 the migration flow turned towards overseas countries, like the USA. It is worth mentioning that after the Second World War and until 1977, a large number of Greeks have left their country, prompted by the occurrence of the Civil War.

According to the Greek Constitution, the State is obliged to procure for the life of the Greek expatriates and to ensure their liaison with the mother country. It has, also, to support the education and social and professional encouragement of all Greeks leaving outside the Greek territory.

The Greek State's main objective, therefore, is to help Greeks maintain their national identity wherever they live and to make full use of the human capital called "the Greek Diaspora".

Its primary concern is to ensure dialogue and active participation of all Greeks around the world and to consolidate the concept that every Greek is regarded as one significant entity.

Being conscious of its responsibility and the needs of a contemporary foreign policy, the Greek State considers it as an obligation to present abroad an image of Greece that corresponds to present day realities.

The vision of a powerful Greek society of the future is being built upon strong traditional Greek values and enriched with new elements. It is based on the principles of tolerance, dialogue, and respect for differences of culture and religion. In this context, the contribution of the Greek Diaspora is essential.

The role of Greeks abroad is important in defending Greek national interests, but also in forming a bridge of friendship and cooperation with the countries where they live.

Greek Expatriates constitute one of the biggest forces of Greece, as this vibrant part of Hellenism can contribute substantially to the future of Greece and of the Greek nation by offering its opinions and its valuable assistance. Greeks abroad and citizens of Greek origin constitute a pool from which Greece can draw invaluable resources to shape a common future for Hellenism in the 21st century. They are bridges of inter-cultural dialogue and international cooperation.

For this reason, with directional aim the respect and love to the Greeks of Diaspora, the Greek State supports its compatriots to the difficult

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task they have undertaken to maintain and perpetuate Greek identity and culture.

During the last decades Greece and especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has, warmly, embraced the Greek Diaspora. It has transformed traditional bonds into institutions, trying to guide the existing cooperation to new productive paths.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports programmes and actions in the fields of education, culture, etc. for all Greeks living abroad, especially those who are facing adversities, like the ones living in ex-Soviet Union countries. In this context, the role of the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad (GSGA) has been very important. It has been shaping and carrying out activities in order to implement the overall state strategy for the Diaspora.

The primary goals of the General Secretariat are the preservation of national and cultural identity of Greeks all over the world, the strengthening of ties among them and with their country of origin and the unhindered reintegration into the Greek society of those who return to their homeland.

With the formation of the Council for Greeks Abroad (SAE) in 1995, it was built a link between the far and wide Greek organisations and individuals of the World. The role of the council (SAE) focuses on coordinating the actions of the homogenous organisations and the reinforcement of their organisational modernisation. At the same time, it secures the bidirectional transfer of messages to and from Greece. SAE expresses the wishes and as-

pirations of the Greeks of Diaspora, proposes solutions to their problems, and it is the main instrument of cooperation and dialogue with the Greek State.



In search to establish methods and means to achieve strengthening of Greeks bonds and to ensure the feeling of pride of originating from Greece, the Greek State formed a series of actions, the fundamental objectives of which are:

- The maintenance of the national and cultural identity of Greeks in the world.
- The maintenance and reinforcement of the relations of the emigrant Greeks with the homeland.
- The maintenance and reinforcement of the relations of the emigrant Greeks between them.
- The improvement of terms of work, conditions of life as well as the defence of the rights of the emigrants in the place they live.
- The harmonious rehabilitation in the Greek society of those wishing to return.
- The reinforcement of philhellenism around the world.
- The conservation and dissemination of the Greek heritage.

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ination of the Greek language between the younger generations of expatriate Greeks.

- The diffusion of the Greek language abroad.
- The promotion of the Greek tradition and Greek civilisation.
- The dissemination of anthropocentric values of the Greek spirit.

For the realisation of its actions the State develops independent and completed activities, it materialises programs and it collaborates with other Ministries and Organisations when it comes to special subjects, as i.e. subjects of insurance, tax exemptions, etc.

Particularly, the Greek state:

- Economically strengthens the emigrant organisations.
- Organises congresses of emigrant Greeks in Greece and abroad.
- Supports and economically strengthens congresses and

meetings made by homogenous institutions.

- Promotes contacts with institutions of emigrant Greeks, via visits of official levels of GSGA in the various hearths of emigrant Hellenism for the direct recording of their problems, exchange of opinions, tightening of human relations, and promotion of solutions in the problems with other responsible carriers in Greece.
- Publishes informative booklets on subjects actuarial, fiscal, economical, that then sends abroad in the Greek Embassies, Consulates, organisations, associations, etc.
- Dispatches in Greek institutions abroad informative audiovisual material.
- Works out programs of training for homogenous teachers.

USEFUL LINKS

General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad
www.ggae.gr