

1. What does philanthropy mean to you?

Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that caring for others, for our fellow human beings is what makes us all human, while Aristotle said that “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all”. These two approaches completely define the meaning of philanthropy for me personally, and for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. What I would like to point out here is the importance of understanding that philanthropy can be expressed in many different ways, all of which are equally important. Philanthropic activities expressed through the provision of financial support, such as the Foundation’s actions, are important, but volunteering is another, different way of practicing philanthropy, and it is just as important.

2. Why is there a tendency among so many wealthy and affluent Greeks, who could make a philanthropic contribution, to focus on “Me” rather than “Us”?

One of the fundamental reasons is lack of education, which I would like to define as lack of a sense of responsibility, as well as an absolute lack of understanding of what it means to be part of a community, and how this social solidarity is expressed. We shouldn’t, of course, ascribe individual responsibility only. The State is also, to a large extent, responsible for the phenomenon you described in your question. The State’s failure to function efficiently and meritocratically, the absence of institutions, and the lack of infrastructure (moral, material and institutional) deter people who could make a contribution to benefit society at large, or serve as an excuse for the lack of action on their part.

3. How did you decide to go ahead with the 100 million euro program for the Greek Crisis? What motivated you? Are you happy with its results so far?

As you know, the Foundation’s philanthropic activity began in 1996 and, since then, over 80% of its total grants have been made in Greece. Simultaneously with all of our other grants, we decided, in 2006, to fund the construction of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC). This decision was based

on the conviction that the project has substantial transformational potential, on a cultural, educational, environmental, social and economic level.

Along the way, however, came this crisis of unprecedented severity and length, which made us think hard, in the same way that we thought hard, due to the crisis, about the construction of the SNFCC. After serious consideration and being fully aware of the overall situation, we decided to go ahead with the project's construction following our original plan. We are convinced that the construction of the SNFCC becomes even more significant under the current socioeconomic conditions. It is a project of national importance and a project of hope, a testament and a commitment to the country's future, at a critical historical juncture. It is also an engine of short- to mid-term economic stimulus, which is essential under the current economic circumstances in Greece.

At the same time, we could not ignore the severe economic recession and its consequences, which were and are still felt across all levels of society. In recognition of the gravity of the situation, we realized that we had a great responsibility, and that it was our duty to do more and act immediately. Thus we decided to commit (above and beyond our regular and ongoing activities) an additional €100,000,000, in order to help ease the consequences of the crisis in Greece, focusing on providing immediate and much needed relief.

Out of the results of this initiative so far, and apart from the fact that there is tangible evidence of success in our goal of providing immediate relief to the population groups affected, what satisfies us the most is the fact that we have found notable partners for its implementation. The Foundation considers grantee organizations as its partners, and we are fully aware that our philanthropic work could not be done without them, as all of our grants are directed to non profit organizations. We will, of course, be even happier when the entire sum of €100,000,000 has been allocated (already, within one year, we have distributed half of the total amount, through 157 grants), as well as when, and I stress this point, others come forward to follow our example.

4. What are your criteria for selecting the programs and proposals you support?

To begin with, there are two very simple and basic criteria that guide and define our decisions and our choices:

First, does the proposed grant add value to society? Can the grant, in this specific environment, alleviate pain and restore dignity? Second, are the people involved ethical, professional, committed and able to implement the project's mission? This is the starting point for all of our grants, and it is always followed by a thorough evaluation of the proposal, based on transparent and meritocratic criteria.

5. Do you believe there can be private-public partnerships for such programs in Greece?

Not only I believe it, but we have also done it, since the SNFCC is a unique, in terms of size and, subsequently, an exemplary project – the result of a private-public partnership in Greece, which, in addition, serves a philanthropic purpose. In order to underline the importance of such partnerships, I will simply say that things cannot work any other way. Globalization and the technological revolution in recent years have highlighted, in addition to substantial benefits, a series of complex and unprecedented problems on a global scale. It is now obvious that neither the public nor the private sector is in a position to provide an effective response to these problems on their own. Collaboration between the two is essential, and it's a one-way street.

6. You are in charge of a Foundation with global reach. Are you planning new initiatives or synergies with similar foundations in other countries?

The answer to this question follows on from the previous one. We are always open to creative collaborations and the exchange of know-how and ideas, and we encourage such initiatives. The sole criterion is the absolute philanthropic nature of such efforts, and the total absence of returns/benefits defined by non-philanthropic parameters.

Besides, our faith in the concept of collaboration between foundations led us to organize last year our first international conference on the role of philanthropy during times of economic and social crisis, with the participation of numerous European and American foundations. The conference is a new idea and effort for all of us at the Foundation, based on the fact that discussing and exchanging ideas that may lead to potential partnerships is an essential tool for responding to the multiple and complex problems faced globally – problems that cannot be addressed effectively through isolated efforts.

The response to our first conference, both on a local and international level, led us to the decision to establish the conference as an annual event, always in Greece. Recognizing the value and potential impact of this conference requires hard work, but we believe we are on the right track. The second international conference hosted by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation will take place on June 27-28, 2013, in Athens, on the topic of *The Role of Philanthropy in the Context of a Welfare Society*.

7. It seems that Greek society, due to the crisis, is in despair. Extreme political powers are gaining ground. How do you think you could help, through your philanthropic/social action, to impede the propagation of such phenomena?

The phenomena you are referring to are complex and defined by a series of political, economic, social and ideological parameters. Subsequently, responding to them requires actions that go far beyond the philanthropic/social activities of one or more foundations. We mustn't forget that the scope of action of philanthropic foundations is subject to certain limits and, by extension, inherent limitations. Their role is, by definition, to complement rather than to replace. Philanthropic foundations, regardless of their size, can never replace the state. The common denominator of their actions is, by definition, providing relief, more than anything else. This is demonstrated by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's recent initiative to provide an additional €100,000,000 for the crisis in Greece. The aim of philanthropic activities must be primarily to provide relief for society and, by extension, to strengthen it. Society by itself, then, rejects extreme phenomena and situations as a result of being strengthened.