

International Conference
The Challenge of Reform in Greece, 1974-2009
Assessment & Prospects
May 8th - 9th, 2009
Yale University, Hellenic Studies Program



Despite constant lip-service to reform in the public discourse, and several actual waves of reform since 1974, there has been very little produced by way of systematic scholarly assessment of Greece's reform experience over the last nearly 35 years. This conference provided a platform to a number of scholars from Greece, Turkey, the UK and the US to discuss the Greek reform experience and assess its prospects across most sectors of socioeconomic life. The papers that were presented were analytically and empirically rich. They came from public policy, economics and legal backgrounds and analysed the reasons of failure of reform as well as the prospect of improvement.

Organized by:

Stathis Kalyvas, Professor, Yale University;

George Pagoulatos, Associate Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece;

Haridimos Tsoukas, Professor ALBA Graduate Business School, Greece & University of Warwick, UK

Two GPSG members presented papers:

Dr. Stella Ladi, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Sheffield

**Institutional Reform and Soft Europeanization:
The Transfer of the Ombudsman Institution to Greece**

Policy reform and policy innovation, are central to the study of public administration. Processes of Europeanization have shifted the focus of the analysis from uni-dimensional, state-centred approaches to multi-dimensional processes but their importance should not be exaggerated. This paper argues that soft mechanisms of Europeanization have initialized institutional reform in member-states. What is interesting is that soft mechanisms of Europeanization can be equally effective to hard mechanisms given that the policy preferences of the domestic actors are reformative. The EU functions as a platform of best practices and policy transfer mechanisms are put into action in order for the member-states to pick and choose institutions. Member-states according to the timing, time and tempo adjust their policies and institutions.

The case of the transfer of the Ombudsman institution to Greece amply demonstrates the importance of soft Europeanization and of its processes. Furthermore, the case of the introduction of the Ombudsman institution is an interesting case of successful institutional reform which took at least 7 years to be completed. The Greek Ombudsman was established in 1997 while the discussion for its introduction had already started in 1990. It has been active for the last 11 years which gives the opportunity for both commenting on the introduction of the institution as well as assessing its credibility and its functioning.

Dr. Dimitris Tsarouhas, Assistant Professor in European Politics, Bilkent University

**Intentions, Policies, Impasse:
PASOK and Welfare Reform in Greece**

In line with rising levels of economic growth and the attainment of political stability, welfare politics has become a key component of Greek public policy, including its universally-celebrated and

hardly-ever-implemented reform agenda. For the centre-left in particular (in this paper identified with the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK), the welfare state has been, at least in theory, a manifestation of its commitment to combining high growth rates with redistributive policies. In the light of the longevity in power PASOK enjoyed after 1981, this paper analyzes the relationship between the Greek welfare state and the social democratic party. Looking at health and pension policies in particular, it assesses the social democrats' record in office and the degree to which PASOK has influenced the direction and evolution of the welfare state.

Empirically, the paper argues that successive PASOK governments have strengthened the financial aspect of social policy in Greece, rapidly increasing social expenditure as part of GDP. On the qualitative side, PASOK is credited with important innovations in welfare policy in the 1980s, with the establishment of the National Health Service (ESY) being its jewel in the crown. Reform-wise, however, the paper finds that the party has been unsuccessful in improving the efficiency and representative character of welfare services. To account for this failure, the paper employs Schmidt's discursive institutionalist framework to argue that a strong case for welfare reform has yet to be made in the Greek context. In combination with problematic policy legacies and disputed policy preferences, sustainable welfare reform has proven an elusive goal for the Greek centre-left.