

## **“Greeks, united, can once again surprise the entire world.”**

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The goal of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation is to help “make our world a better place to live and create,” said the Co-President of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Andreas Dracopoulos, in an interview to ANA-MPA news agency. In his interview, Mr. Dracopoulos talks about the SNF’s recently announced major grant initiative in the Health Sector in Greece, expected to exceed €200 million, notes that the inaugural operation period of the emblematic Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center “fills us with optimism,” and closes by sharing his belief that “all of us Greeks, if we are united, can once again pleasantly surprise the entire world and turn everyone’s gaze to Greece, for all the right reasons.”

*Read the full interview of the Co-President of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Andreas Dracopoulos, in ANA-MPA by Maria Kouzinopoulou, below:*

**Q.: Recently, the Foundation announced its largest grant to date, concerning the Health Sector in Greece—with the exception of the SNFCC. What was the rationale behind this grant initiative and why did you choose to support Health?**

A.: Upon the completion and delivery of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), the construction of which is essentially a major intervention in the field of Culture, we decided to turn our attention, in a similar way, to the crucial sector of Health, by pursuing a series of major interventions throughout Greece. This initiative adds to the multidimensional activities of the Foundation in the area of Health, which is one of the main program areas of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).

The new initiative, expected to exceed €200 million, is implemented in close co-operation with the Greek Ministry of Health, based on a proposal by the Ministry, indicating the most pressing, prioritized, needs of the Greek Health sector. The new grants include the construction of a new building for the General Hospital of Komotini, the creation of a Children’s Hospital in Thessaloniki, the reconstruction and complete outfitting of the Nursing Sisters’ building at Evangelismos Hospital, as well as the reinforcement of the fleet of EKAV (National Center for Emergency Care) with new and upgraded helicopters. In time, it is our intention that these grants will be accompanied by additional education and infrastructure projects, in collaboration with the corresponding Ministries.

As you may know, this particular initiative comes as an addition to a series of previous grants in the Health sector, implemented over time, which include, among others, the recent SNF grant to EKAV, for the procurement of 143 state-of-the-art ambulances and the digital upgrade of the organization’s operations center. It is also worth mentioning initiatives such as the Mobile Medical Units (MMU), providing healthcare programs to residents of islands and remote areas in Greece, with the objective of meeting the basic need for open access in reliable and comprehensive healthcare services for all Greek residents. The MMU have already completed 29 missions. Other noteworthy grants in the Health sector, include the grant, totaling €16 million, supporting the replacement of seven obsolete linear accelerators

in public hospitals around the country, as well as the grant for the renovation of all Pediatric Intensive Care Units (ICUs) in Greece and many more.

**Q.: Can the support of philanthropic organizations resolve the chronic problems of the State?**

A.: The SNF *cannot* and *does not want to* replace the State. No private philanthropic organization can assume the role of the State and unilaterally provide a solution to the increasingly complex socio-economic challenges, both in Greece and internationally. We work in a complementary, auxiliary manner, in order to contribute, to the best of our abilities, through our actions, towards building a better society; a better future for all.

We believe that public-private partnerships, conducted with full transparency and common goals, can bring about multiple and immediate benefits to society. The brightest example of such an effective partnership is the creation of the SNFCC. The successful implementation of this complex project paves the way—as a source of inspiration, but also as an example of best practices—for similar initiatives. We are following the same rationale with regards to our new grant initiative in the Greek Health Sector.

**Q.: In addition to Health, which other areas does the Foundation intend to support?**

A.: The SNF makes grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and sports, and social welfare, seeking to support in a comprehensive manner, with consistency and planning, organizations and projects that have the ability to bring about positive and lasting changes for society at large. Since 1996, the Foundation has committed more than \$2.4 billion, through almost 4,000 grants to nonprofit organizations in 113 nations around the world.

SNF grants may involve support to a small-scale organization situated in a provincial city, directly benefiting the members of the local community, as well as far-reaching initiatives that have thousands of beneficiaries. We treat all grants in the same way, regardless of size. We always try to operate with flexibility, but also within a predefined framework. As the Anglo-Saxons say: “flexibility within structure.” We regard our grantees as partners, with whom we work together in order to contribute, to the best of our abilities, to creating a better tomorrow for all.

In Greece, the SNF has continued to respond to urgent local needs by providing relief against the severe effects of the country’s socioeconomic crisis through three nearly complete major grant initiatives totaling approximately €300 million, in addition to its ongoing grants.

In addition to its regular and ongoing international grant-making activities, the SNF recently committed €140 million to establish the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) in Baltimore, MD, US. This multidisciplinary center will debate, explore and promote civil discourse and civic engagement worldwide. The SNF’s gift to JHU follows another landmark gift of €60 million to Rockefeller University, a world-renowned academic and medical research institution, in New York, NY, US, to create a new and expanded university campus, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation-David Rockefeller River Campus (SNF-DR).

In keeping with the Foundation's long-standing and extensive commitment to libraries worldwide, the SNF just announced a transformational gift of €53 million for the complete renovation of New York Public Library's Mid-Manhattan Central Circulating Branch and the creation of an endowment in support of its public programs. The library will re-open in 2020 as the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL)

Our goal in the years to come, is to continue to contribute in the best possible way, helping as much as we can, to make our world a better place to live and create.

**Q.: The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has implemented a comprehensive program to support Greek society against the effects of the economic crisis. Do you believe that the Foundation's vision of bringing about positive and lasting changes for society is finally being realized?**

A.: Our wish, but also our moral obligation, is to contribute, to the full extent of our abilities, to directly supporting and improving the lives of our fellow citizens, as well as in strengthening the social groups that are most vulnerable, both in Greece and abroad. At the same time, it is important for a philanthropic organization to be able to envision the "next steps," and thus contributing to building the foundations for the future. This is precisely the philosophy we followed approximately ten years ago, when the idea for the creation of the SNFCC was conceived, and this is the philosophy that continues to drive our philanthropic work today.

We do not want, nor can we substitute the State. We do our best and we are always careful and transparent in our philanthropic work, supporting initiatives that can bring about positive effects for society, both in the short and the long term.

**Q.: The SNFCC is your most emblematic grant. How do you assess the inaugural period of its operation?**

A.: In this inaugural period of just over one year, the SNFCC's operation and the response of the public fill us with optimism that positive and essential changes can indeed become reality. What was once merely a sketch on a piece of paper and a dream in our imagination, has taken now "flesh and bones." Before even opening its doors to the wide public, the SNFCC was embraced by the people, fulfilling our vision of creating a space that would be open and accessible to all, a "crack" through which the light of hope would get in, as Leonard Cohen would say, a staple of optimism for changing our everyday mentality and the way that all of us act and coexist in the public space.

**Q.: Are you optimistic about the recovery of the Greek economy and the exit from the crisis? And, finally, how would your ideal version of Greece?**

A.: I wish the day comes that institutions such as the SNF will not be necessary or, at least, will only fund initiatives that promote our culture and education; initiatives that lead us to the next day. However, until that day comes, it is our duty to help change the existing mentality and take the future in our hands; to regain our education and culture, in the broad sense.

Only with “philotimo,” hard work, civilized dialogue and public participation can we become part of a new collective narrative that will take us further and further. I am optimistic that all of us Greeks, if we are united, can once again pleasantly surprise the entire world and turn everyone’s gaze to Greece, for all the right reasons.