DAY 1

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

11:30  Arrival of guests – Registration

12:15  Welcome Remarks

Ioannis Vrentzos, Managing Director, Alter Ego Media S.A.
Symeon Tsomokos, Delphi Economic Forum

12:20  Opening Speeches

Nikos Dendias, Minister of National Defence, Hellenic Republic
Kostas Skrekas, Minister of Development, Hellenic Republic
George Tsunis, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Hellenic Republic
Christos Staikouras, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Hellenic Republic

13:30  Opening Remarks

Christodoulos Topsidis, Governor, Region of East Macedonia Thrace
Ioannis Zampoukis, Mayor, Municipality of Alexandroupoli
13:50 Rising Phoenix: Social and Economic Strategies to rebuild Evros

The wildfires of 2023 had a devastating impact on the Evros region, both economically and socially. As the region is slowly trying to heal, what can be the main pillars of a comprehensive recovery plan? What can be done to protect the Evros natural reserve and similar treasures in the future?

Christos Triantopoulos, Deputy Minister, Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, Hellenic Republic
Antonis Gravanis, President, Chamber of Tradesmen and Handicrafts of Rodopi Prefecture
Marianna Nathanail, Institutional Affairs Officer, EIB Group Office in Greece
Christos Dermentzopoulos, Member of the Hellenic Parliament, Evros Municipality

Chair: Dimitra Kroustalli, Journalist, TO VIMA

14:40 Networking Lunch

15:30 Navigating Crossroads: Geopolitics and Migration in the Southeast Europe

Surrounded by conflicts, at the crossroads of continents and seas, Greece is in the eye of the storm. Thrace and Eastern Macedonia are a European border entangled in the reality of human movement. This panel explores how geopolitics shape migration and vice versa, and how this dynamic affects the region.

In Conversation

Sofia Voultepsi, Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum, Hellenic Republic
Konstantinos Moutzouris, Governor, Region of North Aegean
Constantinos Filis, Director, Institute of Global Affairs, American College of Greece

Chair: Sotiris Danezis, Founder and Managing Director, Danezis Stories
16:10 Demographics and reversing the brain drain

Demographics is a global challenge. Overpopulation and underpopulation coexist, as challenge meets opportunity for adaptation and change. How do demographics affect local communities? What is the impact of brain drain in a local community and how can it be reversed? Can it?

Fireside Chat

Sofia Zacharaki, Minister of Social Cohesion and Family, Hellenic Republic

Chair: Stella Stylianou, Anchorwoman, MEGA

16:30 Keynote Speech

Regional Energy Dynamics

Geoffrey Pyatt, Assistant Sec. of State for Energy Resources, U.S. Depart.of State (rec. message)

16:40 Unlocking Potential: Great Infrastructure Projects, Big Impact

How Great infrastructure projects can transform Eastern Macedonia & Thrace’s connectivity, powering economic growth and a brighter future.

George Tsaprounis, Chief Communications Officer, INTRAKAT GROUP
Evangelos Papadimitriou, General Manager, Thermoilektriki Komotinis
Ioannis Kirkinezis, Vice President and Managing Director Balkans, Hill International

Chair: George Papachristos, Publishing Advisor, TA NEA
17:15  **Thrace & Eastern Macedonia: Southeast Europe’s Transport Hub**

Southeast Europe is the gateway to Europe, Africa and Asia. Thrace and Eastern Macedonia sit in the middle of this passage. Can their transformation into a Transport Hub create a local economy with a greater spill-over effect to the wider area?

Andrei Popov, Ambassador, Republic of Moldova to the Hellenic Republic
Constantinos Chatzikonstantinou, CEO, Alexandroupolis Port Authority
Stylianos Zantanidis, Air Traffic Controller, Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority
Dimitrios Dimitriou, Professor, Democritus University of Thrace - (D.U.Th.)
Anastasios Dimoschakis, Member of the Hellenic Parliament, New Democracy

Chair: Alexia Tasouli, Diplomatic Correspondent

18:00  **Thriving Thrace: Unlocking local potential through Innovation and Sustainability**

How an international Group based in Thrace impacts the local community and the national economy through exemplary sustainable practices

Ioannis Sideris, Chief Sustainability Officer, Thrace Group

Chair: Dimitra Kroustalli, Journalist, TO VIMA

18.30  **FDI as a catalyst for job creation:**

**Policy keys to unlock industry re-generation in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace**

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a key driver of economic growth and job creation. In Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (EM&T), FDI can play a catalytic role in regenerating industry and creating new employment opportunities. How can government and business address challenges in order to attract and retain FDI in the region?

Loukia Saranti, President, Federation of Industries of Greece
Panagiotis Stampoulidis, Executive Director, Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund
Babis Thamnidis, Chief Financial Officer Greece, Japan Tobacco International
Paras Gravouniotis, CEO, Elina Komotini Paper Mill

Chair: Nikos Filippidis, Journalist, Anchorman, MEGA TV, Columnist, TA NEA & ot.gr
19:15  **Saving Europe from energy dependency: can Thrace be part of the solution?**

Energy efficiency has been the holy grail for European leaders for decades. The energy crisis after the pandemic and the war in the Ukraine attracted even greater attention to the subject. Can Thrace and Eastern Macedonia be part of the solution?

**Vicky Loizou**, Sec. General for Private Investments, Ministry of Development, Hellenic Republic

**Evangelos Apostolakis**, Member, Standing Committee of National Defense & Foreign Affairs


**George Kopanakis**, Technical Director, Gastrade S.A.

Chair: **Sotiris Danezis**, Founder and Managing Director, Danezis Stories

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20:15  **END OF DAY 1**

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21:00  **Dinner**

hosted by the Mayor of Alexandroupolis *(by invitation only)*
DAY 2

Thursday, March 14, 2024

08:30  Registration - Coffee

09:10  Welcome Remarks

09:15  Fireside Chat

George Gerapetritis, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hellenic Republic

Chair: Alexandra Fotaki, Diplomatic Editor, in.gr

09:45  Local government as a catalyst for growth in the region/driver

For East Macedonia and Thrace to reach their growth potential a concerted effort by all levels of government is required. How can the region’s local officials strengthen and foster cooperation between regions, cities and central government and how can they leverage cooperation on an EU level?

Voula Patoulidou, Deputy Governor, Region of Thessaloniki
Ioannis Gkaras, Mayor, Municipality of Komotini
Spyros Spyridon, Hellenic Company for Local Government & Development CEO (EETAA)

Chair: Alexia Tasouli, Diplomatic Correspondent
10:20  **Empowering Communities:**

**Exploring the Nexus of Local Self-Government in Urban and Rural Development**

How funding tools which incorporate bottom-up strategies, can serve as a catalyst for sustainable urban & rural development, emphasizing community empowerment and grassroots initiatives.

Savvas Michailidis, President, Reg. Union of Municipalities, Eastern Macedonia & Thrace

Giannis Kalaitzakis, Marketing Director, Masoutis S.A.

Alexandros Tsiatsiamis, General Manager, AT Management

Yiannis Koufoudakis, Administration Consultant, Cognitoera S.A.

Chair: Dimitra Kroustalli, Journalist, TO VIMA

11:00  **Migration: Driver for Growth?**

*In Conversation:*

Dimitris Kairidis, Minister of Migration and Asylum, Hellenic Republic

Bernd Krösser, State Secretary, Federal Ministry of the Interior & Communication, Germany

Chair: Sotiris Danezis, Founder and Managing Director, Danezis Stories

11:45  **The role of the European Parliament in Regional Development and Self-Government: Challenges and Prospects for the future of Europe**

Nikolas E. Farantouris, Jean Monnet Prof., EU Law & Policies Univ. of Piraeus, EU Policy Counsel SYRIZA

Andreas Spyropoulos, General Secretary of PASOK - KINIMA ALLAGIS

Michalis Angelopoulos, President of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Local Government

Chair: Stella Stylianou, Anchorwoman, MEGA TV
12:20 **Strategies for Sustainable Rural Development in Eastern Macedonia & Thrace**

Policy frameworks aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, promoting agro-tourism, improving rural infrastructure, fostering innovation in farming practices, and supporting local entrepreneurship.

Theodoros Skylakakis, Minister of Environment and Energy, Hellenic Republic (online)

Eleftherios Avgenakis, Minister of Rural Development and Food, Hellenic Republic

Mihail Katrinis, Parliamentary Representative of PASOK- Kinima Allagis

Aggeliki Paparadi, Organic Agriculture Agronomist, Founder, “Small Greek Producers Initiative”

Chair: Symeon Tsomokos, Delphi Economic Forum

13:00 **Bridging Universities with the Labor Market:**

**A Case Study from East Macedonia and Thrace**

A presentation explores a project aimed at connecting universities with the labor market, focusing on promoting startup entrepreneurship and development in East Macedonia and Thrace.

Anastasios Tzikas, President, Thessaloniki International Fair – Helexpo SA, Greece

Fotios Maris, Rector, Professor at the Department of Civil Engineering, D.U.Th

Evripidis Stylianidis, Member of Parliament, Rodopi

Petros Soukoulis, Head of Scientific Committee, Lighthub

Chair: Stella Stylianou, Anchorwoman, MEGA TV

13:45 **Networking Lunch**

14:30 **Fireside Chat**

George Pitsillis, Governor, Independent Authority for Public Revenue

Chair: Dimitra Kroustalli, Journalist, TO VIMA
14:50  Fireside Chat

Nikos Panagiotopoulos, Member, Hellenic Parliament, Minister of National Defense (2019–2023)

Chair: Alexandra Fotaki, Diplomatic Editor, in.gr

15:00  A vibrant human canvas: Attracting talent to East Macedonia and Thrace

Eastern Macedonia and Thrace is a region with rich multicultural heritage and a tradition of peaceful coexistence. Can this environment become an asset to the region’s efforts to attract fresh talent in order to economically and socially revive the area?

Aggeliki Giannakidou, President, Ethnological Museum of Thrace
Demetra Koukouzika, Classics Scholar, Comm. Consultant, Ramada Plaza Thraki
Giorgos Tsigaras, Dean of Department of History and Ethnology, D.U.Th

Chair: Alexia Tasouli, Diplomatic Correspondent

15:30  Land unspoilt:

Drivers for a sustainable tourism upsurge in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace

Eastern Macedonia and Thrace remains a relatively underexploited gem in the Greek tourism crown. How can the region’s unique natural assets be leveraged to develop sustainable tourism experiences that benefit both visitors and local communities?

Myron Flouris, Sec. Gen. for Tourism Policy & Development, Ministry of Tourism, Hellenic Republic
Konstantinos Palakidis, Owner & CEO, Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Thraki

Chair: Dimitra Kroustalli, Journalist, TO VIMA
16:00 The contributing and prospects of female Entrepreneurship to the Regional Economic Development

Eleni Nalbanti, Entrepreneur, Founder of Kazanabla Jewels & Nalbanti Jewels
Kyriaki Chatzisavva, Owner at Hatzisavva Vineyards & Winery
Kyriaki Leggetsi, Member of the Board, Head of Services Department
Dimitra Detsaridou, Entrepreneur, Animal Feed Sector
Chrysa Argyrakaki, Entrepreneur in the field of Hospitality & Tourism

Chair: Felina Kazakou, Special Collaborator, Development Programs, Eastern Macedonia & Thrace Region

16:50 CONCLUSIONS

Symeon Tsomokos, Delphi Economic Forum

17:00 End of Conference