



**EAST MACEDONIA
THRACE
FORUM II**

**RAMADA PLAZA THRAKI
Wednesday & Thursday, March 13-14, 2024**

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 Topsisidis, Governor, Region of East Macedonia Thrace

Ioannis Zampoukis, Mayor, Municipality of Alexandroupoli



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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



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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

Stylios 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



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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

Manolis Grafakos, Sec. Gen. for Waste Management, Ministry of Environment & Energy, Hellenic Republic

George Kopanakis, Technical Director, Gastrade S.A.

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

20:15 END OF DAY 1

21:00 Dinner

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



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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 Gkaranis, 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 Tsatsiamis, General Manager, AT Management
Yiannis Koufoudakis, Administration Consultant, Cognitera 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



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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 Papparadi, 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

Evrpidis 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 Pitsilis, 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



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**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