

**CENTRE FOR PROGRESSIVE POLICY RESEARCH – A NEW,  
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC THINK TANK IN GREECE**

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In the post-1989 era, sterile ideological arguments and clashes have long passed their expiry date. European societies demand solutions to pressing social and economic problems rather than vague ideological statements or expressions of nationalist sentiments. That does not mean that the role of ideas and values in politics has ended, far from it. It means, however, that the era in which policies could be straightforwardly derived from ideological convictions has gone. European societies today are much more complex and differentiated than ever. Policies must reflect that complexity rather than ideological purity. Values, such as the belief in equality, social cohesion and in public institutions, continue to be absolutely essential for a social-democratic agenda. The challenge, however, is to translate those values in specific policies; to combine value-based politics with political pragmatism. Unlike perhaps social democratic politics in the past, social democracy today should see itself anchoring its policies in values rather than ideological systems, and seek to operationalize those values in a globalized, uncertain world. Such a process of operationalization is an open-ended process, calling for experimentation, freshness of ideas, and overcoming old but sterile ways of thinking.

Greek society, in particular, is more demanding today, asking for solutions to accumulating problems, instead of populist remedies which were prevalent in past public debates. The question “how can the centre-left modernisation of society be legitimated as a central political project?”, which dominated much of the centre-left agenda in the 1990s, has been replaced by a more complex and open-ended question: “Which are the appropriate social-democratic policies for the country in the era of globalization?”.

For the social-democratic modernization project to regain its momentum there is an urgent need for a progressive think tank, generating ideas and policies to address social problems. A well organised think tank is necessary, with the independence to open new vistas in social-democratic thinking and the ability to produce radical policy recommendations, without being affected by the exigencies and antagonisms of party politics or electoral pressures. Being autonomous from governmental and party political interests it will aspire to encourage real change. By taking the long-term view it will hopefully inject strategic thinking and vision into a notoriously fractious political system that rarely sees beyond the next electoral cycle.

The Centre aims to bridge the gap between intellectuals, politicians and policy-makers by providing a laboratory for progressive thinking, an open ground for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and a reservoir of social democratic policies. Research on specific problems and bold suggestions to address them will contribute to the re-shaping of the social-democratic agenda. It will also contribute towards a more rational political debate rather than one that is shaped by the cult of personalities and life-style.

In the search for a modern and credible social-democratic perspective, aligned with the changes the world is undergoing, our common ground and guiding values are:

- The value of *open society* – a society capable of continuously reforming itself, adapting to new circumstances, and open to novelty
- The values of *collective good, public institutions, equality and social cohesion.*
- The value of *smart government and support for social self-organization*- a state that thinks strategically, acts rationally, with technologically advanced means, for the collective good, assisting, at the same time, the self-organisation of individuals, civil society, and socio-economic institutions.

The think tank should respond appropriately to the ever more globalized environment. International experience has shown that the best ideas come

through working with external partners, share best practices in public policy problems and look for effective ways to tackle international and regional challenges. Therefore, it is planned to extend with other think tanks and networks across continents, especially in Europe. The European integration project should also be one of its main areas of research and networking activity.

The administrative bodies of the Centre for Progressive Policy Research are the Board of Trustees, the Scientific Committee and the Director. The think tank engages a number of Associate Fellows – Researchers in an annual action plan, in order to produce relevant research output. Apart from these studies and the reflection papers, the Centre organises policy seminars in order to facilitate interaction among scientists, intellectuals and policy makers and even more open public events, workshops and publications to communicate ideas. However, it is fully electronic, based largely in a multifunctional website [www.kepp.gr](http://www.kepp.gr) via which it communicates with the outside world.