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The Effects of the Crisis on Society and Institutions

The EPLO event on the “Facets and Experiences of the Crisis in Greece: Proposals for Re-structuring” which took place on Monday 11 March at its headquarters in Athens, offered the opportunity for many interesting remarks from the audience and the engagement of the speakers to engage in a lively dialogue.

All the speakers noted that the measures taken to deal with the economic crisis, which is bringing about highly adverse effects on society and serious blows to democracy, are characterized, as a general observation, by lack of justice and morality.

Prof. Vasso Artinopoulou, Panteion University of Social and Political Science, f. Vice Rector, Head of Unit for Criminal Justice and Criminology and Unit for Gender Issues at the EPLO, chaired the event. In her speech, she focused on the social effects of the crisis, poverty, exclusion, depression and suicide, and disapproved of certain statements that have been expressed by government officials such as that indicating that the number of suicides has increased by only 17%.

In their addresses, the speakers referred to the following:

Ioannis Pottakis, PhD. Philosophy – Former Minister: “Justice, the foundation of democracy, is not part of the measures taken. When things go well, both businesses and workers are winning. When things go badly, as they do now, workers are the only ones to lose. In the meantime, the situation is at a deadlock. The GDP is continuously decreasing, while the debt is continuously increasing. “Political solutions” are given, while morality and justice are sidelined as if they are not essential components of politics.”

Fotini Tsalikoglou, Psychology Professor at Panteion University – Author: Prof. Tsalikoglou remarked that politicians lack “in-awareness” and characterized the fact that 1.5 million Greeks are unemployed, which affects their families and hence 4.5 million people, and leads to social exclusion and depression, as a scandal.

Marina Oikonomou-Lalioti, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, A’ Psychiatric Clinic of the Faculty of Medicine of the National & Capodistrian University of Athens: “The economic crisis turns into a human crisis, with a continuous increase in the consumption of medication and alcohol, as well as in the number of suicides. In 2008, 1.8% of those calling the Depression Helpline referred to economic reasons while in 2012 it was 39.2%. It is crucial that employment is supported and debts alleviated.

Dr. Anastasia Sotiriadou, General Director for Coordination, General Secretariat for Gender Equality: Dr. Sotiriadou analyzed how the economic crisis nullifies women’s right to equality and the equal right to education, a prerequisite of democracy.

Nikoletta Giantsi-Meletiadou, Associate Professor of Medieval History at the Faculty of Philosophy of the National & Capodistrian University of Athens: Prof. Giantsi-Meletiadou referred to the Middle Ages, the period during which the system of exploitation and subordination was formed and moral rules began to fade into economic practice.



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Vasilis Tsevrenis, Lawyer, PhD in Public Law, National & Capodistrian University of Athens, Specialized Researcher of the Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights (MFHR), *“Human rights” and “Poverty”*: Dr. Tsevrenis referred to the human rights that are nullified by poverty, brought about through the measures taken for dealing with the economic crisis and noted that “the protection of human dignity is one of the foundations of the European Union. However, the reality is different”.

Spyridon Flogaitis, the EPLO Director, Effie Mpekou-Mpalta, the Secretary General for Welfare of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, Zetta Makri, the Secretary General for Gender Equality, and G. Stamatopoulos, Director of the Press Office of the Municipality of Athens on behalf of the Athens Mayor, delivered greetings.