



ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΩΝ & ΒΙΟΜΗΧΑΝΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC & INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

*Online Conference on
Greece and the EU Recovery & Resilience Facility*

*Organized by the European Commission
in collaboration with
the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research - IOBE*

29 & 30 September 2021

**How can “Greece 2.0” transform the
Coronavirus crisis into an opportunity?**

Executive Summary

October 2021

The European Commission in collaboration with the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research - IOBE organized a two-day online Conference on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 September 2021, entitled “Greece and the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility” (Web page: www.iobe.gr/EC_Conference2021/).

This Executive Summary has been prepared by a team of IOBE researchers including Elias Demian, Niki Kalavrezou, Antonis Mavropoulos and Ismini Patta, coordinated by Georgios Gatopoulos, Head of IOBE International macroeconomics and Finance Unit, and supervised by Nikos Vettas, General Director of IOBE and Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business. The judgments on policy proposals contained in this report express the opinions of researchers of IOBE and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members or the Board of IOBE nor of the European Commission.

The researchers would like to thank officials from the European Commission for their valuable support and collaboration in the context of the conference’s organization, and in particular the DG ECFIN Resident Advisor in Athens, Chris Allen, and his team, especially Vasilis Nikitas, Eleni Polemidiotou and Irene Vlachaki. They would like to thank Kostas Valaskas from IOBE for his contribution to set up the conference web page, administrative staff of IOBE for their precious assistance, in particular Katerina Xanthi, Maria Kavvadia, Fania Christidi and Nancy Roussia, as well as staff from Wave Technologies for their technical support. Last but not least, the conference organizers would like to thank all guest speakers and panel moderators for their constructive interventions and all conference virtual participants who contributed to making this event a success. All remaining errors should be attributed to the authors alone.

The Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research - IOBE is a private, non-profit, public-benefit research organisation. It was established in 1975 with the dual purpose of promoting research on current problems and prospects of the Greek economy and its sectors and of generating reliable information, analysis and proposals for action that can be of high value in economic policy making.

ISBN 978-960-7774-02-6

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1. SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE

The European Commission in collaboration with the Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research - IOBE organized a two-day online Conference on 29 and 30 September 2021, on Greece and the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The underlying theme of the conference was how the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) “Greece 2.0” can transform the coronavirus crisis into an opportunity for the Greek society and economy. Notably, the Conference highlighted policies combining investments with reforms, while exploiting the financial instruments put in place by the EU framework. A set of nine panels discussed challenges and opportunities for Greece to pursue a resilient, sustainable, inclusive and extrovert recovery, while accelerating digital and green transitions.

- **Session 1. EU economic governance for recovery and resilience;** the discussants addressed the priorities of the EU policy framework and opportunities for Member States.
- **Session 2. Greece’s Recovery and Resilience Plan– a programme for investments and reforms;** the panel debated over the degree of ambition, considerable strengths and possible weaknesses of the Plan “Greece 2.0”.
- **Session 3. Digital transformation of the Greek economy and the public administration;** the discussion touched upon progress so far and key steps ahead for accelerating the transition in both the public and private sectors.
- **Session 4. RRP – moving from the plan towards implementation;** the aim was to discuss the challenges stemming from implementation of the Plan including through another Member State’s perspective.
- **Session 5. The prospects for Greece looking beyond the pandemic;** the opening session of the second day focused on the long-term economic perspective for Greece.
- **Session 6. Making an ambitious Green Transition;** key stakeholders with global and domestic insights discussed good practices for implementing the green transition.
- **Session 7. Implementing the RRP – Ensuring growth with social inclusion;** participants highlighted the importance of an effective social welfare state for a resilient recovery.
- **Session 8. Mobilising finance for Recovery and Resilience;** key domestic and international stakeholders elaborated on the loan financing instruments available under the RRF.
- **Session 9. RRP implementation to stimulate investments and exports in key sectors;** the discussion touched upon Greek businesses’ appetite for extroversion and investments.

The conference attracted a large number of digital participants, exceeding 1,000 viewers, representing the academic, journalistic, diplomatic, social partner, and business communities. Among the high caliber speakers, the program hosted two European Commissioners, five Greek Ministers, Members of the European and the Hellenic Parliament, prominent academics including one Nobel Laureate, Heads of independent authorities, senior representatives from other Member States, from the European Commission and other international organizations such as the EBRD and the World Bank and key stakeholders from the private sector.

The executive summary highlights the key takeaways from the various sessions. Links to the conference presentations, the full program, the background information memos and related sources are available in the Annex.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an abrupt and severe recessionary hit in 2020 across Europe and the whole world. Monetary and fiscal authorities across the globe put in operation sizable stimuli packages to ease the crisis effects and accelerate the economic recovery, which has gathered momentum during 2021. The policy response at the EU level has been unprecedented in terms of magnitude and speed. Solidarity and coordination were key elements for setting up the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), making available €723.8 billion, or 5.4% of EU GDP in 2020, over 2021-2026 to Member States to support reforms and investments to overcome the crisis and facilitate the green and digital transition. For its part, Greece has adopted an extensive package of short-term measures to support the economy during 2020-2021, while submitting in Spring 2021 its National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) “Greece 2.0” to the European Commission with more medium- to long-term reform and investment measures. The adoption of the Plan in summer 2021, foresees an inflow of €31.2 billion over 2021-2026, conditional upon the completion of milestones and targets in relation to specific policy reforms and investment projects.

The Opening Sessions

The **opening sessions of the 2-day conference (Session 1 and Session 5)** highlighted the opportunities stemming from the RRF at the EU level and the ambitious scope of the Greek RRP. A common underlying theme of the two opening sessions was that the RRF, as a “game changer”, should not be a missed opportunity for the Greek society and economy. Speakers acknowledged that the “road ahead will not be easy”, as there is need for a credible long-term path of fiscal discipline, which will strengthen sustainability without harming the recovery prospects. In her welcoming remarks, the **Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece, Ms. Niovi Ringou**, noted that the EU has put in place the largest fiscal stimulus package since its creation and expressed trust that, through proper and timely implementation of the envisaged reforms and investments, Greece will make the most of this opportunity.

The **European Commissioner for the Economy Mr. Paolo Gentiloni** stressed that the EU faced this crisis differently compared to previous ones. He identified three core policy lessons following the coronavirus crisis, (a) the need for the EU to react fast and strong when it comes to crises, (b) the need for solidarity and coordination at the EU policy level, amid concerns for increasing divergence among Member States, and (c) the important interplay between fiscal and monetary policies for a successful outcome. The **Minister of Finance, Mr. Christos Staikouras** highlighted the significance of fiscal credibility, which requires to strike a balance between required fiscal stimulus for economic recovery and medium-term sustainability. Among key priorities for EU economic governance looking forward, he stressed the importance to accelerate EU initiatives for the revision of the Stability and Growth Pact, the acceleration of the Banking and Capital Markets Union, plus the creation of the European Deposits’ Insurance Scheme.

The **European Commission Vice-President, Mr. Margaritis Schinas**, commended the design of the Greek RRP that was based on an explicit growth strategy and tackled the two big challenges of climate mitigation and digital transformation, while helping address the skills

mismatch problem of Greece and improving the business environment thereby leveraging much-needed private investments. The plan safeguarded policy continuity with recent reforms and had strong political ownership, while it was well connected with reforms which had been introduced in the recent years. **Professor of London School of Economics and 2010 Nobel Economics Prize Laureate, Sir Christopher Pissarides** highlighted the investment and productivity gaps as the two main challenges of the Greek economy, which have to be tackled through systematic reforms in the medium-term horizon. He re-iterated the crucial role of ownership of the RRP reforms, not only by the political system, but also and foremost by society itself.

Greece's RRP – Design and Implementation

One panel discussion (**Session 2**) was dedicated on elements of the design of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) “Greece 2.0”. Overall, the discussion emphasized the complementarity between reforms and investments, as well as the importance of public administration continuity and ownership. **Alternate Minister of Finance, Mr. Theodoros Skylakakis**, noted that the RRP is a unique opportunity for Greece to tackle three of its long-standing weaknesses, namely its introvert business model, its large informal economy and its persistent investment gap. Overcoming these three challenges would set the stage for a sustainable and durable economic recovery in the long run. He further mentioned that the RRP can be a catalyst for investments by the Greek SMEs, their digitalisation, and the green transition of the wider economy. **Member of Parliament and Shadow Minister of Development for SYRIZA, Mr. Alexis Haritsis**, acknowledged the positive nature of the RRP, and strongly advocated for setting up a relevant permanent mechanism at the EU level. He was critical on the Greek RRP for its insufficient focus on economic inequality and on the need for changing the production model. He suggested additional funding to be directed towards innovative start-ups, employment clauses to be attached as conditionality to loans, as well as for setting up regional industrial policy strategies. He further emphasized the need for transparent implementation of the Plan.

Deputy Director General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), Mr. Declan Costello, highlighted the novelty of the RRP instrument, for the first time combining reforms with investments under a performance-based instrument. He also stressed that the relationship between the EU and Greece has entered a new era, in which the Greek RRP was among the first to be adopted, and covers an ambitious and comprehensive set of reforms and investments. He further noted that the disbursements are conditional among specific milestones related to reforms and investment projects. He finally noted that timely and effective implementation will be key for the RRP to yield the expected positive effects on the Greek society and economy.

Another panel discussion (**Session 4**) was dedicated on elements of the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) “Greece 2.0”. Overall, the discussion emphasized the need to ensure timely implementation of the Plan, including by overcoming delays which could relate to lengthy procurement, judicial, or other administrative procedures. **Governor of the RRF Agency (under the Greek Ministry of Finance), Mr. Nikolaos Mantzoufas** referred to the importance of coordination and technical assistance from the European Commission, setting clear priorities and the management and control system to support and monitor the

implementation. He highlighted his Agency's objective to strike a balance between the speed and the need for transparency in the implementation process. He also mentioned the low cost of the loans' programme, where the European Investment Bank will co-finance up to 50% of the RRF budget for specific investments by the private sector. Among the various investment projects, he noted that nearly 57% of allocated funds concern green transition and digitalization, including upskilling and reskilling programmes, while one measure aims for the development of more than 700 local urban development plans, requiring the involvement of the local authorities. **Mayor of Trikala, President of the Greek Municipal Union (KEDE), Mr. Dimitris Papastergiou** stressed the importance of active participation by local governments, including through timely submission of their proposals. He noted that without pro-active local involvement and ownership, significant funding opportunities through the RRP may be missed.

The panel had a chance to also discuss implementation practices in another Member State which has also launched an ambitious RRP, the case of Portugal. **Vice President of the RRF Taskforce of the Ministry of Planning in Portugal, Mr. Mário Tavares da Silva**, elaborated on the Portuguese administration model of governance in relation to the RRP. He stressed the objective to strike the balance between centralized management and decentralized execution. The **Head of Unit for Greece at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), Ms. Julia Lendvai**, highlighted the importance of strong ownership by the member state of its RRP for effective implementation. She also noted that the RRF Agency is well equipped for implementation and has already developed appropriate audit procedures, while the European Commission's services responsible for the delivery of technical assistance are readily available to further assist. From the Greek public assets' perspective, the **CEO of the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF), Mr. Dimitris Politis**, highlighted the important synergies of the RRP with the HRADF action plans for improving the degree of exploitation of public property. He also noted the recent establishment of an independent unit within HRADF that will provide project preparation support aiming to advance the maturity of key investment projects, which is expected to contribute positively in the overall implementation of the RRP.

Accelerating the Green Transition

Key stakeholders involved in environmental and energy policies discussed international good practices and how the RRP is expected to promote the green transition in Greece (**Session 6**).

The importance of green investments for the Greek economy was highlighted by most speakers. As mentioned by the **Minister for Environment and Energy, Mr. Konstantinos Skrekas**, the next 5 years will see green investments of approximately €5 billion that are expected to mobilise complementary funds of up to €11 billion. Total investments that could be up to €44 billion are expected by 2030, with a multiplying effect in the economy's added value and employment. The above investments will be focused on improving the energy efficiency of the existing building stock, on accelerating the diffusion of electric mobility, and on the preservation of the natural ecosystem and biodiversity. To facilitate the implementation of the above projects, the Ministry will proceed with several reforms to remove bureaucratic barriers related to permitting and to facilitate the effectiveness of the actions funded.

The EU has kept a leading role in promoting green transition during the past years. To this effect, **the Principal Advisor of the Recovery & Resilience Task Force of the European Commission, Mr. Johannes Luebking**, noted the design and implementation of the Green Deal and its strategic objective to halve EU emissions by 2030 and make EU the first carbon neutral continent in 2050. The Green Deal, with the Fit for 55 package, the RRF and the EU climate law are only some of the main policy tools that will be used across the Member States to achieve these objectives. At least 37% of the RRF's budget is foreseen to be allocated to measures contributing towards the climate objective, while no measure approved under the RRF will have a detrimental impact to the environment, as set out in the so called "Do No Significant Harm" principle.

The Member of the European Parliament with Greens–European Free Alliance, Mr. Damian Boeselager, noted the importance for the green transition to be further promoted through actions which will complement the RRF budget. He praised the ambition of the Greek RRP, but said that it was important to avoid green-washing (unvalidated claims of environmental performance) through closely monitoring RRP implementation across all EU Member States. **The Practice Manager, Energy Global Practice of the World Bank Group, Mr. Sameer Shukla**, described the opportunities and challenges raised through the implementation of the Just Transition programme. In particular, he highlighted the need for active policies targeting to support the vulnerable social groups, in a context which offers an opportunity for business model transformation.

Greece has progressed in terms of generation of electricity from renewable energy sources (RES) significantly over the past period. **The President of the Hellenic Wind Energy Association (HWEA/ELETAEN), Mr. Panagiotis Ladakakos**, noted that daily generation of electricity from RES exceeded 60% in some cases, with the 48% deriving from wind power. However, the need for more medium and high voltage networks that will integrate smart features and technological innovation is necessary to support further penetration of RES in the energy mix of the Greek energy sector. **The Head of Policy of WWF Greece, Ms. Theodota Nantsou** expressed concerns about the current pace of pursuing the 2050 environmental targets, while acknowledged that the RRP offers significant opportunities plus synergies with other existing green strategies. She finally highlighted the importance of social dialogue and transparency, which can increase social acceptance and involvement in the green movement. Amid the current global energy price surge, panelists expressed consensus that the pursued green policies not only are not causing the current crisis, but also that their effective implementation will safeguard affordable energy prices in the medium-term.

Deepening the Digital Transformation

Greece's digital transformation performance accelerated substantially during the pandemic, but remains well below EU average. The pandemic crisis highlighted the importance of digital infrastructure for a resilient recovery. Whilst an extensive application of digital processes in public administration, healthcare, education, employment and tourism has been observed since the onset of the pandemic, significant scope remains for both the public and private sectors to exploit further digital infrastructure and technology.

Digitalisation in public administration and the private sector was highlighted as high priority in the Greek and the European Commission's regulatory agenda (**Session 3**). The new national digital transformation strategy, the "Digital Bible" was recently adopted by the Ministry of Digital Governance. It aims to boost the integration of new technologies by businesses, improve the country's connectivity infrastructures, enhance digital skills for businesses, citizens and the public administration, and improve digital access to public services by further extending the use of the digital processes and tools, in particular through the gov.gr portal, across all public administration sectors. The COVID 19 pandemic has helped accelerate the implementation of Greece's digital transformation strategy, which is expected to help the country not only to close the digital gap with its EU peers, but also to boost its innovation capacity and competitiveness. The RRP, which foresees €7 billion grants towards digitalization, will usefully enable the materialization of a significant number of projects under the digital transformation strategy.

From the European Commission's side, the digital policy programme will guide each Member State through a harmonised digital roadmap, where human capital, digital infrastructure, public and private sector digital inclusion are at its core. The panel discussion also touched upon public finances, where digital transformation is key. The continuous digital upgrade of the Greek tax revenues administration has been highly beneficial for tax collection processes, for the monitoring of taxation activities and for the ease-of-use of the services by both businesses and households. Fiscal revenues have further improved from an ever-increasing electronic payments trend, which in turn improved transaction transparency, financial inclusion and co-operation between the public administration and the private sector.

More specifically, the **Minister of Digital Governance, Mr. Kyriakos Pierrakakis**, discussed that citizens are at the core of the digital transformation strategy. The ministry's goal is to continuously improve and simplify the government's services that are offered to citizens and companies, which will reduce inequalities, increase transparency and improve every project's future returns to the economy. For example, the implementation of 5G networks across Greece was structured in a way that would incentivize a fast project completion by telecommunication companies and that will subsidize a free access portion of the 5G spectrum to start-ups and universities, so that they can undertake research and innovate. **Governor of the Independent Authority for Public Revenues, Mr. George Pitsilis**, noted that digitization acts as a catalyst for modernizing public revenues administration, an area where significant progress has systematically been recorded in recent years in Greece.

With regards to the digital transformation of Greece and other EU Member States, **the Acting Deputy Director General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG Connect), Mr. Thomas Skordas**, explained that the Commission's role is to guide and make certain that no country falls behind in digital transformation. Among others, the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) mechanism will be extended to allow for cooperation and progress between the Member States and the Commission. **Manager of Mastercard for Greece, Cyprus & Malta, Ms. Aspa Palimeri**, explained that it is of high importance that the private and the public sector co-operate and create equal opportunities to all individuals when it comes to digital and financial inclusion. This will improve the universal adoption and use of new technologies that can benefit the Greek economy at its entirety. She further pointed out that the extensive use of

card payments in the last years provide valuable information through comprehensive anonymized data that could better inform and guide new policy design.

Enhancing Social Inclusion

The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the weaknesses of the Greek welfare system and the need to improve living conditions for the most vulnerable segments of the country's population. In response to these challenges, the EU RRF will make €5.3 billion available, close to one-third of Greece's total grant allocation under the Facility, to help the country meet labour and social objectives, including in the area of education and health, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, Roma, homeless and low-income people. Resilience requires investment in skills, including digital skills. Tackling youth unemployment, promoting digital upskilling and vocational education and training, while eliminating child poverty and social exclusion, were highlighted as key priorities for Greece from a dedicated panel discussion on social inclusion (**Session 7**).

Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ms. Domna Michailidou, noted that the RRP will inter alia finance three areas of special importance for social inclusion: (1) pre-school education and the reform of the curriculum in all nurseries which will lead to a strengthening of cognitive skills aiming to reduce inequality over time, (2) the role of personal assistants for persons with disability, (3) the third pillar of the Guaranteed Minimum Income, which relates to skills enhancement of beneficiaries to be re-integrated in the labour market. At the same time, she expressed the wish to have been able to also integrate social inclusion measures which entail repeated costs. **Member of Parliament, Shadow Alternate Minister for Labour and Social Solidarity for SYRIZA, Ms. Theano Fotiou**, expressed concerns that the current social inclusion actions embedded in the RRP are insufficient in magnitude and scope. She further noted that RRF funds should be exploited as an opportunity to introduce innovative tools in the domestic social welfare system, which would increase its effectiveness.

From a European perspective, the **Director of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), Ms. Barbara Kauffmann**, highlighted the three broad priority targets in the context of social inclusion at the EU level, namely employment, skills and poverty reduction. In terms of the long-lasting Greek challenges in this area, she referred to high unemployment, the disability-employment gap, the gender-employment gap, gaps in digital skills, the overburden of housing cost, the unmet medical needs and high risk of poverty, including for children. She added that targeted actions included in the RRP offer a significant opportunity to partially tackle some of these challenges, while the remaining gaps need to be addressed through the EU Social Fund and national policies. **Professor Manos Matsaganis** of the Polytechnic University of Milan, highlighted Greece's gap in terms of skills and identified the most urgent social policy priorities as follows: (1) make healthcare more affordable, (2) expand coverage of income support receiving unemployed population from just 18% currently, (3) reduce the "pension reliance" of the welfare system, (4) promote skills upgrading measures, (5) focus on long-term care, (6) enhance migrants' integration, (7) offer affordable childcare services.

Mobilising Business Investments to Transform the Economy

The RRP grants pillar budgeted to mobilize private investments exceeds €4.8 billion, to be complemented with the Loan facility which can reach up to €12.7 billion. The use of loan support under the RRF aims to facilitate the provision of financial incentives to the private sector and mobilize further private investments. There is a commitment on directing significant share of funds towards the green (37%) and digital transition (20%). Investment costs will be covered by (a) the State for a maximum of 50%, (b) the financial institutions for a minimum of 30% and (c) debtors' own participation for at least 20%.

One panel focused upon private funds that can be further mobilized through the RRP, plus on how the stakeholders of the financial system will be involved in implementing the Loan Facility (**Session 8**). **Regional Head of Greece & Cyprus, of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Ms. Andreea Moraru**, pointed out that the EBRD participates in co-financing the Loan Facility, while stressed the opportunity for businesses to achieve lower financing costs. EBRD'S involvement aims to enhance the competitiveness, resilience and export orientation of Greek businesses, plus prioritize projects enhancing the digital and green transitions, plus significant infrastructures. **Head of Unit for Greece at the European Commission's Recovery & Resilience Task Force (SG-RECOVER), Ms. Felicia Stanescu**, referred to the Greek RRP as one of the most comprehensive and ambitious Plans, whose most important challenge will be its effective implementation.

Chief Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister, Mr. Alex Patelis, emphasized that the RRP has integrated all specific recommendations made by the European Commission to the country. He noted five eligibility criteria for companies' investments to benefit from the Loan Facility, those are: being "green", digital, export oriented, focusing on R&D, and scaling up including through mergers and acquisitions. He further noted that the RRP can be an opportunity for the banks to further enhance their credit expansion prospects. **Chairman of Piraeus Bank and of the Hellenic Bank Association, Mr. George Handjinicolaou**, highlighted the role of the banks in the co-financing process of the Loan Facility, and the need for coordinated actions among banks, companies, investors and the state. He identified at least one challenge in the process, in relation to the capacity of small and medium enterprises to comply with the Fund's eligibility criteria. **President of the Executive Committee of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), Mr. Efthimios Vidalis**, noted the opportunity for enterprises to receive subsidized loans and to scale up, at a juncture when Greek investments remain at very low levels compared to the rest of the EU. He stressed the importance of the banking system in this process.

The last panel discussed whether the Greek business community is ready to absorb the resources offered by the RRF, and the Loan Facility in particular (**Session 9**). The objective is to use the resources for productive investments which will accelerate the transformation towards a more extrovert production model. The Loan Facility will finance projects that (a) have a positive net present value, ensuring that the decision to finance is based on sound economic criteria; (b) are aligned with the five strategic pillars set for the Loan Facility, namely green transition, digitalisation, extroversion, economies of scale through mergers and acquisitions, and innovation (R&D); (c) comply with State aid rules.

Overall, there was consensus by panelists that Greek businesses are ready to exploit the resources made available by the RRF towards investments in key sectors such as tourism, technology and health sectors. **Executive Director and Member of the Board, Enterprise Greece, Ms. Betty Alexandropoulou**, highlighted the role of Enterprise Greece to enhance the extroversion of Greek businesses and to attract foreign investment funds. **CEO of Elounda Real Estate Development and Member of the Board of the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), Mr. Fotis Kokotos**, noted the significant prospects to improve the quality of tourism services. He explained that the RRF can improve crucial infrastructures including roads, ports and airports, plus promote the digital upgrade of tourism services. **CEO of Uni Pharma, Ms. Julia Tsetis**, called for a “friendlier” political and social stance towards the manufacturing sector, which will unlock innovative and creative initiatives. **Partner at Big Pi Ventures, Mr. Alexandros Eleftheriadis**, underlined the role of venture capitals in relation to funding the gap of businesses, while adding that their ecosystem offers synergies with innovation and technology. **Head of the Athens office of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM), Mr. Ioannis Hadjiyannis**, concluded that the central objective of the RRF is to transform the coronavirus crisis into an opportunity. He reiterated the novel nature of the RRF in the sense that it combines investments with reforms. He noted that the European Commission stands by the Member States to offer technical assistance, including on the effective implementation of their Plans.

3. KEY TAKEAWAYS

The conference focused on the following three **strands of discussion**:

- The challenges for the Greek economy, but also its strong prospects in both the short and long-term horizon stemming from the EU policy framework and the RRF. Combining substantial investments with policy reforms can allow Greece to transform the coronavirus crisis into an opportunity for resilient recovery and economic transformation.
- The central areas of the RRP design, which focus on green transition, digital transformation, social inclusion and mobilizing further private investments.
- The challenges in relation to the timely implementation of the RRP and ensuring effective use of valuable EU resources.

The conference achieved the following **objectives**, as those were summarized at the end of each day by the **General Director of IOBE, Professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business, Mr. Nikos Vettas**, and the **Resident Adviser in Athens, of DG ECFIN of the European Commission, Mr. Chris Allen**:

- To raise awareness about developments in the EU economic governance framework, highlighting the opportunities arising for Member States to transform the pandemic crisis into an opportunity.
- To cover the key priority areas of the RRP funded projects and policy reforms, in conjunction with international and EU good practices in the areas of green and digital transition, social inclusion and mobilizing investments.
- To examine some key issues particularly about process, implementation and financing, both at the central and local government levels.
- To highlight areas where reform progress has been made, how Greece compares with other EU peers, and to flag areas where significant challenges remain.
- To stress the importance of broad policy consensus in some key areas, continuity of public administration and political stability.

The main **policy priorities** highlighted during the conference interventions were the following¹:

- The need to effectively and fully exploit available EU Recovery Fund resources by Member States to be able to sustainably enhance medium-term growth prospects.
- The importance to systematically leverage investments through policy reforms.
- The need for timely implementation of the RRP, backed by efficient public administration and judicial processes, combined with ownership from social stakeholders, political leadership, central and local administration.
- The importance of continuity of public administration, the need for public consultation and the positive effects from forming broad political consensus on key policy reform areas.

¹ The judgments on policy priorities express the opinion of researchers of IOBE and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

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IOBE. (2021). *Background memos for the 2021 Conference on Greece and the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility*.

5. ANNEX A – LIST OF SOURCES

(1) Link to conference videos and presentations:

<http://www.iobe-ec-conference.gr/2021/>

(2) Link to conference factsheets:

<http://www.iobe-ec-conference.gr/2021/memos.html>

(3) Some other useful sources:

- The EU Recovery and Resilience Facility:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en
- European Commission on the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Greece:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/recovery-and-resilience-plan-greece_en
- The National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0":
<https://greece20.gov.gr/en/>
- European Semester - 2021 In-depth review of Greece:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/european-semester-spring-package-2021-economic-coordination_en
- Shaping Europe's Digital Future:
<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en>
- European Green Deal:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:
<https://www.ipcc.ch/>
- Enhanced Surveillance Report - Greece, September 2021:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/enhanced-surveillance-report-greece-september-2021-0_en

6. ANNEX B – CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Online Conference on Greece and the EU Recovery & Resilience Facility

29 & 30 September 2021

How can "Greece 2.0" transform the Coronavirus crisis into an opportunity?

DAY 1 | Wednesday 29 September | 15:00-19:10 (Athens time)

15:00 Welcoming remarks

Niovi Ringou, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece

Moderator: Irene Vlachaki, Economic Analyst, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission

15:10 Session 1 | Opening session of Day 1 | EU economic governance for recovery and resilience

Paolo Gentiloni, Commissioner for the Economy, European Commission

Christos Staikouras, Minister of Finance, Hellenic Republic

Moderator: Nikos Vettas, General Director of IOBE, Professor at AUEB

15:50 Session 2 | Greece's Recovery and Resilience Plan – a programme for investments and reforms

Theodore Skylakakis, Alternate Minister of Finance, Hellenic Republic

Alexis Charitsis, Member of the Hellenic Parliament, Shadow Minister of Development & Investments, SYRIZA

Declan Costello, Deputy Director-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission

Moderator: Yannis Palaiologos, Journalist, Kathimerini & Skai

16:50 Break

17:00 Session 3 | Digital transformation of the Greek economy and the public administration

Kyriakos Pierrakakis, Minister for Digital Governance, Hellenic Republic

Thomas Skordas, Acting Deputy Director General, DG CONNECT, EU Commission

George Pitsilis, Governor for the Independent Authority for Public Revenue, Hellenic Republic

Aspa Palimeri, Country Manager, Greece, Cyprus & Malta at Mastercard

Moderator: Maria Nikoltsiou, Journalist, Alpha TV

18:00 Session 4 | RRP – moving from the plan towards implementation

Nikos Mantzoufas, Governor of RRF Agency, Ministry of Finance, Hellenic Republic

Mário Tavares da Silva, Vice President of RRF Taskforce (Recovering Portugal), Ministry of Planning, Portugal

Dimitris Politis, Chief Executive Officer, Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund S.A. (HRADF)

Dimitris Papastergiou, Mayor of Trikala, President of the Greek Municipal Union (KEDE)

Julia Lendvai, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission

Moderator: Tasos Teloglou, Journalist, ANT1 TV & Kathimerini

19:00 Summary of conference takeaways for Day 1

Nikos Vettas, General Director of IOBE, Professor at AUEB

19:10 End of e-conference Day 1**DAY 2 | Thursday 30 September | 15:00-19:10 (Athens time)****15:00 Welcoming remarks**

George Gatopoulos, Head of Finance and International Macro Unit, IOBE

Session 5 | Opening session of Day 2 | The prospects for Greece looking beyond the pandemic

Christopher Pissarides, Professor London School of Economics, 2010 Nobel Prize Laureate

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President, Promoting our European Way of Life, European Commission

Moderator: Nektaria Stamouli, Reporter, Politico Europe & Athens News Agency

15:30 Session 6 | Making an ambitious Green Transition

Kostas Skrekas, Minister for Environment and Energy, Hellenic Republic

Johannes Luebking, Principal Advisor, Recovery & Resilience Task Force, European Commission

Damian Boeselager, Member of the European Parliament, Greens–European Free Alliance

Panagiotis Ladakakos, President Hellenic Wind Energy Association (HWEA/ELETAEN)

Theodota Nantsou, Head of Policy, WWF Greece

Sameer Shukla, Practice Manager, Energy Global Practice, World Bank

Moderator: Giorgos Fintikakis, Editor-in-Chief at Liberal.gr

16:30 Session 7 | Implementing the RRP – Ensuring growth with social inclusion

Domna Michailidou, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Hellenic Republic

Theano Fotiou, Member of the Hellenic Parliament, Shadow Alternate Minister for Labour and Social Solidarity, SYRIZA

Barbara Kauffmann, Director, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Manos Matsaganis, Professor, Polytechnic University of Milan

Moderator: Antonis Papagiannidis, Managing Editor, Economia.gr

17:15 Session 8 | Mobilising finance for Recovery and Resilience

Andreea Moraru, Director, Regional Head of Greece & Cyprus, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

Alex Patelis, Chief Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister, Hellenic Republic

George Handjinicolaou, Chairman of Piraeus Bank and Chairman of the Hellenic Bankers Association

Efthimios Vidalis, President of the Executive Committee, Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV)

Felicia Stanescu, Head of Unit SG-RECOVER, European Commission

Moderator: John Papageorgiou, Athens Municipal Radio, Head of Athens Digest

18:15 Session 9 | RRP implementation to stimulate investments and exports in key sectors

Betty Alexandropoulou, Executive Director and Member of the Board, Enterprise Greece SA

Fotis Kokotos, Elounda Real Estate Development and Member of the Board of the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE)

Julia Tsetis, CEO, Uni Pharma

Alexandros Eleftheriadis, Ph.D. - Partner, Big Pi Ventures

Ioannis Hadjiyannis, Head of the Athens office, DG REFORM, European Commission

Moderator: Nectarios Notis, CEO, Notice Content & Services

19:00 Farewell address | Summary of conference takeaways for Day 2

Chris Allen, Resident Adviser in Athens, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission

19:10 Conference close