

Greece and the Convention on the Future of Europe

Greece has become one of the staunchest supporters of deeper integration along a federalist model, it participates in the Euro-zone, and it is a Schengen Member State. In line with its attachment to the EU's political union, it has called for increased common positions in CFSP and deeper cooperation in ESDP issues, and for the extension of the community method of integration to social policies, environmental, macro-economic and fiscal policies. Fully conscious of the fact that current challenges are better faced through supranational approaches and co-operation, and that security, stability and prosperity at all levels ranging from the individual, to society and the state, can be addressed more successfully, constructively and with greater impact through common solutions and coherent, integrated approaches, Greece has actively participated in the proceedings of the Convention.

The Greek Presidency has articulated that the outcome of the proceedings of the Convention on the Future of Europe is among its key priorities. In view of the forthcoming enlargement to a Union of twenty-five Member States in April 2003, the need to consolidate and improve the institutions and decision-making processes in an increasingly democratic and efficient manner is of the utmost importance for the Presidency. A Presidency that is necessarily marked by the two processes that have historically driven EU integration: widening and deepening. Thus, at the Thessaloniki Council in June 2003, provided that the proceeding results are not significantly delayed, the Greek Presidency aims to coordinate the first in-depth discussion on the issues and proposals that will be put forward on the draft Constitutional Treaty. In light of this, what are the positions of one of the so-called 'smaller' states on the issues debated? What is the scope of the national debate and what are the subjects that have received the highest degree of exposure as issues of national interest?

Overall, in the context of the Convention's proceedings, the Greek Presidency has declared its intention to support recommendations that will further the process of European integration. In addition, it has declared its support for conditions and procedures that will ensure a democratically organised system of governance 'close to the European citizen and society' and respectful of the European common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It has declared its commitment to define effective decision-making

processes that will ensure economic and social cohesion, convergence and sustainable development. Finally, Greece has stated its resolution to ensure that through the Convention the EU is strengthened as a political actor in the wider regional and international system promoting peace, stability and co-operation.

It is important to note that the federalist vision for the European Union is common to both the socialist party PASOK, currently in government, and the largest opposition party the neo-liberal New Democracy. In addition, both parties are particularly concerned with ensuring that the deepening and widening of the EU is not undertaken at the expense of the 'smaller' states, and above all that the Convention's aims are to guarantee 'more' Europe and increased coordination and coherence among the Member States and among the Community's policies and instruments

To turn in more detail to the positions Greece supports with regards to the institutions and the decision-making procedures. Above all, the Greek Members of the Convention (George Katiforis, Marietta Giannakou and Petros Avgerinos), have emphasised the need for the Constitutional Treaty to be easily understood by the European citizens, as in fact are the national constitutions of the Member States. It is also stressed that the Charter on Fundamental Rights must be included as an integral part of the Constitutional Treaty. Moreover, the Greek representatives have strongly supported the over-arching objective of strengthening and further consolidating the rights and powers of the EU institutions and expanding the community methods.

With regards to the institutional arrangements that are debated at the Convention, Greece has declared itself in favour of the option of 'double-hatting.' This is the case for the role of Commission President and Council President, and it is equally the case concerning the external representation of the EU, where Greece argues that the positions of the Commissioner for External Relations and High Representative for the CFSP should be merged. In line with its federalist approach, Greece supports granting the European Parliament the right to elect the Commission President, as well as the strengthening of the role of the EP and its right of censure. Overall, Greece has argued in favour of strengthening the Commission and the European Parliament since these institutions further the promotion of European common interests and defend the participation of the smaller states in the European decision-making procedure. It is this same line of argument that led

Greece to express its concern with the proposal to create a Congress of national and European parliamentarians. Such an institution would emphasise national characteristics and interests, it would most probably have a negative impact on the European Parliament and in any case would do little to further the European integration process. Greece also defends the Commission in retaining the sole right of initiative and the representation of the EU in all areas with the exception of CFSP and ESDP. On the subject of the external representation of the European Union, the position is clearly in favour of greater communautarisation of CFSP based on the principle of solidarity while it is regarded as increasingly pertinent and necessary that the EU be represented on the UN's Security Council. As the bastion of intergovernmentalism, the Council is viewed as a second legislative organ that expresses the positions of the Member States. Therefore, it is argued that its procedures should be simplified, and that these would be improved and made more effective if it were to adopt the model of longer, team presidencies. At the same time, being one of the 'smaller' states it is concerned with ensuring its representation within the EU institutions. Thus, it supports the principle of maintaining at least one Commissioner per Member State, and has placed itself in opposition to the famous Blair-Aznar proposal on the President of Europe. In what concerns the decision-making procedure, Greece favours the extension of the co-decision procedure as the standard law-making procedure, and of qualified majority-voting in all areas including CFSP, with the exception of military aspects of CFSP/ESDP.

The economic objectives of the EU have been at the epicentre of significant Greek interest, and were in effect, elaborated in a written memorandum by the Greek Representative to the Convention George Katiforis (May 2002). In particular, reference was made to the importance of strengthening the European economy and the employment market, and therefore identifying these as common priorities. This is also the position that is defended by the Greek business community that strongly supports the view that the Convention should stipulate that European governance should have as one of its fundamental, guiding criteria the improvement of the Union's position in the global economy. For this, the objectives of the EU, namely economic and social development based on free market economy, competition and social cohesion should be clearly enumerated in the Convention. The business community also supports the simplification of the decision-making procedures and has called for cost-benefit analyses to be undertaken as a matter of procedure prior to legislative and regulatory decisions. Finally, through the speech of the

President of the Federation of Greek Industrialists Ulysses Kyriacopoulos in November 2002, the Greek business community expressed itself in favour of the strengthening of the European Commission as the institution expressing and defending common European interests and as a balance to the inter-governmental Council driven by the primacy of national interests. In line with the above, the Greek business community has supported the Greek Presidency's emphasis on the Lisbon process and the pursuit of policies that will promote, strengthen and consolidate innovation and competitiveness for the European industry. For this, it has specifically called for: the continued integration and liberalisation of the European markets, increased expenditure on R&D with a target of 3% of European GDP, a common fiscal policy that will encourage entrepreneurship and competition, and the deeper integration of the financial service sector that will enable funding and access to capital, particularly for SMEs.

A final area where the Greek positions have further demonstrated their support for the construction of the European polity is with regards to citizenship, and is thus closely inter-linked with the concept of a European identity. The Greek Members of the Convention, from across the political spectrum, have favoured the proposal of consolidating the double citizenship in the Constitutional Treaty. It has been argued that the European citizenship would reaffirm the principles of equality and non-discrimination across the Member States. Hence, its value as a citizenship complementary to the national one has been welcomed particularly in view of the additional facilities and rights it offers the citizens of the European Member States. The Greek Members of the Convention have particularly referred to the increased facilities that this would imply in terms of the European citizens' freedom of movement within the Union, their rights of residence in other Member States and the right to vote in European elections, and the provision of diplomatic protection in third countries where their own country does not have a diplomatic representation. In this context and in view of the ultimate objective of the political Union of Europe, the formalisation of the European citizenship is a fundamental stepping stone closer to the Union of the European peoples.

To conclude, Greece has situated itself in defence of the *acquis communautaire* and in favour of strengthening the process of European integration towards a federalist model of governance. The Greek Presidency in particular has emphasised and has worked towards promoting common positions and building on common ground both with regards to the

EU's responses to developments in the international scene, and with regards to the proceedings of the Convention. This has clearly illustrated that Greece sees its future within an ever stronger and ever integrated European Union, a Union with an enhanced political and legal personality, with an enhanced democratic substance and with an enhanced value for the European citizen.

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