



# Greek Diaspora in an uncertain world

MIGRATION PROGRAMME

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## **A Joint SEESOX-ELIAMEP Research Endeavour**

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## Summary

- Greece's fiscal crisis has energized its relationship with its diaspora in the last several years, after decades of decline, as well as reshaping the diaspora itself due to the massive crisis-driven migration.
- Research institutes as well as individual scholars have addressed key aspects of the diaspora and homeland relationship prior to and during the crisis. South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX) established in 2015 the Greek Diaspora Project, a dedicated research unit which has applied the well-established diaspora and development literature to the Greek case, in the crisis and post-crisis years.
- The opportunities for synergistic research between University centers and think tanks located in Greece and abroad, in satisfactorily addressing this crisis-driven transformation of the diaspora & homeland relationship, are compelling. SEESOX and ELIAMEP have thus decided to collaborate so they can catalyse such synergies both between themselves and with universities in Greece and abroad.
- SEESOX's and ELIAMEP's joint endeavor will be resolutely comparative as well as cross-disciplinary, reflecting both the requirements of a highly advanced diaspora studies prospectus as well as the respective strengths of the two partners.

## Introduction

This policy paper gives a short overview of the research opportunities, involving research centers located both in Greece and abroad, that relate to the study of the Greek diaspora & homeland relationship during the fiscal crisis and in the post-crisis period. The objective of this paper is to set the framework for the joint collaboration of SEESOX with ELIAMEP which aims at catalyzing comparative as well as multidisciplinary research, jointly undertaken in Greece and abroad, on the diaspora and homeland relationship.

This paper includes the following themes. First, it identifies some of the key features of the fiscal crisis that had a transformative effect on the diaspora and homeland relationship. Second, it reviews the main research units engaged in diaspora studies in Greece as well as the work that SEESOX has done in developing the diaspora and development research agenda during the fiscal crisis years. Examples of the fruitful division of labour between research units and centers in Greece and abroad will also be mentioned, in that context. Third, it indicatively reviews the comparativist context of research on the diaspora & homeland relationship from a mostly developmental perspective. Fourth, it identifies how the study of the diaspora and homeland relationship can advance through multidisciplinary interaction with five well-established research domains in Greece. The paper concludes with the key aims of the SEESOX/ELIAMEP collaboration in the study of the diaspora and homeland relationship.

*“Following Greece’s entry in the European Community (EC) in 1981, the country became increasingly reliant on European transfers to sustain rising levels of affluence.”*

## The impact of the Greek crisis and post-crisis era and the diaspora & homeland relationship

Following Greece’s entry in the European Community (EC) in 1981, the country became increasingly reliant on European transfers to sustain rising levels of affluence. The traditional importance of diaspora remittances declined in importance both relatively and absolutely. Despite or even because of entry in the EU, the Greek economy did not become highly competitive in international terms and remained inhospitable to outsiders, be they Diaspora Greek investors or purely foreign ones.<sup>1</sup> At the mass level, Greeks became among the least mobile populations in the EU and the diaspora experience had at least partly receded from the collective imagination of the resident Greek population.<sup>2</sup>

*“Greeks became among the least mobile populations in the EU and the diaspora experience had at least partly receded from the collective imagination.”*

The fiscal crisis completely transformed this state of affairs. The forceful, even brutal realization that Greece had to adjust in an internationally competitive economy, and the robust institutions that underpin international economic competitiveness, placed at the forefront the role of diaspora Greeks in all facets of Greek collective life: as well-capitalised investors or influential managers in multinationals capable of injecting much needed funding and know-how in the Greek economy; as highly accomplished academics with the skills and outlook necessary to revamp a sclerotic state higher education system; as knowledgeable technocrats willing to upgrade key aspects of state performance; as philanthropists, keen to throw a lifeline to cash-strapped but vital state and private, non-profit organisations in education, public health, social welfare and the arts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of FDI in Greece see Bitzenis, A., Tsitouras, A., Vlachos, V.A., Decisive FDI obstacles as an explanatory reason for limited FDI inflows in an EU member state: the case for Greece, *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 38:4, pp. 691-704 (2009)

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of how the fiscal crisis has chipped away at the comparative lack of mobility of Greek people see Manolis Pratsinakis, Social and discursive constraints and the decision to leave: Emigration from Greece at times of crisis, *Diaspora Working Paper Series*, no 7 2019, SEESOX

<sup>3</sup> On the engagement of Greece’s diaspora technocrats and academics with Greece’s public policy and governance see Antonis Kamaras, Andreas Georgiou – Diaspora Actor, SEESOX Diaspora Briefs. August 2017. On the rise of influence of diaspora and transnational philanthropy

“...the fiscal crisis generated the third largest migration wave in Greece’s bicentennial history as an independent nation-state, of close to half a million.”

Concurrently the fiscal crisis generated the third largest migration wave in Greece’s bicentennial history as an independent nation-state, of close to half a million, mostly highly educated individuals, who emigrated by and large to EU countries such as Germany and the UK.<sup>4</sup> In effect, the crisis further critically intensified the ongoing brain drain of highly accomplished Greeks which had started earlier but acquired alarming proportions in recent years.<sup>5</sup> This migration wave allowed a critical population cohort to acquire income, skills and values not readily available to crisis-hit Greece while at the same time denying them from their homeland in their capacity as taxpayers, citizens and economically active agents. As a corollary, *the crisis-driven migration wave put at the top of Greece’s political agenda the ways through which the diaspora can be induced to reengage with Greece* via the institution of the expatriate vote<sup>6</sup>.

### The research community on Greece’s Diaspora & Homeland Relationship

The Institute for Migration and Diaspora Studies at the University of Athens has mostly focused, in the recent past, in immigration to Greece. The Center of Intercultural and Migration Studies of the University of Crete, which is under the University’s Department of Primary Education has been conducting very significant work on diaspora issues but with a specific focus on education. The University of Macedonia has also established a commendable track record on research on brain drain prior and during the crisis and on Greeks from the Former Soviet Union. Scholars at the Center of Planning and Economic Research (KEPE), a year later also published a report which comprehensively relates this research agenda to the crisis-shaped context of diaspora & homeland interactions<sup>7</sup>. Individual scholars from other institutions, such as the University of Athens and Panteion University, have made important contributions on such issues as the diaspora and Greece’s foreign policy and diaspora engagement at the subnational level. ELIAMEP has committed significantly both to the study of in-migration to Greece and to the brain drain phenomenon in Greece and South East Europe at large<sup>8</sup>.

Relatedly, South East European Studies at the University of Oxford (SEESOX) responded to the challenge by setting up the Greek Diaspora Project in 2015, a research unit which sought to relate the wider diaspora and development literature to the Greek case.<sup>9</sup> Since

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during the fiscal crisis see Antonis Kamaras, *Diaspora and Transnational Philanthropy in Greece-Report of the Diaspora Philanthropy Commission*, November 2019. In the economy some of the most emblematic investments by multinational firms in Greece during and in the aftermath of the fiscal crisis have involved firms with diaspora Greek at the helm, such as Phillip Morris’s CEO Andre Calantzopoulos and Pfizer’s CEO Albert Bourla.

<sup>4</sup> See Lois Labrianidis and Manolis Pratsinakis *Greece’s new Emigration at times of Crisis GreeSE Paper No.99 Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe* May 2016

<sup>5</sup> For an account of Greece’s brain drain and the structural forces underpinning it see Lois Labrianidis (2014) *Investing in Leaving: The Greek Case of International Migration of Professionals, Mobilities*, 9:2, 314-335

<sup>6</sup> On the subject of the diaspora’s right to vote, as a political issue rising to prominence due to crisis-driven migration see Antonis Kamaras, *The diaspora vote as a dividing line in the Greek political system*, *Book’s Journal*, 6 October 2019 (in Greek)

<sup>7</sup> Cavounidis, J., *The Emigration of Greeks and Diaspora Engagement Policies for Economic Development*, Report 76, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Consult respectively the relevant websites at the Universities of Athens and Crete <http://emmedia.pspa.uoa.gr/fysiognwmia.html>, <http://www.ediamme.edc.uoc.gr/index.php?information>. At the University of Macedonia the doyenne of the studies of Greeks from the ex-Soviet Union, Professor Effie Voutira, and other researchers in the same domain, belong to the University’s Department of Balkan, Slavic and Eastern Studies. On diaspora engagement with the homeland at the subnational level see the work of Professor Vicky Chrysanthopoulou, at the University of Athens, at <http://scholar.uoa.gr/vchrys/publications>. International Relation scholars at Panteion University have done important work on the role of the Greek diaspora in Greece’s foreign policy, see Conostas D., Platias A. (1993) *Diasporas in World Politics: An Introduction*. In: Conostas D.C., Platias A.G. (eds) *Diasporas in World Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. For ELIAMEP emigration is one of its long-standing specialization areas, see <http://www.eliamep.gr/en/topics/migration/>

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the research agenda of the Greek Diaspora Project see, [https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/greek\\_diaspora\\_project\\_ws\\_report\\_v4.pdf](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/greek_diaspora_project_ws_report_v4.pdf)

then, SEESOX's Greek Diaspora Project has accumulated a significant body of work, within the diaspora and development taxonomy of economics, politics and philanthropy/voluntarism, through the output of its research team and network of scholars. This diverse output, on diaspora & homeland relations, is comprised of edited volumes, discussion papers, conference contributions, surveys, policy reports, opinion pieces and blog entries. The main foci of this output have included brain drain dynamics, the drivers of the diaspora's political participation with Greece, transnational and diaspora philanthropy, the digital mapping out of diaspora associational actions and diaspora elite engagement with Greece<sup>10</sup>.

As with the example of the Greek Diaspora at SEESOX, this type of work can be built upon both by scholars resident in important host countries of Greece's diaspora communities as well as by researchers resident in Greece. A variety of examples addressed below can illuminate the division of labour between research conducted abroad and in Greece, a division of labour that includes collaborative projects in terms of research design and implementation.

BREXIT will one way or another affect the UK's Greek community and thus ultimately influence the latter's interaction with Greece.<sup>11</sup> US tax exemptions of cross-border philanthropic giving by US nationals affects the capacity of Greek-Americans to donate to institutions and causes in Greece. Germany's attraction to Greek medical professionals shapes the know-how and expertise that they might be able to bring back to Greece in the future. All these research subjects that relate to the host countries of Greece's three leading diaspora communities worldwide need to be complemented by additional research, on respectively: the drivers of Greek policy towards the interests of UK Greeks; the governance of state and non-profit organisations which seek or can access Greek-American philanthropy; and on the type of public health reforms that can induce Greek medical professionals to return to Greece or engage in brain circulation processes, if they choose to stay at such host countries as Germany for the long term.

Importantly, University departments and research centers located in Greece, such as the ones mentioned above, possess an irreplaceable expertise if we are to enlarge our comprehension of the diaspora & homeland relationship in the fiscal crisis and post crisis era. Here are some more examples: Research on in-migration to Greece and on the educational institutions of the Greek diaspora can be productively applied to the issue of education of the children of fiscal crisis repatriates; experts on diaspora lobbying in the US are best positioned to analyse how Greece's fiscal crisis has affected the mobilizational aptitude of Greek-Americans on behalf of Greece's national interests; and scholarship on the assimilation of ex-Soviet Union Greeks in Greece is foundational to understanding patterns of their crisis-driven re-expatriation.

## Diaspora & homeland relations as a comparative phenomenon

As there is no state without a diaspora, diaspora studies are richly comparative at a global level.

Indicatively, the term 'brain drain' was coined in the UK in the post WW II period and

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive outlook of the Greek Diaspora Project's research output, see <http://seesoxdiaspora.org/>

<sup>11</sup> SEESOX, in partnership with Dianeosis, has conducted an extensive survey on the attitudes of UK Greeks, BREXIT also being investigated in that context. This survey's publication is forthcoming.

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reflected concerns that the US, with its better funded universities, was attracting UK scientists in increasing numbers<sup>12</sup>. Likewise, political scientists specialising on the US, a country better known for the ethnic communities that it hosts rather than its own diaspora, have developed a robust literature on Democrat and Republican strategies designed to attract the US expatriate vote and political donations.<sup>13</sup>

*“The issue of the diaspora vote has generated a substantial scholarly debate due to the rise of transnationalism worldwide.”*

The diaspora and development literature has as its main focus the relationship between diaspora communities in developed host states originating from developing homeland states. Migration from Central and South East European countries to Northern European countries is also a very significant phenomenon.<sup>14</sup>

The issue of the diaspora vote has generated a substantial scholarly debate due to the rise of transnationalism worldwide as has the development by various homeland states of state mechanisms and policies designed to harness diaspora resources to government and state priorities.<sup>15</sup> The concepts of social remittances and of institutional distance provide helpful tools with which to analyse the possibilities and limitations in the engagement of Greek diaspora scientists, technocrats and organisations in policy making in Greece.<sup>16</sup>

*“In philanthropy we highlight the work done on Jewish-American philanthropy to Israel, by far the most well-researched category of diaspora philanthropic investment.”*

In the domain of the economy, we note work done on how diaspora portfolio investors might have differentiated risk perceptions from the generic international portfolio investor, on how diaspora networks in the IT sector have been critical to the development of homeland IT enterprises and, more generally, how the experience of present-day transnationalism confers structural power to elite diaspora businessmen and managers<sup>17</sup>. The literature on the role of diaspora communities in the export performance of homeland enterprises is also relevant as is that of the role of diaspora ethnic business networks in FDI taking place in homelands.<sup>18</sup>

In philanthropy we highlight the work done on Jewish-American philanthropy to Israel, by far the most well-researched category of diaspora philanthropic investment, both in terms of comprehensiveness of the relevant surveys and the qualitative analysis of the dynamics shaping the relationship between the diaspora grantor and the homeland grantee,<sup>19</sup> More generally, diaspora philanthropy has engaged wider scholarly attention,

<sup>12</sup> Giannoccolo, P., The Brain Drain: A Survey of the Literature (April 7, 2009). Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, Department of Statistics, Working Paper No. 2006-03-02. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1374329> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1374329>

<sup>13</sup> See indicatively, Dark III, T., Americans Abroad: The Challenge of a Globalized Electorate, PD: Political Science and Politics, 36 (4), 733-740, 2003

<sup>14</sup> On migration from the Balkans see Triantaffylidou, A. and Gropas, R, Voting with their feet: Highly Skilled Emigrants from Southern Europe, American Behavioral Scientist, 58 (12), opp. 1614-1633, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> On the diaspora vote see Rainer Bauböck (2010) Studying Citizenship Constellations, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36:5, 847-859 and on state – diaspora relations Gamlen, A. Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance, International Migration Review, Volume 48, Issue 1, pp., 180-217, Fall 2014

<sup>16</sup> See, Levitt, P., Social Remittances: Culture as a Development Tool, The International Migration Review, 32 (4), 926-948, 1998 and Brinkerhoff, J., David and Goliath: Diaspora Organisations as partners in the development industry, Public Administration and Development, 31 (1), 37-49, 2011

<sup>17</sup> See indicatively, Schimmelpfennig, A and Gardner, E.H., Lebanon-Weathering the Perfect Storms, IMF Working Paper, Saxenian, R., From Brain Drain to Brain Circulation: Transnational Communities and Regional Upgrading in India and China, Studies in International Comparative Development, 40 (2) pp.35-61 and Lessinger, J., Indian Immigrants in the United States – The Emergence of a transnational population, in Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora, edited by Parekh, P., Singh, G., Vertovec, S., Taylor and Francis, 165-182, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> On homeland exports and the diaspora see indicatively, Aleksynska, M., Peri, G., Isolating the network effect of immigrants on trade, Discussion Paper Series, No 6941, IZA, 2012 and Bettin, G., Lo Turco, A., A Cross-Country View on South-North Migration and Trade: Dissecting the Channels, Emerging Markets Finance & Trade, July-August 2012, Vol 48, No 4, pp. 4-29 and on the diaspora and FDI see, Leblanq, D., Familiarity breeds investment: diaspora networks and international investment, American Political Science Review, Vol. 104, Issue 3, AUGUST 2010, pp. 584-600.

<sup>19</sup> Fleisch, Eric Sasson, Theodore, The New Philanthropy: American Jewish Giving to Israeli Organizations, Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies Brandeis University, April 2012 and Fleish, E., Israeli NGOs and American Jewish Donors: The Structures and Dynamics of Power Sharing in a New Philanthropic Era, Brandeis University, unpublished PhD Thesis, 2014.

drawing in an increasing number of diaspora and homeland pairings, from which research on Greek diaspora philanthropy to the homeland can benefit.<sup>20</sup>

## Greece and its Diaspora: The need for multidisciplinary synergies

As important as the comparative perspective is, it is imperative that Greek diaspora studies link up with leading research domains in Greece, so that the diaspora & homeland interaction is studied from a genuine multidisciplinary perspective. Such complementarity is also the measure of the importance of research collaborations on the diaspora & homeland relationship, between such institutions as SEESOX and ELIAMEP. Indicatively, we select the following five disciplinary domains where SEESOX and ELIAMEP, together with other research centers and university departments, located in Greece and abroad, can catalyse important research work:

*“...it is imperative that Greek diaspora studies link up with leading research domains in Greece.”*

- In European Studies, the survey of the brain drain and gain phenomenon is inextricably connected with such issues as the EU’s freedom of movement and the debate on North-South transfers within the EU (who transfers what to whom). The actual or potential impact of important diaspora communities in major EU member -countries and their relationship with Greece, such as the Greek community in Germany, also merits investigation from a European Studies perspective.
- In Security and Foreign Policy studies, the evolution of the Greek-American lobby is significant in terms of identifying sources of conduct of Greek foreign and national security policy while also being a factor that needs to be assessed in the interpretation of Turkish national security and foreign policy.
- In the study of Culture, and Religion, productive lines of inquiry can be pursued such as on Greek Orthodoxy in Greece and abroad, and how they influence each other; on values transmission from diaspora communities to Greece and vice versa, both at the wider society and at the family unit levels, particularly in view of the crisis-driven migration of the last decade; and on the state of governance of Greek language instruction abroad and its impact on the reproduction and evolution of Greek identity among diaspora communities.
- In Migration Studies, there are substantial opportunities in adding to the focus on in-migration the focus on out-migration particularly from a comparative South East European perspective, where we can build on the longstanding commitment, to Greece’s surrounding region, by Greek state university departments and research institutes.
- *In Economics, well-developed research efforts on Greek export and FDI-attraction underperformance can take on board the diaspora factor*, in order to evaluate future trends in these two domains. Likewise, the thorough literature on Greek fiscal policy on taxes, social contributions and pensions is well-positioned to evaluate the feasibility and roadblocks on the way to a brain gain-friendly fiscal policy stance.

<sup>20</sup> See indicatively, Johnson, P., *Diaspora Philanthropy: Influences, Initiatives and Issues*. Boston.MA, The Philanthropic Initiative Inc, and the Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University, 2007, Sidel, M., *A Decade of Research and Practice of diaspora philanthropy in the Asia Pacific Region: the State of the Field*, University of Iowa Working Paper, 2008 and Anheier, H. K., and List, R.2000. *Cross-border Philanthropy-An Exploratory Study of International Giving in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and Japan*. Centre for Civil Society, the John Hopkins University

## Conclusion

*“...substantial opportunities still await to be pursued, though an effective division of labour between research units and centers in Greece and abroad.”*

Important steps have been taken to address research-wise, the transformative impact of the fiscal crisis and of the post crisis era in the diaspora & homeland relationship. Significant research resources, predating the fiscal crisis, have been committed in Greece and elsewhere in the study of the diaspora & homeland relationship. Yet, very substantial opportunities still await to be pursued, though an effective division of labour between research units and centers in Greece and abroad. By combining field presence in the homeland and in important host countries the dynamics and implications of the transformed diaspora & homeland relationship can be most satisfactorily explored. SEESOX and ELIAMEP are committed to the catalyzing of such combinations both between themselves and through the open and inclusive engagement with research units and individual scholars, either in leading, in diaspora studies, Greek universities or universities in the countries that host the most important diaspora communities. This joint commitment will be resolutely based on a comparative as well as multi-disciplinary perspective.