

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY

Case study:

Sismanoglu Megaro, General Consulate of Greece in Istanbul

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YUNANİSTAN VE TÜRKİYE ARASINDA KÜLTÜREL DİPLOMASİ

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KEY WORDS: Cultural diplomacy, Sismanoglio Megaro, Greek-Turkish relations, bilateral cooperation and dialogue

Culture:

The whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs

World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 06 August 1982

ABSTRACT

The present study examines the concept and practice of cultural diplomacy in bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. More specifically, the study focuses on the cultural activity of Sismanoglio Megaro, the cultural center of Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul over the past six years from September 2008, when Sismanoglio Megaro officially opened its doors to the public as a cultural center, to 2014. Through archive research, questionnaires and interviews methods, this study attempts to give an answer to the following questions: to what extent can activities of cultural diplomacy contribute to the improvement of bilateral cooperation and dialogue and how can this be traced in the case of Turkish-Greek relations and the activities of Sismanoglio Megaro between 2008-2014?

Key words: Cultural diplomacy, Sismanoglio Megaro, Greek-Turkish relations, bilateral cooperation and dialogue

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Yunanistan ve Türkiye arasındaki ikili ilişkiler kapsamında Kültürel diplomasi kavramı ve uygulamaları incelenmektedir. Özel olarak, çalışma İstanbul'daki Yunanistan Başkonsolosluğu'nun kültür merkezi olan Sismanoglio Megaro'nun son altı yıl içerisinde bulduđu Kültürel faaliyete odaklanıyor. Bu süreç Sismanoglio Megaro'nun resmi olarak bir Kültür merkezi olarak halka açıldığı yıl olan 2008'da başlayıp, 2014 yılında Sismanoglio Megaro'nun kültürel etkinliklerini özetleyerek bitiyor. Kültür merkezinin arşivinin, anketlerin ve görüşmelerin yardımıyla yapılan araştırma aracıyla, bu çalışmada Sismanoglio Megaro'nun Kültürel diplomasinin ikili işbirliğinin ve diyalogun kurulması ve geliştirilmesinde ne derecede katkıda bulunduđu sorusuna cevap vermeye çalışılıyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kültürel diplomasi, Sismanoglio Megaro, Türk-Yunan ilişkileri, ikili işbirliği ve diyalog

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THOMAI ZIANNA

Istanbul, June 2014

PREFACE

It is fact that the process of writing this dissertation was an amazing experience. While researching about the role of Cultural diplomacy in bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey, I was triggered to start my study on this. Finally, I decided to work on issues related to Greek and Turkish relations making focus on cultural activity of Sismanoglio Megaro.

Nevertheless, during the research of this dissertation I was confronted with some unexpected difficulties. First of all, the subject which I chose has never been studied before; as a result there is no adequate literature that I could follow as a useful guideline. Both the Greek and Turkish literature about the cultural relations between Greece and Turkey is limited. Furthermore, the lack of literature led me to the creation of a series of questionnaires and interviews in order to successfully complete my research. In that reason, it was difficult to synchronize the interviews because the program of each person was different and for this reason the organization of my schedule was not easy.

In this dissertation, I made an attempt to focus on the aspect of Greek and Turkish relations in which the past is not emphasized and it is considered of low importance in the political agenda in both countries. My hope is this work not only to give an answer to the questions raised from those who desire a deeper knowledge on how the cultural activity of Sismanoglio Megaro improves the relations between Greece and Turkey, but also to be the first step for further research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	4
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	6
PREFACE.....	8
I. INTRODUCTION	11
II. CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL RELATIONS	18
2.1 Cultural diplomacy.....	18
2.1.1 Cultural dimension in contemporary international relations	20
2.1.2 Tools of Cultural diplomacy.....	21
2.2 Cultural diplomacy in Greece	23
2.2.1 Objectives and priorities.....	24
2.3 Greek institutions of cultural diplomacy	25
2.4 Multilateral cultural cooperation framework	30
2.4.1 UNESCO	31
2.4.2 EUROPEAN UNION.....	33
2.4.3 COUNCIL OF EUROPE.....	38
2.5 Bilateral cultural cooperation framework.....	39
2.6 Cultural cooperation in the public sector.....	41
2.6.1 (Inter) Governmental cooperation	41
2.6.2 Cooperation through national cultural centers.....	43
2.7 Cultural network.....	45
2.8 Cultural cooperation in the private sector	47
2.9 Language as a cultural policy instrument.....	50
III. THE CULTURAL ACTIVITY OF Sismanoglio MEGARO	56
3.1 Current situation and operational framework.....	56
3.2 Chronology	58
3.3 Institutional framework.....	61
3.4 Activities in Sismanoglio Megaro	63
3.4.1 Events/exhibitions	64
3.4.2 The Greek language courses.....	65

3.4.3	Greek books in Turkish	66
3.4.4	Sakkoulidis library.....	67
3.4.5	The bilingual lending library	68
IV.	SISMANOGLIO MEGARO CULTURAL ACTIVITY ANALYSIS	71
4.1	Introduction.....	71
4.2	Greek language courses and translated literary work: data from 2008-2013	71
4.2.1	Sismanoglio’s Catalogue: The Greek books in Turkish	72
4.2.2	Greek language courses	75
4.3	The motivation behind Sismanoglio Megaro, its realization, and current infrastructure: interviews with key figures.....	77
4.3.1	Teachers	78
4.3.2	The former coordinator of Sismanoglio Megaro from 2008-2010.....	81
4.3.3	Interviews with the former Consul General and the Consul of Greece in Istanbul.....	82
4.4	Survey Analysis	85
4.4.1	Introduction.....	85
4.4.2	Greek language course students’ responses.....	86
4.4.3	Cultural events visitors’ responses.....	95
V.	CONCLUSIONS	104
	APPENDIX	110
	QUESTIONNAIRE 1	110
	QUESTIONNAIRE 2.....	113
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	117

I. INTRODUCTION

Every city in the world has its own past, which is more or less distinct in its contemporary visual and spiritual identity. For each city the past constitutes a passport to the future by providing opportunities for the development of diplomatic relations between different nations. As history taught us, Istanbul has always been a crossroad where different nations, cultures and religions meet and mutually influence one another. In the contemporary times, multiculturalism institutes a basic characteristic of every-day life worldwide and also forms one of the main objectives of the present research. The aim of this research is to examine the Greek cultural presence in Istanbul, its position as well as the role in society in a Cultural diplomacy context. More specifically, author's interest is focused on the presence of Sismanoglio Megaro, the cultural center of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul, which was established in 2008, being treated as a means of further developing, intercultural cooperation and dialogue between Greece and Turkey.

Despite occupying the same region and often sharing a common mentality in every-day life, the relations between Turkey and Greece have often been regarded and primarily characterized as antagonistic. Indeed, the long-standing antagonism between the two countries has its roots in the past, and can be attributed to numerous disputes, conflicts and tension over diverse issues. This relationship could consist of characteristic example of a long lasting conflict, which to a large extent, is based on stereotypical images of the national "other."¹ According to Hercules Millas, the Greek-Turkish conflict

¹ For more information on stereotypes and Greek-Turkish relations see Dissertation: Pasamitros Nikolaos: Stereotypical Images and Enemy Perceptions in the Greco0Turkish Conflict: Is it possible to change stereotypes?, Brussels: The University of Kent in Brussels, (2007)

is being kept alive and fortified by the repetition of the negative “other”, which is presented as carrying some historical and irreversible negative characteristics.²

It is obvious that the causes of Turkish-Greek conflict it is not a simple process, while it requires a more complex and deeper analysis from the past to the future in order to understand the reasons that led us to that conflict. Their conflict could be characterized as a collision of nationalisms, which has never stopped since “Tourkokratia.”³ “Tourkokratia” is the period in which the Ottoman rule is in the Greek lands. The strained relations between two countries continued with the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the rise of Megali Idea (Great Idea), the Turkish War of Independence in 1923, and continue to this day. The most characteristic paradigms of outbreaks that continue to overshadow the bilateral relations are the Istanbul pogroms of September 6-7, 1955, the deportation of Greeks in 1964 and 1974, the closure of the Theological School of Heybeliada (Halki) in 1971, the Aegean dispute in the 1970s, the Turkish invasion/intervention in Cyprus in 1974, the Imia/Kardak Crisis in 1996⁴ and the Öcalan Crisis in 1999.

After multiple waves of conflicts and tensions in the relations between Greece and Turkey, the bilateral relations between the two countries have gradually improved. In an

Available at: <http://www.e-ir.info/?p=5263>

² Millas, Hercules, “Greek- Turkish Conflict and Arsonists firemen,” New perspectives On Turkey, Istanbul, 2000, pp.173-184

³ ‘Tourkokratia’ in Greek nationalist historiography is described as a historical event, which refers to a period from the 15th Century until the Greek War of Independence waged between 1821 and 1832 against the Ottoman Empire. For more information about ‘Tourkokratia’, see also: Millas, Hercules, “Tourkokratia”: History and the Image of Turks in Greek Literature”, South European Society and Politics, Volume 11 (1), March 2006, pp 47-60

⁴ For more information on Imia /Kardak Crisis, see: Reasearch Report: Arapoglou, Stergios, Dispute in the Aegean Sea: The Imia /Kardak Crisis, (Alabama: Air Command and Staff College Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, 2002). It includes the Greek and Turkish Positions, as well as the E.U. and U.S. positions. Available at:

<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA420639>

interview about cultural affairs at the Council of Europe in 2003, the Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism Mr Hüseyin Celik stated:

«We're neighbors. We used to be enemies, but that was in the past. The important thing now is to live for today, and build a better future together. Of course, we must learn from history, learn from our past. But building the future is what really matters. We have suffered enough because of ethnic and religious conflicts. We must do everything we can to consolidate the new ties between our countries, the progress we have made already. We can live together peacefully on the same planet. It has enough air, enough oxygen for Turks, Greeks and all the others - and it has enough water too. These are things we don't have to fight over. They are there for everyone. Obviously, we are not blind to our differences. We are not all made the same way. We can't all be the same shape, and have the same religion, language, feelings and ideas. That is impossible. We must respect one another's differences and we must try to live peacefully together⁵».

However, the first moves of bilateral rapprochement can be traced before 2003. In the recent years, the relations between Greece and Turkey have been improved and “the other” is supposed to be analyzed on a different basis, but it is still receiving the blame for tension.⁶ In 1999 another significant crisis came to shake the Greek-Turkish relations. In October 1998 Turkey organized an operation in order to capture Abdullah Öcalan, an outlawed terrorist or the leader of the Kurdish liberation movement and the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK). Öcalan arrived in Greece from Europe with the contribution of Greek ultra-nationalist circles. His friend Admiral Antonis Naxakis was that who provided him with a Lear jet to facilitate his arrival.⁷ The position of the Greek government was extremely difficult and it could not offer asylum to Turkey’s most wanted enemy, therefore they decided to offer a temporary shelter until an asylum

⁵Informal meeting of the European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs: «The new role and new responsibilities of Ministers of Culture in initiating intercultural dialogue, with due regard for cultural diversity» - Strasbourg, 17- 18 February 2003
Available at: <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN.42852/council-of-europe-interview-brings-greek-and-turkish-cu-.html>

⁶ Millas, Hercules, “Greek-Turkish Conflict and Arsonists firemen”, New Perspectives On Turkey, Istanbul, 2000, pp.173-184

⁷ See Black, Joshua, “Greek Diplomacy and the Hunt for Abdullah Öcalan”, WWS Case Study 4/00, p. 4.

elsewhere could be arranged. In February 2nd, 1999, Öcalan was transferred to the Greek Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. After a few days, on February 16th, Öcalan was captured on his way to the airport.⁸ After that event the situation of the Greek government was very difficult because they had to prove to the neighbor country, Turkey, that they were not involved in the case. The Greek-Turkish relations were disturbed once again.

However, the devastating earthquake that hit Greece and Turkey in the summer of 1999 contributed significantly to the improvement of both countries' public opinion about their neighbors. Actually, both the Turkish public and the international public opinion welcomed Greece's reaction to the natural disaster and applauded its efficiency in coordinating a humanitarian mission in the Turkish areas affected by the earthquake. Ultimately, Greece managed to win both the trust of Turkey's public opinion and that of the international public opinion, as it illustrated its efficiency in contexts of emergency cases as efficient.⁹ On the occasion of two disastrous earthquakes¹⁰ that hit both countries a process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement was initiated, running on a bilateral level.

The process of rapprochement continued all these years with more or less efforts. In October 2009, the Greek government created a new mechanism for the promotion and structuring of bilateral cooperation in soft policy areas; the High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC), was inaugurated during Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Athens on 14th of May 2010. It is worth mentioning that the above rapprochement

⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁹Panayiotis I. Tsakonas, *Modern Greek Foreign Policy, A Total Approach*, volume A, I Sideris, 2003, p. 364-365

The original title of the book is: Παναγιώτης Ι. Τσάκωνας, Σύγχρονη Ελληνική Εξωτερική Πολιτική, Συνολική Προσέγγιση, Τόμος Α, εκδ. Ι Σιδέρης, σελ. 364-65

¹⁰The first one is in Istanbul on 17 August 1999 and the second is in Athens on 7 September 1999

process led to the Declaration of the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic and, on the other side, the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey to agree on the Cooperation in the Field of Culture.¹¹ On March 2013 a second conference on High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) took place in Istanbul, within the scope of which 25 agreements, concerning some of the most important fields of daily life were signed. In that conference both countries agreed that the field of culture is highly significant. According to them, cultural heritage can be a considerably interesting field. Both sides agreed to extend the cooperation in the fields of Culture, Education, Science, Communication, Youth and Athletic exchange programs for the years 2013-2014-2015. On 4 March 2013 Greece and Turkey also signed the Protocol referring to the prevention and prohibition of illicit import, export trafficking and illegal transfer of cultural property. They also reached agreements on the fields of identification, protection and preservation of cultural heritage under the UNESCO Convention on World Cultural Heritage¹².

After the end of the Cold War it became apparent that all countries implemented an ideal foreign policy without taking into consideration the cultural dimensions. Today, a growing number of states acknowledge that culture is a high priority in diplomatic relations and is considered to be a vital instrument in improving their position in the international scene. Many countries put culture in their agenda as one of the most important tools of practicing foreign policy. Greece is one of those countries, while the principle of promoting identity is predominant in its cultural policy. In the case of

¹¹ Joint Communiqué between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Republic of Turkey
Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/en/issues-of-greek-turkish-relations/relevant-documents/joint-communicue-between-the-government-of-the-hellenic-republic-and-the-government-of-the-republic-of-turkey.html>

¹² Joint Communiqué between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Republic of Turkey
Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/epikairota/proto-thema/koine-delose-metaksu-tes-kuberneses-tes-ellenikes-demokratias-kai-tes-kuberneses-tourkikes-demokratias.html>

Greece, with its ancient classical history and more specifically, its contribution to European Culture that constitutes the main argument which was best described by Melina Merkouri who said that “Culture is the heavy industry of Greece”.

Greek multilateral cultural diplomacy is being realized through international cultural organizations, such as UNESCO, the European Union and the Council of Europe, while bilateral cultural diplomacy materialization requires international bilateral agreements and programs. The current bilateral cultural cooperation between Greece and Turkey in fields of education and culture is being conducted in line with the *Agreement on cooperation in fields of science and culture*, which was signed on 4 February 2000 in Athens¹³, representing the legal basis for conclusions of periodical programs of cultural and educational cooperation, the latest of them expiring in 2015.

However, Greek-Turkish cultural cooperation is predominantly intensive in the public sector, which encompasses cooperation between national cultural centers. An initiative for establishing such a center was made by the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul and is called Sismanoglio Megaro, which is operating under the auspices of it, and opened the doors to the public in 2008. Sismanoglio Megaro aims at the extroversion character of the center in order to reinforce the cultural cooperation, especially through its activities, enhancing the events year by year, as well as offering to the audience another, more positive dimension of the image of Greece in Istanbul, which supports the existing cultural ties and cultural memory between the two countries. But, how will the founding

¹³Bilateral Agreements for Cooperation on Culture,
Available at: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/bilateral-agreements-for-cooperation--on-culture_.en.mfa

of the Greek Cultural Centre influence the development of cultural diplomatic relations between the two countries?

It is within this context of Cultural Diplomacy developments that the operation and activities of Sismanoglio Megaro will be examined. Necessitating a concrete theoretical and methodological framework, the present research will examine the degree to which Cultural Diplomacy of Sismanoglio Megaro contributes to the establishment and further improvement of bilateral cooperation and dialogue.

This will be achieved by studying the Sismanoglio Megaro's cultural act between 2008 and 2013 Data sources including 1) The archive of Sismanoglio Megaro, the cultural events (exhibitions), 2) Sakoulidis Library, 3) the digital library "Medousa", 4) Greek language courses, 5) Greek books translated into Turkish.

During the research different methods were used in order to find out the answers. For the purpose of analyzing the aforementioned data, a descriptive content and an analytical methodological approach were utilized. In addition to the above sources, the present study also involved contact field research, including in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

II. CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL RELATIONS

2.1 Cultural diplomacy

The term «*cultural diplomacy*» is new. It is referred to a field of scientific research through which it recently emerged. For that reason, the available bibliography-Greek and foreign- is not extended. Yet, Cultural diplomacy has always been implemented within the process of diplomacy since it involves the contact between different people in an official level of representation. From a narrower point of view, Cultural diplomacy is both a practice of the International Relations and a department of heritage management, which is also a very modern scientific field. Consequently, the research of the Cultural diplomacy includes the combination of theoretical tools derived from the science of International Relations as well as the Cultural Studies. The concept of culture combines all the aspects of human life which makes it very significant.¹⁴

The term “diplomacy” has a few more applications which derive from its basic significance. First, it can be translated as a synonym of the negotiations which also intimate the process and the mechanism of their transaction, but it can also mean the ability of management of the foreign relations of the state. In other words, this determines the total of the people and the services which are institutionally practicing the above mentioned roles. Cultural diplomacy, particularly, is the methodical and strategic use of the culture of a state within the practice of its foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy has as primary aim the promotion of the cultural values and the achievements abroad as well as

¹⁴Tzoumaka Helene, *Cultural Diplomacy: International Data and Greek Prospects*, I.Sideris, Athena 2005, p. 111
The original title of the book: Τζουμάκα Ελένη, *Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία: Διεθνή Δεδομένα και Ελληνικές Προοπτικές*, Ι.Σιδέρης, Αθήνα 2005, σελ. 111.

the enhancement of its image. It is also directed to the clamping of the relations with other people as well as the consolidation of trustworthy and understanding relationships. The successful practice of the foreign cultural diplomacy benefits all levels of the foreign relations respectively, while a false approach could be regarded disastrous. Therefore, the most powerful states systematically invest in the promotion of their culture abroad. There is no need for any financial support or military forces for a successful practice; for that reason even small states can have a neat presence in the cultural field. This depends on the quality and the range of the cultural proposal which is submitted to their international relations.¹⁵

When it comes to cultural diplomacy France comes immediately to our mind, although similar activities can be noticed in the history of international relations of other countries, such as Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Netherlands. However, the cultural diplomacy was implemented by governments for centuries, while the term itself came into use in the United States in the mid-1960s of the 20th century. In the USA “public diplomacy” became the object of interest and because of its influence over its image in the world and over the public opinions in other countries, the boundaries of the traditional, official diplomacy would no longer be existed. At the same time, it tried to influence positively the shaping of external politics and conduct the international relations between governments.

According to Joseph Nye the public diplomacy consists the most essential factor for the acquisition of the “soft power”. Nye, who is the first that used the term “soft power”, supports that “soft power” is the ability of a country to shape the preferences of

¹⁵ Hamelik Cees, “Culture” Available at: <http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/LCMM/ham5.html>.

others as well as to achieve the desired results in global politics. That happens because the other countries admire its values, emulate its example and aspire to reach its level of prosperity and freedom. Worth mentioning that “soft power” does not assert itself, it consists a pulling force and a consequence of everyday democratic political practice.¹⁶

Nevertheless, art and culture can give its own contribution to the public diplomacy. According to Margaret J. Wyszomirski¹⁷:

“Arts and culture can play a significant role in shaping of international image. When a country consciously tries to influence its image in the world, then those efforts are often regarded as cultural diplomacy. Therefore, cultural diplomacy can be considered a subcategory of public diplomacy. Arts and culture, as well as the media that spread the images of every-day life and values across the planet, today have increasing influence over the image of each nation in the world and, consequently, they present more and more important factor in the context in which official diplomatic relations are being developed.”

2.1.1 Cultural dimension in contemporary international relations

Economic, military, technological, scientific and environmental factors were those that led the process of globalization to our world by being more trite and monotonous. On the one hand, the information and communication technology, the global mass media and other aspects of modernization, aim at the good preconditions for multinational dialogue and interaction, while on the other hand, the traditional values try to adopt a cultural restrain such as dialogue. After the end of the Cold War, foreign affairs are no longer strictly conducted according to ideological motives, but have instead been substituted somewhat by those of culture. Apparently no country can implement an

¹⁶ Nye Joseph Jr., *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*, Public Affairs, USA, 2004, pp 5-11

¹⁷ Dissertation: Wyszomirski, Margaret Dž., Šnajder, Sintija P., *Cultural diplomacy*, Belgrade, 2006

optimal foreign policy without seriously taking into consideration the role of the culture itself. Cultural matters affect foreign policy agendas and are incorporated into every day work of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and their diplomatic representation abroad.

At this point we have to mention that countries like France and Greece do not use in the same way the term of cultural diplomacy and its field of action. The most common term is international cultural relations (used in countries such as Australia, Canada, Singapore and United Kingdom), followed by cultural (and/or educational) exchange (America, Japan) and international cultural policy (Austria, Sweden, Netherlands).¹⁸

2.1.2 Tools of Cultural diplomacy

The delineation of the foreign cultural diplomacy and the diplomacy of a country is the government's responsibility as well as its bodies, such as the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. The official Cultural diplomacy expresses the priorities of the state's foreign policy. The executive agents are usually the officials of the Foreign Ministry and they work either at the Foreign Ministry or at the embassies abroad. The communication with foreign audiences is carried out by using a variety of tools, including intercultural exchange programs, educational exchanges and scholarships, international cultural programs and projects, scheduled cultural visits of artists (painters, dancers, musicians etc.), international broadcast of cultural events, symphonies, concerts, etc., international culture related conferences, symposia and workshops, as well as language promotion through language learning programs and institutions, support of infrastructure in form of cultural institutes, centers or forums

¹⁸ Dissertation : Vizomirski, Margaret Dž. i Šnajder, Sintija P.: Cultural Diplomacy, Belgrade, 2006, p.17

abroad, cultivation of ties with foreign journalists, academics, key foreign leaders, etc., and publications.¹⁹ The implementation of educational and cultural programs could be undertaken by Institutes (Legal Entities of Public and Private Law), which are entirely or partly under the state supervision and financing. An important role could also be played by private bodies or even by individuals. The private initiative has more autonomous operation and usually has a more convincing effect to the public. The ideal environment could be a balance between governmental and private participation, while financing as well as convergence could be addressed mainly in the objectives.

During the design and the practice of the cultural diplomacy particularities of the environment, the cultural profile and the corresponding performances, the interests, the receptivity and the “susceptibilities” should be taken into account. Those particularities could constitute the elements with which the objectives of the action will be designed. The Greek Ambassador E. Megalokonomos underlines the importance of the meaning of the *cultural relativity*, according to which every single element of behavior, doctrine or custom should be criticized by the terms of the system of values in which they developed. In the case where it’s interpreted from the observer as ethnocentric, every effort of approach will fail.²⁰ Another Greek Ambassador, G. Christogiannis, aptly considers that the character and the proportion of the scheduled events as well as the level of costs should not necessarily be affected in that high degree by the principle of Reciprocity. He

¹⁹ Ibid., p.21-22

²⁰ Megalonomos Emmanouil, Cultural Diplomacy and Post-Cold War Periods, Responsible: Magazine of Freedom and Language, part 297, September 1996, p. 426-30, The original title of the book is: Μεγαλοκονόμος Εμμανουήλ, << Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία και Μεταπληροπολεμική Περίοδος >>, Ευθύνη, τχ. 427-8. Σεπτέμβριος 1996, σελ..426-30

also emphasizes the necessity for close cooperation between the coordination of activities of the pertinent governmental bodies and the individual services.²¹

The role of the state in the organization and the financing of the Cultural diplomacy are undoubtedly determinative. As Robert Taylor noted, in many democratic states during the last decades the strong governmental character – which traditionally and with great success France practiced - has been disputed. He considers that the organizations which can act independently from the state apparatus have more possibilities to bring their mission into success. Moreover, he supports that the position of the cultural attaché could be regarded as an old-fashioned one.²²

2.2 Cultural diplomacy in Greece

Greek cultural diplomacy composes a primary part of its external politics, which aims at promoting Greek culture abroad. Greece considers that its culture is the main component of its international image and tends to create a precise image of contemporary Greece. Other terms that are probably used for cultural diplomacy activities are international cultural cooperation and exchange, or international cultural relations.

One of the main aspects and priorities of the Greek cultural policy is “promotion of international cultural cooperation and exchange as a tool to strengthen the relations of Greece with other countries, such as other EU member-states, neighboring countries, major international actors and countries with a strong Greek Diaspora, in the context of

²¹Christogiannis Georgios, Greek Cultural Diplomacy, I.Sideris, Athena, 2002, p. 76 and p.163

The original title of book is: Χριστογιάννης Γεώργιος, Ελληνική Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία, Ι. Σιδέρης, Αθήνα, 2002, σελ 76 και 163

²² Taylor Robert, <<Cultural Diplomacy- The Future>>, available at: <http://business.hol.gr>

the goals of Greek foreign policy, and the pursuit of synergies between cultural activities in Greece and abroad”.²³

2.2.1 Objectives and priorities

The main objectives and priorities of Greek Cultural diplomacy are presented in the official statement of the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Theodoros Kasimis:

“As Minister of Foreign Affairs responsible for Greek Diaspora and foreign cultural-educational affairs, I would like to underline special interest of the country, and especially of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for promotion of Greece on the international stage through external cultural policy.

In today’s era, era of globalization, of disappearing of old separating lines, of rapid developments, but also of multicultural trends and specialties, cultural diplomacy can contribute significantly to the strengthening of country’s international image, with multiple benefits in conducting of our external politics.

Within this framework the Greek education and cultural heritage, as well as contemporary artistic and spiritual creativity, can function as powerful weapons by creating frames of wider understanding and positive confrontation of our national positions by the international public. At the same time they promote as an instrument of essential contact and constructive dialogue on world level, contributing, through their universal dimension, to peace and stability, and creating a climate of mutual understanding.

Therefore, transformation of our inexhaustible cultural resources into works, ways of thinking and practices represents essential contribution to vital development and quality of life. At the same time it functions as a conductor of cooperation between nations, as a mild but still efficient weapon of our external policy.”²⁴

The principle of promoting identity is the primary goal in Greek cultural policy, giving emphasis not only to the diachronic unity of Greek cultural heritage but also to the

²³ Available at: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net>

²⁴ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/>

prevalent views expressed both in policy documents and in public debate about the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Greek culture. In the case of Greece, with its ancient classical history and more specifically, its contribution to European culture constitutes the main argument which was best described by Melina Merkouri who said that “Culture is the heavy industry of Greece”.²⁵

As for the planning and allocation of resources to international cultural cooperation and exchange programs, they are increasingly linked to foreign policy priorities and goals to support democracy and institution building in the region of southeast Europe, on the one hand, and, to strengthen cultural relations and encourage understanding of contemporary Greece among major international partners on the other.²⁶

2.3 Greek institutions of cultural diplomacy

a) Foreign Ministry

The cultural field it is also included in the Foreign Ministry’s activities. Particularly, the 5th General Department of Cultural, Religious and Consular Affairs of the Foreign Ministry is responsible about the general coordination of the overall cultural, religious and consular affairs. Moreover, in cooperation with other ministries, services and organizations, the main goals are the research, suggestion and submission of the proposals, in order to take the necessary measures about the protection and the promotion of interests of the country in the field of culture and educational exchanges and, at the same time, the cultural promotion of the country. In that point we will focus on the first

²⁵ G.I.Christogiannis, Greek Cultural diplomacy, Athens, 2002, p.78

The original title of the book is: Γ.Ι. Χριστογιάννης, Ελληνική Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία, Αθήνα, 2002, σελ. 78

²⁶ Available at: <http://culturalpolicies.net/>

department of the 5th General department and the Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Particularly, its responsibilities are being analyzed as follows:

- The negotiation and the sign of the Educational Agreements as well as the agreements of cultural cooperation with foreign states.
- The negotiation and the sign of the Educational Programs with foreign states.
- The observation and the performance of the Educational Programs, the cultural cooperation as well as the accomplishment of the cultural exchanges out of the programs. Furthermore, the observation of the activity of the Cultural and Science Foundation and Committee.
- The scholarships.
- The relations between Greece and UNESCO.
- The observation of the relations of Greece with other countries in the field of scientific research and technology.

The 5th Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs consists of four other departments which have distributed responsibilities:

- a) The Department of Educational Agreements and Programs,
- b) The Department of Bilateral and International Cultural Cooperation,
- c) The Department of UNESCO,
- d) The Department of Cultural and Science Foundation and Committee.

The foreign cultural policy of Greece is based on the following components:

1. Because of the geopolitical position, Greece could operate as a communication and approach hub between European Union and the other countries of Balkan, Black Sea Countries and Mediterranean. It emphasizes especially the development of the mutual historical, religious and cultural elements between the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula.
2. In the framework of European Union, and at the same time with respect to the cultural diversity, the position of the Hellenism and the Hellenic cultural heritage is not disregarded in the formation of the European identity.
3. Greece could play a significant role in the religious dialogue between Christianity and Islam. The tradition of Byzantium and Christianity could play an important role in the dialogue between the people of the wider area.
4. The Hellenic Diaspora constitutes an important power for the amplification of the international position of Greece and thus necessary to form a new relation between national center and diaspora which will focus on the social, linguistic and cultural specifics and necessities of Diaspora. Moreover, one of the most significant aims of the Olympic Truce and the Cultural Olympiad was the mobilization of this power.²⁷

b) Ministry of Culture

In regards to the foreign cultural policy, the Ministry of Culture has the same responsibility with the Foreign Ministry on the training and performance of the educational contracts with other countries. It is also responsible for contacting relations

²⁷ Christogiannis Gewrgios, 2002, p. 20-2

with the international organizations and the foreign cultural institutes abroad. Since 2001 it has the supervision of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture. The responsible department is the Department of International Relations, while the Special Department of European Union deals with the Hellenic participation in the community cultural programs.²⁸ Both of them fall under the General Department of Administrative Support.²⁹

In theory, Cultural diplomacy could also be practiced by all bodies which are under the supervision or cooperating on a program basis with the Ministry of Culture, depending on their object:

- National Theater of Greece³⁰
- Greek National Opera ³¹
- National Theater of Northern Greece³²
- Athens State Orchestra³³
- Municipal Theaters³⁴
- National Gallery³⁵
- Greek Film Center³⁶
- National Book Center of Greece³⁷
- The Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece³⁸
- Greek Publisher
- Museums

²⁸ See the unit 6.8, International and European Programs that is participating Greece.

²⁹ Tzoumaka Helene, p. 180-1

³⁰ Available at: <http://www.n-t.gr/en/>

³¹ Available at: <http://www.nationalopera.gr/>

³² Available at: <http://www.ntng.gr/>

³³ Available at: <http://www.koa.gr/>

³⁴ Available at: <http://www.yppo.gr/6/g6432.jsp>

³⁵ Available at: <http://www.nationalgallery.gr/site/content.php>

³⁶ Available at: http://www.yppo.gr/1/g1540.jsp?obj_id=841

³⁷ Available at: <http://www.ekebi.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=NODE&cnode=138>

³⁸ Available at: <http://www.eete.gr/>

- The program of the European Capital of Culture³⁹

Aims of the foreign cultural diplomacy of the Ministry of Culture are⁴⁰:

1. To emphasize the cultural cooperation with the neighboring countries and the importance of the role of the European Union. Greece aims to participate in different cultural networks of Balkans, Black Sea and Euro-Mediterranean as well.
2. To focus on the countries which have big, ancient civilizations like Russia or China and on the countries which have intense Greek presence such as America and Australia.
3. To take into account areas which have recently acquired interest for Greece such as countries of the USSR and Cuba.

c) Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs has the same responsibilities regarding the international promotion of the Greek civilization. The Department of International Education Relations is the responsible service about:

- a) The management and the provision of scholarships to the countries which have not signed educational agreements with Greece.
- b) Teacher exchanges as well as fraternization of schools.
- c) Efforts to create relations with other institutes and bodies abroad where Greek language and Greek culture are taught.

³⁹ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/capitals/european-capitals-of-culture_en.htm

⁴⁰Tzoumaka Helene, p.182

- d) The annual participation at the International Language Exhibitions in Paris and in other events, in order to promote Greek language and Greek culture.⁴¹
- e) Publication of books in corporation with the Greek Language Center⁴² for the same reason.

It is worth mentioning that the official certificate of attainment in Greek Language courses constitutes responsibility on the Greek Language Center part which is under the control of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Since the language is a body of the cultural characteristics and particularities, each country determines and demands the way of structure and the details of studies.

2.4 Multilateral cultural cooperation framework

After the Second World War the bodies of Cultural diplomacy understood the necessity to redefine their cultural practices in the level of international relations. As a result they tend to abandon the exclusive bilateral action and that extends to multilateral diplomatic relations, developed mainly in the International Organizations and networks.⁴³

Greece is a member of a large number of international organizations. Except for European Union, it participates in Global Organizations (United Nations, UNESCO, WHO) and regional organizations (NATO, BSEC). It also participates in political organizations (European Council, OSCE), financial (WBG, IMF, OECD), and humanitarian, (UNICEF). The aim of the Greek participations is to achieve all the goals set by the foreign policy of Greece through international organizations and particularly

⁴¹ Available at: www.ypepth.gr, www.isocrates.gr

⁴² The Center of Greek Language: Available at: www.keg.gr

⁴³ Moutsaki Helene, Multilateral and Regional Cultural Diplomacy and the Related Role of Greece, thesis for the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government, Athena 2005.

those for peace, respect of International Law, human rights and development of international relations. Regarding the following intergovernmental organizations, three of them are active in the field of culture. The first is UNESCO, which is a global organization, while the other two, the E.U. and the European Council, are regional. International organizations -and non - promote a cooperation in issues of culture through the convergence of conferences, conventions and seminars as well as formulating the basic principles and directions, establishing behavior rules through the International Contracts which are binding for the member-state that they have ratified. A concise reference to the three intergovernmental organizations follows below.

2.4.1 UNESCO

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) is an international organization of the United Nations, which was established in Paris in 1945 and today it counts more than 190 members. The member-states have permanent representation in UNESCO which is the link between the Organization and the governments.⁴⁴ The Organization keeps its autonomy from the U.N., it has its own members, governing body, processes and budget. On the other hand, it consists of three basic organs: a) General Meeting, b) Executive Committee, c) Secretariat.

The General Meeting has representatives from all the countries-members which take decisions for the general policy of UNESCO. The Executive Committee consists of respected individuals and representatives of the state who has a six year term and their

⁴⁴ Konsola Dora, The International Protection of the Global Cultural Heritage, published by Papazisis, Athena 1995, p. 115-122
The original title of the book is: Κόνσολα Δώρα, Η Διεθνής Προστασία της Παγκόσμιας Πολιτιστικής Κληρονομιάς, εκδ. Παπαζήση, Αθήνα σελ. 115-122

responsibilities are: a) the observation of the working schedule⁴⁵ and the budget and submitting suggestions to the General Meeting, b) the introductory in the General Meeting for the election of new members and new General Manager, c) the supervision of the execution of the working schedule. The person responsible for the Secretariat is the General Manager.⁴⁶

UNESCO activates in fields like: education, natural sciences, social and humanity science of the culture, communication and computer science.⁴⁷ Regarding the policies of Organization it is worth mentioning that UNESCO is the only Organization in United Nations which focuses on the cultural field. It helps the member-states to enhance their policy for the culture and it emphasizes not only the cultural development, but also the protection of the cultural heritage. UNESCO, even from its first declarations, regarded culture as one of the most important human rights. As far as the protection of cultural heritage concerns, UNESCO's action has always been very active and determined.⁴⁸

Greece participates actively in the working program and the budget of UNESCO. On the one hand, Greece wants to succeed in the strategic goals and the aspirations of the Organization, but on the other hand, Greece is trying to bring some positive results in Greek topics of interest. Putting into practice cultural diplomacy, it is useful to conjugate Greek subjects of interest to global issues, for example environmental protection, monuments, human rights, folklore. The request of Greece for the return of the Parthenon Marbles, which are exhibited in the British Museum, will find supporters, not only on a bilateral basis, but also under discussion in international bodies such as UNESCO for the

⁴⁵We should also mention that in the context of UNESCO there are programs with different issues, such as Peace and Disarmament, International Decade for Growing Peace, Human Rights, and Educational Programs.

⁴⁶ Gewrgios I. Christogiannis, 2002, p. 111-114

⁴⁷ Available at: <http://en.unesco.org/>

⁴⁸ Tzoumaka Helene, p.142-148

protection of monuments in their homeland. The success of the UNESCO programs in Greece depends mostly on the Greek expectations and the extended financial support by UNESCO. The strategic goal of UNESCO for the next years is the protection and promotion of the cultural diversity.

In order to succeed this goal UNESCO should activate in the following fields:

- The promotion of intercultural dialogue.
- The connection between culture and sustainable development.
- The interconnection between incorporeal heritage, cultural diversity and creativeness.
- The activity of UNESCO in areas which are under armed conflict or other types of disaster in order to salvage the cultural properties.
- The promotion of the languages, arts and education.
- The adjustment, observation and evaluation of the application of contracts.

Generally, because of the international conjuncture as well as the importance and the role that culture needs to play, as a field of dialogue and the settlement of differences between the people, UNESCO in the future should be considered as a point of reference which gives solutions in critical issues of the international scene.

2.4.2 EUROPEAN UNION

In the founding treaty of Rome in 1957 it was obvious that there were no references to the particular actions in the cultural field, because the European Economic Community, the today European Union, was par excellence an economic union. However, there were inherent difficulties as in European Union coexist many different

cultural identities, many languages, traditions, new and old nationalisms in a common geographic and historic framework, from which conflicts were not absent. The promotion of the cultural action within the European Community was very soon appeared to be a political, social as well as economic necessity. The cultural dimension in European Union resembles the need of the governments of the European countries to create a multicultural Europe of nations. They confided to the union the mission to sensitize European people in the history, in the values and to encourage familiarization towards European heritage with respect to the local and regional cultural specifics. Particularly, the governments wanted to encourage the cultural exchanges in Europe, to give the opportunity to the citizens, artists and professionals of the culture to participate in European projects, to encourage the creativity as well as to facilitate a global access to the culture.

In 1977 the European Committee submitted the first Announcement about the Community Action in the Cultural Field. For the first time a specific Committee of Culture, Youth, Education and Media was established in the European Parliament. In 1982 the European Committee submitted the second Announcement with the title «Invigoration of the Community Action in the Cultural Field», which determined the basic principles of this community intervention in that specific field, having subsidiary character about the cultural policy of the member-state.⁴⁹

In 1992, with the sign of the Treaty of Maastricht, the community action acquired not only legal base, but also a very composed framework. The action of the European Community includes four fields:

⁴⁹ Tzoumaka Helene, p. 151-158

1. The improvement of knowledge and the spreading of culture and the history of European nations.
2. The preservation and protection of the European meaning of the cultural heritage.
3. Non- commercial cultural exchanges.
4. Artistic and literary creativity.

It is also encouraging the cooperation with third countries and international organizations and particularly with the European Council, while European Union is binding to take into account the cultural aspects in all activities. It also encourages the governmental projects in which are taking part bodies of different member-states and third countries.

In the Treaty of Maastricht there is a specific article for the culture (article 128) according to which «*the Community contributes in the development of the cultures of the member-state and respect their national and regional diversity, while promotes the common cultural heritage*». Hence, the European Union encourages the cooperation of the member-states in all fields of culture and supports and encourages or criticizes their actions when necessary, introducing even to the culture field the «principle of subsidiarity» which governed the Treaty of Maastricht.

When the Treaty of Maastricht was put into force in the 1st November in 1993, European Union was transacting cultural activities. It is obvious that since 1992 the action of the Union in the cultural field is translated into specific actions, which are determined by the General Directorate of the European Committee's General Directorate of Education and Culture, as the responsible organ for the culture. The basic aim of the

Committee and generally of European Union is to contribute “to the development of the culture of the member-state”.

The article 151 of the Treaty of Maastricht authorizes the European Union to support cultural initiatives through programs and actions, like the program Culture 2000, the action “Cultural Capital of Europe” as well as “the European Cultural Month”. The aim is two folded. It does not only contribute to the development of the culture of the member-state with respect in the national and regional diversity, but it also promotes the common cultural heritage.

The support of the linguistic diversity also constitutes one of the most significant operating principles of the E.U. After the expansion of 2004 the number of the official languages increased from 11 to 20. The E.U. demands the legislation to be available in all languages. It is also guaranteed that every citizen of E.U. can address in writing to any institution of E.U. in his own language and the response to be in the same language. In the same way, the members of the European Parliament have the right to represent their voters in their own language.

As we have already mentioned, the Programs in the field of Culture are organized and financially supported by the E.U. One of the most important programs is the «Culture 2007» which was held on until the end of 2013. Particularly, the program «Culture 2007»⁵⁰ contains a single way of programming and financing for the community activities in the field of Culture, which was established for the period between 1st January 2007 and 31st December 2013. It provides a budget of 400 million EURO to develop transnational cultural cooperation between operators from the European Union (EU)

⁵⁰Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc411_en.htm

countries or non-EU countries participating in the program. The aim of the Culture program is to support cultural cooperation actions, European organizations active in the field of culture, as well as the collection and dissemination of information in the field of culture. The program has three central objectives:

- Supporting the transnational mobility of professionals in the cultural sector.
- Encouraging the circulation of works of art, artistic and cultural products beyond national borders.
- Promoting the intercultural dialogue.

The program “Culture 2007” is not the only program in E.U. in the field of Culture. There is another significant program, «the European Capital of Culture».⁵¹ The "European Capital of Culture" event gives European cities the opportunity to present a one-year cultural program that highlights the richness, diversity and shared characteristics of Europe's cultures. The decision of announcing the “European Capital of Culture” event, defines the process of selecting cities to hold the title between 2013 and 2019, as well as the system for monitoring the preparations up to the year of the event.

Each candidate’s city file should include a cultural program with a European dimension that must be based on the cultural cooperation objectives, which have been set out in Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (EU). The program must meet a certain number of criteria, divided in two categories:

⁵¹ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/capitals/european-capitals-of-culture_en.htm

- "The European dimension", which includes stepping up cooperation between cultural operators at all level. The program must also highlight the richness of Europe's cultural diversity and the shared aspects of European cultures;
- "The city and citizens", with the aim of arousing citizens' interest in the event at European level and strengthening the long-term cultural development of the city.

The program normally lasts for one year. The Commission will be able to reward the quality of the preparations by granting an award to the city regarded, called the Melina Mercouri prize (financed by the Culture Program).

The "European City of Culture" event was launched by the Council of Ministers on 13 June 1985 and has become one of the EU's most popular actions. Because of the high level of citizen participation and its cultural and socio-economic impact, a growing number of cities compete for the title every year. The procedure for designating the "European Capital of Culture" has been amended in order to make it more effective and to adapt it to the needs of an enlarged EU.

2.4.3 COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 in order to create closer bonds between the European states, promote European consolidation as well as to preserve the politic and cultural heritage of Europe. The Council of Europe operates in Strasburg and its members are states from the West and East Europe, including Greece, Cyprus and Turkey.

The Council of Europe has a very wide scope with priority to the human rights. Also the Council of Europe focuses on issues like: Media and communication, social and economic rights, health, sport, education, environment, legal cooperation.⁵² The Cultural field gives emphasis not only to the promotion of cultural identity and heritage, but also to the governmental cultural cooperation in the national, regional and topic level. The activity of Council in the cultural field and cultural heritage can be found in the European Convention for the Culture, which emphasizes the establishment of the intercultural dialogue, in the acceptance of the cultural diversity and diversity and also focusing on the meaning of the cultural heritage.⁵³ In order to succeed its aims the Council of Europe organize meetings, conferences, symposium, seminars and congresses which lead to signing Conventions, Compositions and Declarations.

2.5 Bilateral cultural cooperation framework

In regards to the Greek approach to the international cultural cooperation, that is based on its history and heritage of its geopolitical and regional position as well as the traditional policy commitments and major events that affect recent and current priorities. Generally, the Ministry of Culture is responsible for the international cultural relations. Regarding bilateral aspects with Turkey they are often within the scope of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, issues of cultural diplomacy involving inter-faith and religious instruments fall under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs. Special services, such as the General Secretariat of Greeks abroad, and the

⁵² Tzoumaka Helene, p. 148-151

⁵³ Moutsaki Helene, Multilateral and Regional Cultural Diplomacy and the Related Role of Greece, thesis for the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government, Athena 2005.

Special Service for Development and Cooperation, belong to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Institute of Intra-cultural Education is under the patronage of the Ministry of Education. The Hellenic Foundation for Culture is under the Ministry of Culture. In the case of Sismanoglio Megaro, it falls under the authority of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul, which is part of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It is important to say that significant role for the promotion of the Greek cultural diplomacy, except ministries and institutions, also play the departments of classical and Modern Greek studies in high educational institutions abroad. Concerning the classical Greek studies responsible for the current program is the adequate cultural institution in each country. On the other hand, the departments of Modern Greek studies come under the authority of the Greek state and the financial support is depending on the needs and the activities of each department. Those activities include teaching of Greek language and history, through lectures, student exchange, competitions and publications, which promote Greek literature. This kind of financial support is also provided for institutes abroad, which promote Greek culture, and usually are found on the initiative of Greek communities abroad or dynamic temporary inhabited Greeks, such as Greek Institute for Post-Byzantine Studies in Venice, Centre Cultural Hellenique in Paris, Center of Greek studies in Alexandria of Egypt, Association des Amis de la Grece in Paris, Griechisches Theater Wuppertal in Germany, Boston University ALEA III, Association Cultural Hispano-hellenica in Madrid, Greek Institute in London etc. These institutions organize

theatrical plays and concerts, periodical publications, lectures and other cultural activities.⁵⁴

2.6 Cultural cooperation in the public sector

2.6.1 (Inter) Governmental cooperation

Since 2000, the most significant issues of foreign cultural relations in Greece have been transferred from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ministry of Education, cooperates with the Ministry of Culture in order to run a large number of bilateral cultural agreements and programs, providing a framework for some actions in international cultural relations (mainly scholarships, exchange of personnel in the arts, etc.).

Bilateral cultural cooperation is based on bilateral agreements, signed by the governments of both countries, and programs in which the responsible ministries take part, such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a coordinating role. As an (inter) Governmental Cooperation could be characterized the cooperation between the Greek government and Turkish government.

Cooperation between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Greece in fields of education and culture has been conducted according to the Agreement on cooperation in fields of science and culture, signed in 2013 between the two states. The Prime

⁵⁴ G.I.Christogiannis, 2002, p.108

Minister of the Hellenic Republic and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey met in Istanbul on 4th March 2013 within the framework of the 2nd High Level Cooperation Council meeting between Greece and Turkey. They co-chaired the session of the second meeting of the High Level Cooperation Council, with the participation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs as coordinators and Ministers responsible for Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports / National Education / Youth and Sport, Justice, Development, Competitiveness, Infrastructure, Transport and Networks / Family and Social Policies / Networks, Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean / Transport, Maritime and Communication, Rural Development and Food / Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Public Order and Citizen Protection / Interior, Tourism / Culture and Tourism, Health as well as Ministers of State, National Defense, EU Affairs. On the same day, agreements *about the Cultural, Educational, and relevant institutions of the Scientific, Mass Media, Youth and Sports Exchange Program for the years 2013-2014-2015* were adopted and signed by the respective Ministers and representatives between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Republic of Turkey.⁵⁵

The two governments signed the Agreement in Istanbul on March 4th, 2013, with the aim to develop mutual cooperation in the above mentioned fields. In the text of the Agreement the governments focus on the “Cultural heritage which is another area of mutual importance and the two sides have agreed to explore ways to further cooperation in this field”, within the scope of “*The Cultural, Educational, Scientific, Mass Media, Youth and Sports Exchange Program for the years 2013-2014-2015 between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Republic of Turkey*”.

⁵⁵ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/top-story/joint-declaration-between-the-government-of-the-hellenic-republic-and-the-government-of-the-republic-of-turkey.html>

Also, the two governments also emphasized the “*Protocol on the Prohibition and Prevention of the Illicit Import, Export, Transit and Transfer of ownership of Cultural Property*” which was signed in Istanbul on March 4th, 2013 as well as in the area of identification, protection and preservation of Cultural Heritage in the context of UNESCO World Heritage Convention.⁵⁶

2.6.2 Cooperation through national cultural centers

Another important form of bilateral relation is the establishment of a cultural center in the host country which tends to become a usual practice. A very characteristic example is the Hellenic Foundation for Culture. The Hellenic Foundation for Culture was established in 1992 in Athens and its primary purpose was the promotion of the Greek Culture and Greek Language in the world. Although the Hellenic Foundation for Culture has private legal status, it does fall under the supervision of Ministry of Culture. The foundation is directed by a council which is nominated every four years.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/top-story/joint-declaration-between-the-government-of-the-hellenic-republic-and-the-government-of-the-republic-of-turkey.html>

⁵⁷ Available at: www.hfc.gr

Activities:

The Hellenic Foundation for Culture develops a multi-function activity such as:

- Organization of events in many countries in the world: exhibitions, concerts, and theatrical performances, shows, and lectures, discussions, in cooperation with cultural and educational bodies.
- Participation in European and global organizations like: anniversaries, theater, cinema and music weeks. It also participates in cultural networks like the Union of Ancient Ports, at the head of the Greek network of Anna Lindh's Foundation for the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation,⁵⁸ and also as a member of the EUNIC.⁵⁹
- Promotion of the Greek language and its teaching to the branch, giving material and useful information in other bodies as well as organizing different seminars.
- Diffusion of the Greek book by presenting the writers, supporting the translation and participating in international book exhibitions.
- Promotion of the Greek cinema by repeated projections, festivals and special features in cooperation with the Greek Film Center.
- Publication of books
- Development of educational activities in the school abroad in cooperation with the local authorities.
- The Library in the central offices of the Foundation hosts scientists, students and special guests of the Foundation.

⁵⁸ Available at: www.euromedalex.org

⁵⁹ Available at: <http://www.eunic-brussels.eu/asp/index.asp>

Today the Hellenic Foundation for Culture preserves branches abroad that try to promote the Greek Culture and the Greek language. The choice of the branches is indicative. The most active branches are the ones in Paris, New York, London, Alexandria and Berlin. Few years ago the Hellenic Foundation acquired its own representative in Moscow, while efforts are being made in Istanbul.⁶⁰

It is worth mentioning that the branches have the opportunity to take initiatives. At the beginning of the year each branch presents its program and it submits it in order to endorse from the Administrative Council. Each branch works individually and due to the fact that the number of the people who work is small, and usually permanent, there is a very good communication net between them.

2.7 European and non-European cultural networks

The main purpose of the networks is to help the connection of individuals, groups or organizations especially in the cultural management field which also present a type of international cultural cooperation. In the field of cultural policy, network represents “a response of the civil sector to the state controlled and hierarchically organized international cooperation, which gave priority to national institutions, and neglected projects, artists and individual initiatives”.⁶¹ In Europe the first networks appeared during the 1980s making it easy for countries to communicate directly with one another. The most important European networks in the field of culture are Informal European Theater Meeting (IETM), European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), European Forum for Arts and Heritage (EFAH), European Network of Cultural Administration

⁶⁰ Tzoumaka Helene, pg. 232

⁶¹ Dissertation: Dina Dotlić, Greek Cultural Presence in Belgrade. Experiences From the Near Past and Perspectives for the Future, Belgrade, 2008, p.68.

Training Centers (ENCATC), European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections (AMARC), etc. The creation of these cultural networks aimed at the development and the reinforcement of the European culture as well as European identity. This is mainly achieved not only with the cooperation between European networks, but also from the design of new cultural policy strategies. On the other hand, in the framework of a more international cultural cooperation it is worth to notice the remarkable activity of the non-European cultural networks not only in individual level, but also in a more collective effort.

In the case of Turkey, the presence and the action of cultural networks are obvious during the 1970s.⁶² The initial goal was to offer the finest examples of art from around the world, while at the same time promoting the national, cultural and artistic assets of Turkey by using arts to create an international platform of communication. The most active cultural networks in Turkey are Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV), Association of Civil Society and Development Institute (ACSDI), Turkish Language Association (TLA)/Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK), Turkish Cultural Foundation (TCF).

One of the most significant and in action cultural networks is the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV). The purpose of IKSV is to make Istanbul one of the world's foremost capitals of culture and arts. Another goal is to create continuous interaction between national and universal values, traditional and contemporary values via culture and the arts, as well as to contribute actively to the development of cultural

⁶² The first International İstanbul Festival, organized in 1973 on the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic, covered a period of one and a half months and focused mainly on classical music.

policies. In addition to organize festivals, biennials and events in Turkey and abroad, the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts is also involved in conserving traditional arts and cultural heritage, encouraging and facilitating artistic production in diverse disciplines, and contributing to the development of cultural policies.⁶³

2.8 Cultural cooperation in the private sector

There are thousands of private foundations around the world, especially those set up by the richest families, by private business corporations, and in some exceptional cases, by governments themselves. Greek tycoon family foundations, in respect with their activity such as Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) or Mpodosaki Foundation, are examples of international cooperation in the field of culture and not only.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is one of the world's leading international philanthropic organizations, making grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and medicine, and social welfare. The Foundation funds organizations and projects that exhibit strong leadership and sound management and are expected to achieve a broad, lasting and positive social impact. The Foundation also seeks to actively support projects that facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships as effective means for serving public welfare.⁶⁴

Since 1996, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation has approved grant commitments through 2,599 grants to nonprofit organizations in 110 nations around the

⁶³ Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, available at: <http://www.iksv.org/en/aboutus/mainobjectives>

⁶⁴ Available at: <http://www.snf.org/en/about/history-mission/>

world. Excluding the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, the Foundation's funding is equally divided between grants in Greece and international ones.

The Foundation, considering the continuing socio-economic crisis in Greece, announced in January 2012 a grant initiative of additional \$130 million (€100 million) over three years to help ease the adverse effects of the deepening crisis.⁶⁵ In October 2013, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation announced a new long-term initiative, recharging the Youth, to help create new opportunities for Greece's younger generations.⁶⁶ The Foundation's largest single gift is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens. Construction works at the site have already begun. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation strongly believes that the project is of national importance, even more so under the current socio-economic conditions. It remains 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 circumstances.

In addition to its permanently-established operating programs, the Foundation has provided important financial aid to many cultural, medical, educational and environmental activities in Greece and abroad, and has also substantially supported separate projects, such as in 2006, where it announced its plans to fund the development of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), a project that includes the construction and complete outfitting of the new facilities of the National Library of

⁶⁵ Since then, and as part of the initiative, the SNF has committed grants totaling \$100 million (€77.2 million) in support of numerous not-for-profit organizations around the country.

⁶⁶ The Foundation is committing €100,000,000 to help the future prospects of young people, who are severely impacted by critically high unemployment rates, currently exceeding 60%.

Greece (NLG) and the Greek National Opera (GNO), as well as the creation of the 170,000m² Stavros Niarchos Park. According to the Foundation:

Education and culture are the backbone of any advanced society. In funding the SNFCC, the Foundation's vision is to provide the country and the city with the new institutional foundations they need to move forward and with a framework for the future. Education, culture and sustainability, the SNFCC's three main elements, are essential requirements in enhancing the potential of the city and its people and for placing them within a twenty first century global context.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is not only famous for the sponsorships, grants and initiatives and innovations in the field of culture and education, but it also plays a significant role at the field of health and medicine, as well as in the social welfare, through a series of important initiatives and donations such as “Food Aid & Promotion of Healthy Nutrition Program”,⁶⁷ “Mobile Medical Units”,⁶⁸ “Education in Philanthropy”⁶⁹; also, it supports financially a series of foundations, associations and colleges in the base of social welfare such as, “New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children”,⁷⁰ “United States Fund for UNICEF.”⁷¹

It is a fact that the participation of private partners or private companies in cultural life, either in form of investment or sponsorship and representation of their country abroad, are ways to conduct cultural diplomacy. Today, the participation of the private sector in cultural production is one of the most characteristic examples. The

⁶⁷ Available at: <http://www.snf.org/en/initiatives/grants-against-the-greek-crisis/food-aid-promotion-of-healthy-nutrition-program/>

⁶⁸ Available at: <http://www.snf.org/en/initiatives/grants-against-the-greek-crisis/mobile-medical-units/>

⁶⁹ Available at: <http://www.snf.org/en/initiatives/grants-against-the-greek-crisis/education-in-philanthropy/>

⁷⁰ Available at: [http://www.snf.org/en/grants/grantees/n/new-york-society-for-the-prevention-of-cruelty-to-children/program-support-\(1\)/](http://www.snf.org/en/grants/grantees/n/new-york-society-for-the-prevention-of-cruelty-to-children/program-support-(1)/)

⁷¹ Available at: <http://www.snf.org/en/grants/grantees/u/united-states-fund-for-unicef/program-support/>

presence of benefactors, sponsors, donors, collectors are becoming more and more intense. Therefore, the state should find ways to encourage private initiative by giving significant incentives to companies, institutions and sponsors in order to strengthen creative production of their citizens, in a framework that would guarantee public interest, quality and intellectual rights to the authors.⁷²

A worthwhile effort of successful and fruitful cooperation between public and private partners, which sponsored cultural activities within the framework of cultural diplomacy, were conducted by a grant given to Sismanoglio Megaro, the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul, by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation,. The financial support of this cooperation is under the kind sponsorship of Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) that started in 2008 and is still running, where Greece succeeded in promoting itself in Istanbul in the way it deserved, through culture and art.⁷³

2.9 Language as a cultural policy instrument

Language is one of the main instruments of cultural policy towards foreign countries, or, in other words, its promotion and spreading is one of the basic tools of cultural diplomacy.

It is a fact that some Western European countries through language learning courses, institutions, and support of different forms of cultural infrastructures such as

⁷² Dissertation: Dina Dotlić, Greek Cultural Presence in Belgrade. Experiences From the Near Past and Perspectives for the Future, Belgrade, 2008, p.71

⁷³ Kosmidou Zoe, Cultural diplomacy, VIMA, 30/08/1998, p.B06
The original name of the article Κοσμίδου Ζωή, Πολιτιστική διπλωματία, ΒΗΜΑ, 30/08/1998, σελ Β06

cultural institutes, forums abroad or centers managed to enter foreign cultural scenes and awake the interest among foreign citizens for their own cultures. The most characteristic example of countries which follow this cultural policy is United Kingdom and France. For example, the British Council constitutes of 109 offices, which promote United Kingdom abroad through educational programs, language learning courses, art, science and different informative services,⁷⁴ receiving only from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs 136 million pounds in 2000-2001, 157 million pounds in 2002-2003, and 170 million pounds in 2003-2004. On the other hand, 151 French cultural centers in 2000 received 237 million francs, with additional funds from donations of their embassies amounting another 157 million francs. The same year 219 offices of the Alliance Française, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, received 80 million francs of operational donations, 159 million francs for staff expenses, and another 7 million in immovable assets.⁷⁵

In the case of Greece, the Hellenic Foundation for Culture serves as a point of reference for the Greek language and its teaching abroad. The Greek language is taught at all levels at the HFC branches in Berlin, Alexandria and Odessa. The Branches and the Centers of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture provide the possibility of teaching the ancient Greek language with emphasis on its relation with the Modern Greek language, as well as with the teaching of ecclesiastic language, namely common Alexandrian. Moreover, HFC Branches very often organize seminars for Greek Language teachers. The HFC Branches are ordered by the Centre for the Greek Language as the only examination centers, concerning the acquisition of the Certificate of Study of the Greek

⁷⁴ During 2000, British Council organized more than 3.000 artistic events abroad, and in 2002 it included 16.000 people in the process of exchange. (Vizomirski, Margaret Dž., Šnajder, Sintija P., 2006, p.98)

⁷⁵ Dissertation: Vizomirski, Margaret Dž., Šnajder, Sintija P., Cultural diplomacy, Belgrade, 2006, p.68

Language in Ukraine, Moldavia, Germany and Egypt.⁷⁶ Except for the activity of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture, worth mentioning the remarkable work of the different institutions and department of universities, which are offering courses both Modern and Ancient Greek abroad, such as University of Melbourne⁷⁷, University of New South Wales⁷⁸, University of Wien⁷⁹, Université Libre de Bruxelles⁸⁰ and the Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne⁸¹. Furthermore, the cultural centers of the Greek consulates provide courses to the public, such as the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul offers free Modern Greek learning courses to the students.

In Turkey, teaching of Modern Greek language is institutionally established at the Department of Modern Greek Language and Literature at the University of Ankara, founded in 1991. The first students of the department, which falls under the Department of Western Languages and Literatures School of Language History and Geography, graduated in 1995. Since 2000, Modern Greek is also being taught in the Department of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Istanbul. These Departments contribute to cultural exchange, by sending of its students on various and numerous scholarships all across Greece, where they attend summer language schools and their programs. On several occasions, the Department has organized seminars and conferences, which were attended by Greek and Turkish professors, colleagues, philhellenes, students and many others. The Modern Greek Language is being taught for the last four years in the Balkan Languages Department at the University of Adrianople. The last two years the Modern

⁷⁶ Hellenic Foundation for Culture, Available at: <http://www.hfc.gr/wmt/webpages/index.php?pid=7&lid=2>

⁷⁷ University of Melbourne, School of Languages, Modern Greek Programme, Available at: <http://www.languages.unimelb.edu.au/courses/courses.html>

⁷⁸ University of New South Wales, School of Modern Language and Studies Modern Greek Studies, Available at: <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/languages/greek/greek.html>

⁷⁹ University of Wien, Available at: <http://www.univie.ac.at/byzneo>

⁸⁰ Université Libre de Bruxelles, Available at: <http://www.ulb.ac.be/prog/phil/classi/index.html>

⁸¹ Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne,

Greek Language was taught formally at the University of Canakkale, as well as, in the Boğazıcı University.

On the other hand, the Turkish Language is taught in the Department of Turkish and Modern Asian Studies in Athens that started to operate in 2003-2004. The Chairman of the Administrative Committee of the department, Athanasios Markopoulos says:

The Turkish Studies Department [...] seeks to introduce the academic study of the language, history and culture of a neighboring people with whom the Greek world, in the broadest sense of the word, has been in contact for a very long time; academic as distinct from the sort of amateurishness, ethnocentric bombast, popularization and sentimentality we can easily recognize and – to some extent – understand. The Department's Administrative Committee, and by extension the University of Athens, are of the opinion that these studies will give rise to academics and specialist researchers who, knowing the Turkish world from within, will be equipped to make a substantial contribution to – inter alia – the Greek academic community's approach to, and understanding of, this world, thereby facilitating unimpeded communication between these two adjacent states on every level, academic, cultural, socio-political and economical (my emphasis). For it is universally accepted that states and peoples can only draw closer together if sufficient effort is made in the educational sphere to properly convey those historical 'chapters' of which a working knowledge will ensure respect for the nature, singularities and the general cultural level of the Other.⁸²

Worth mentioning is the 1st International Symposium on 'Turkish Studies Today' on 1-2 June 2007 organized by the University of Athens and the Department of Turkish and Modern Asia Studies. Many Greek Professors and scholars engaged in the study of Ottoman and Modern Turkish History, Language and Culture, participated in this conference and delivered speeches on their particular domain.⁸³ This is indicative of the increasing interest that Greek scholars have in Turkey and Turkish Studies. The

⁸² Markopoulos, Athanasios, "The Turkish Studies Department", available at http://www.turkmas.uoa.gr/en/ind_EN.html

⁸³ "1o Diethnes Symposio- Oi Tourkikes Spoudes Shmera", (1st International Symposium- Turkish Studies Today), (30-05-2007), available at: http://www.grtnews.com/gr/publish/article_827.shtml

Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies was established in 1996 at University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki and the first students were admitted for the academic year of 1998-1999. In that point we have to mention that this Department in Greece is cooperating with two Turkish universities: Boğaziçi University (2008-2010) and Istanbul Bilgi University (2006-2008), through the ERASMUS student exchange program.⁸⁴ Since 1999, the Turkish Language is also being taught in the Department of Mediterranean Studies in University of Aegean in Rhodes. The basic aim of this Department is:

to cultivate and promote knowledge of language, ancient and modern history, ancient civilization, economic and political structure of Mediterranean countries, emphasizing in South and South-Eastern Mediterranean; the systematic study of comparative linguistics, structure and evolution mainly of the languages of South-Eastern Mediterranean, of economic, historic and political development ... of the Mediterranean countries among them as well as of their relations with Greece.⁸⁵

Since 2000, the Turkish Language is taught in the Department of Languages, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries which was established in the town of Komotini. The mission of this Department is

to cultivate, promote and propagate the linguistics, literature and culture of the people of the Black Sea countries, by teaching and research of language [...] and to prepare scientists able to study, research, understand and propagate the languages, literature and culture of the people of the above mentioned countries such as Greeks, Russians, Turks, etc.⁸⁶

The Department of Balkan Studies was established in 1999, in Florina. Its educational program includes studies of Economics, Law, Political Science, Social Anthropology, Culture, ancient and modern History, International Relations, Mass Media

⁸⁴ “Sunergazomena Ekpaideutika Idrumata Ypodohis”, available at: http://compus.uom.gr/erasmus/?q=partner_institutions

⁸⁵ “Idrush”, (Establishment), available at http://www.rhodes.aegean.gr/tms/Γενικές_%20Πληροφορίες_ϊδρυση_.gr.htm

⁸⁶ “Istoria”, (History) available at: <http://www.bscc.duth.gr/index.php?rm=1&pm=73&sm=59>

and Political Communication, Balkan and Russian Languages. The Department ‘encourages the intensification of inter-religious and inter-cultural relations of Greece with the Peoples of Balkan Peninsula, of Eastern Europe and Euxine Sea in order to favor the correct neighborhood and communication.’⁸⁷

Another significant tool of cultural policy, which gives the opportunity to wider public to learn Greek language, is the Sismanoglio Megaro, the Cultural Centre of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul. The basic aim is to promote the already developed relations between the two countries in the field of culture and education. It is open for the public in order to learn the Greek Language, as well as to participate in the various cultural events which are organized in collaboration with the local and foreign educational and cultural institutions. Mr Stavros Gioltzoglou, the coordinator of education at Greek Consulate in Istanbul, is giving us an image:

Times have changed and the youth of Turkey wants to know the Greeks and their language better, away from the prejudices and preconceptions of the past. The European policy of Turkey, new horizons opened, the Internet brings us closer, all have contributed to an increasing interest in the Greek language.⁸⁸

Since 2008, Sismanoglio Megaro operates as a cultural center and tends to be integrated, as a multifunctional type of institution, in the cultural life of Istanbul and a cell of cultural progress and cultural cooperation.

⁸⁷ “A brief presentation”, available at: <http://www.balkan.uowm.gr/ep-english.html>

⁸⁸ “ I Elliniki Glwssa einai moda stin Tourkia” Available at: <http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=379690>

III. THE CULTURAL ACTIVITY OF SISMANOGLIO MEGARO

3.1 Current situation and operational framework

The establishment of cultural centers in the host country has become a common practice for countries aiming to strengthen the existing aspects of bilateral cooperation. In that sense, since 2008 in the most crowded Commercial Street of Istanbul, Istiklal Caddesi, Sismanoglio Megaro was established as a cultural center, which could be characterized as one of the most active and efficient organs of the Greek cultural diplomacy, not only for its geographical position, but also for its various programs and activities. Istanbul is one of the most significant cities in the world that have had for decades a significant Greek minority percentage, while the presence of Sismanoglio Megaro represents the spreading of the network across Europe and other continents. The latest development strategy is oriented towards the East, which for Greece represents an area of common historical and cultural heritage, on the one hand, and an interesting new market full of economical potentials on the other.

Considering the common past between Greece and Turkey, especially Istanbul, one could wonder why Istanbul had to wait for a Greek cultural center for so long. What are the reasons for such an attempt to take place in this particular moment? It is not so difficult to answer if one bears in mind the turbulent times and the transition period, which marked the last two decades in the western Balkans. Apart from the difficult political circumstances and often changes of regimes and governments (which included different political parties), economical factors also played their role. The establishment of

a cultural center certainly requires significant financial resources and careful strategic planning.⁸⁹

In 1999 after two disastrous earthquakes not only in Turkey but also in Greece, the two countries started the process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement. It was a process in which both sides tried to end up in cooperation. The process of rapprochement in bilateral level was based on the development of bilateral cooperation in soft policy sectors; that is, dispute-free sectors: economy and trade, tourism, culture, civil society, etc. A contractual framework which consisted of some agreements and joint committees was created and working groups were set up under the coordination and periodic assessment of the Steering Committee.⁹⁰ The democratic opening of Erdogan's government played a decisive role; it proceeded in a series of freedoms not only towards the Greek Orthodox minority, but also in the framework of the good neighborhood- the policy towards Greece changed. It is a fact that the Turkish government tries to create a constructive relation, recognizing to the minority many rights as well as giving to the Greek people opportunities not only to visit Turkey but also to be established in the country. Worth mentioning is that the rapprochement process has also been expressed through firm support from Turkey's European perspective.

Another important reason which supports the establishment of Sismanoglio Megaro is the Turkish society itself which, in that period, could be characterized as dynamic and the development of education demanded new horizons. According to Miss Artemis Papatheodorou, who was the former Coordinator at Sismanoglio Megaro during

⁸⁹ Dissertation, Dina Dotlić, Greek Cultural Presence in Belgrade. Experiences From the Near Past and Perspectives for the Future, Belgrade, 2008, p. 78

⁹⁰ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/turkey/>

2008-2010, they wanted to cultivate the conditions in order to promote Greek Culture through Sismanoglio Megaro. She also supports that Sismanoglio Megaro is able to offer, apart from knowledge, the incentive for creation, communication and interaction by providing both the place and the way. Furthermore, through cultural events Sismanoglio Megaro focuses on all these people, who cared about learn more for the “other”, the neighbor, or their place of origin. The aim of Sismanoglio Megaro is to provide the familiarity with the Greek presence.

The main purpose of the Greek Cultural center is to further support the existing cultural cooperation between Greece and Turkey. In order to create even closer ties between two countries in the city’s cultural scene, it would be advisable to use full range of its activities, intensifying the events, which would serve the existing positive image of Greece in Istanbul, and which would emphasize the existing cultural ties and cultural memory between two peoples. In those terms, one of the most significant planned activities of Sismanoglio Megaro is a group art exhibition with works by graduates of the School of Fine Arts of Mimar Sinan “Those who follow their memories”.⁹¹

3.2 Chronology

In the middle of Grand Rue de Pera, one of the most popular streets in Istanbul, nowadays known as Istiklal Caddesi, is established the Sismanoglio Megaro of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul. That neoclassical building houses the consular residence as well as a remarkable range of cultural and educational activities. “*Its history*

⁹¹ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/ekdiloseis/omadike-eikastike-ekthese-me-erga-apophoiton-tes-skholes-kalon-tekhnon-mimar-sinan-autoi-pou-akolouthoun-tis-mnemes-tous.html>

*summarizes the history of Anatolian Hellenism, of Istanbul, the history of the Sismanoglou family of benefactors, that of Greece and Turkey as well”.*⁹²

In 1939 the first signs of the war made their appearance in Europe. That period Konstantinos Sismanoglou took the decision to donate the family mansion to Greece in order to house «*the Heart of Greece*». Often, his father said to him that «*For as long as there is money in your safe, you have to give it away. It's your duty; any money in your possession has no importance as long as you lock it; it makes no difference whether you have it or not and, at the end of the day, do you think it's ours? We earned it from the society and it is to the society we ought to give it back*».⁹³ The magnificent 19th century building would constitute the Istanbul link of donations of this great family of Cappadocian Greeks, but also this family is responsible about other donations one finds in the Sismanoglio Hospital in Athens and Komotini, Greece.

In the following years, the basic concern of Greece was to try hard in order to heal the wounds of the Second World War. In the framework of Marshal Plan Greece became beneficiary of financial assistance like Turkey. That period Greece was unable to reciprocate at the exorbitant costs that demanded the maintenance and the restore of the Sismanoglio Megaro, in order to house the consular services of Greece. At the same time, the increasing pressure that bore the Greek minority in Istanbul and the islands, Imvros and Tenedos absorbed all of the Consulate's energy. After all, the Greek government came to the decision to lease the building to the US Consulate in order to host the United States Information Service (USIS). From 1952 until 1968 the building housed the library

⁹² Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/profil.html>

⁹³ Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/profil.html>

of USIS, a carpentry workshop as well as a TV and radio studio. During the host of USIS on the ground floor three shops were located at the Sismanoglio Megaro.

In the summer of 1968 the US Information Services left the building of Sismanoglio Megaro, with a result to raise again the question of the use of the building. It is worth mentioning that at that period Turkey entered an era of profound political crisis, so the idea of using the building was to be abandoned again. However, the only positive progress of that time was that in 1973 Sismanoglio Megaro was added to the list of protected buildings.

Until 2000 the internal developments as well as the improvement of the relationships between Greece and Turkey allowed the restoration of the Sismanoglio Megaro. Since 2000, it is the house of the consular residence as well as the cultural and educational activities of the Consulate. The restoration of the building started in 2004, when Consul General of Greece in Istanbul was Mr. Alexis Alexandris and the most cultural action of Sismanoglio Megaro was continued by the next Consul General of Greece in Istanbul Mr. Vasilios Bornovas and the current Consul General of Greece in Istanbul Mr. Nikolaos Mathioudakis. Since 2008 the Sismanoglio Megaro has shown an unprecedented level of activity. On a daily basis it welcomes a large number of Turks who love Greece and wish to learn Greek and, during its unique exhibitions thousands of visitors.⁹⁴

⁹⁴Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/profil.html>

3.3 Institutional framework

Since 2004 Sismanoglio Megaro is being used as a “cultural center” of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul. Sismanoglio Megaro has no official institutional recognition as an institute. It could be considered as *de facto* cultural center and not as *de jure*. The institutional operation of Sismanoglio Megaro is under the umbrella of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul. The first 2 years of operation financial was supported by the Consulate. Later, due to the weakness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to finance this effort, significant financial support was provided by large private foundations such as Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, etc.

The aim of Sismanoglio Megaro is the «*promotion, spreading and cultivation in Istanbul, in a systematic way, of the Greek Culture*». Sismanoglio Megaro is a very significant tool in order to promote the Greek Culture, not only because of its position (it is situated in one of the most crowded commercial streets in Istanbul), but also because it constitutes a private building. “Extroversion” is the word that characterizes the work and activity of Sismanoglio Megaro as a cultural center. Using the term “Extroversion” we mean the tendency of Sismanoglio Megaro to externalize its efforts and its work in order to bring the people closer, achieving it in the name of culture. In other words, can art open doors, remove, even for a while, borders, bringing people together? That was the slogan of the homonymous exhibition “Extroversion” which took place at Sismanoglio Megaro. The aim of this exhibition was to show the dynamism of contemporary Greek art scene, at the heart of Istanbul. The exhibition had a symbolic character. Not only because it stands in the center of Istanbul, in the heart of Turkish economy, but also because it comes to denote the faith of Greek artists of tomorrow. As noted by the organizers, *"It is*

*time for extroversion. The Greek art, against the messages, the political and economic situations, wants and is able to give a mark to show that it remains strong, combative and exportable".*⁹⁵

Sismanoglio Megaro constitutes part of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul and for that reason its operation is determined by the Organization of Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁹⁶ the Convention of Vienna in 1961,⁹⁷ as well as from the sponsorship agreement between Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul and Stavros Niarchos Foundation.⁹⁸

According to the Article 42 of the Organization of Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Consular represents Greece in the state of their accreditation, practicing the following duties under the authority of the Article 5, in accordance with the international guidelines: *“Ensure the development of relations between Greece and the other countries in the political, economic, commercial, tourist, cultural and other fields”*.⁹⁹

According to the Article 5 of the Convention of Vienna, the Consular’s function is:

- a) *protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, within the limits permitted by international law;*
- b) *the development of commercial, economic, cultural and scientific relations between the sending State and the receiving State and otherwise promoting*

⁹⁵Kathimerini, 05/10/2012

Available at: <http://www.kathimerini.gr/469904/article/politismos/arxeio-politismoy/ellhnikh-e3wstrefeia-sthn-kwnstantinoypolh>

⁹⁶Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/organismos-ypex/>

⁹⁷Available at: http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf

⁹⁸Available at: http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=grant_inquiries_EN, http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=grants_EN&Rec_ID=5394

⁹⁹Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/organismos-ypex/>- Ratification as a Source Of "Organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs"

friendly relations between them in accordance with the provisions of the present Convention;

*c) ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the commercial, economic, cultural and scientific life of the receiving State, reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State and giving information to persons interested;*¹⁰⁰

Another interesting point is that Sismanoglio Megaro of Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul is in collaboration with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation as well as Bodosaki Foundation. It is regarded as a significant cooperation because the Greek Language Courses constitute a notable grant by the Foundation of Stavros Niarchos.¹⁰¹ For that reason the pattern of courses is depended on the sponsorship agreement between them. According to the Consul each side has a range of duties and obligations that is bound to keep.

3.4 Activities in Sismanoglio Megaro

Sismanoglio Megaro aims at promoting Greek culture and spreading Greek language in the Turkish society. It carries out its activities through cooperation with cultural and educational institutions engaged in activities relating to the Greek culture and also coordinates exhibitions, concerts, lectures, documentary, presentation of books and other major cultural events and promotes Greek artists abroad; including cultural months and weeks, anniversary celebrations, concerts, etc. Sismanoglio Megaro, also plans and coordinates the participation and representation of Greece in international cultural events

¹⁰⁰Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 596, p. 261, Copyright © United Nations 2005.

¹⁰¹ Available at: http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=grants_EN&Rec_ID=4431

(i.e. major visual arts exhibitions, International Book Fairs etc), and publishes books and catalogues related to its activities, both in Greek and other languages. One of the most significant participation and coordination is in the Global Day of Languages. It also promotes Greek Language by offering free courses in Sismanoglio Megaro, giving the opportunity to the students and the researchers to be informed about a rare library which is located in Sismanoglio Megaro and presents a range of unique books. These activities will be analyzed in detail later.

3.4.1 Events/exhibitions

Regarding the events and exhibitions which took place in Sismanoglio Megaro from 2008 until today the cultural activity of Sismanoglio Megaro could be characterized as remarkable considering its short period of operation. The Consular tried to promote the Greek Culture through a series of activities presenting various themes. Some of the most significant events and exhibitions that took place in the historic building of Sismanoglio Megaro, the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul, are: the exhibition of Kostas Tsoklis in 2010 which was organized by Istanbul 2010, European Capital of Culture, the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul and State Museum of Contemporary Art;¹⁰² the exhibition “Greek Painters of Istanbul at the Topkapı Palace” in 2011 which was organized by the Directorate of the Topkapı Palace Museum and the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul under the auspices of the Minister of Culture of the Turkish Republic Mr Ertuğrul Günay and His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew;¹⁰³ the workshop “Fictions on Stage” focused on the possibilities of adapting for the theatre texts

¹⁰² Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/ekdiloseis/ekthese-tou-kosta-tsokle-sten-konstantinoupole.html>

¹⁰³ Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/ektheseis/stanbullu-rum-ressamlar-topkapi-sarayinda-greek-painters-of-istanbul-at-the-topkapi-palace.html>

that draw from modern Greek literature and took place on July 2012;¹⁰⁴ Group art exhibition with works by graduates of the School of Fine Arts of Mimar Sinan “Those who follow their memories” which took place on March 2013;¹⁰⁵ Lectures at Sismanoglio Megaro “Languages and alphabets Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire” during the period 2013-2014;¹⁰⁶ the photo exhibition by J.Joshua Garrick «Imprinting ancient beauty" in 2014.¹⁰⁷

3.4.2 The Greek language courses

In Sismanoglio Megaro of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul, Greek Language Courses have taken place since 2008. The syllabus is compatible with the Common European Framework of Reference of the Council of Europe. Academic terms start from September to January and from February to June each year, while in July more intensive courses are on offer. Sismanoglio Megaro is the only certified center in Turkey conducting examinations for the Certificate of Attainment in Greek issued by the Center for the Greek Language.

According to the program, Sismanoglio Megaro offers Ancient Greek Courses. The classes introduce the students to a broad vocabulary as well as grammar and syntax of the classical period (5th cent. B.C.). In this framework Sismanoglio Megaro aspires to bring its students into contact with the basic parameters of the Ancient Greek civilization. The aim of Sismanoglio Megaro is to give the students the opportunity to read the

¹⁰⁴ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/ekdiloseis/fictions-on-stage-theatre-workshop-based-on-modern-greek-literature-at-sismanoglio-megaro.html>

¹⁰⁵ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/ekdiloseis/omadike-eikastike-ekthese-me-erga-apophoiton-tes-skholes-kalon-tekhnon-mimar-sinan-autoi-pou-akolouthoun-tis-mnemes-tous.html>

¹⁰⁶ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/ekdiloseis/kuklos-dialexeon-sto-sismanogleio-megaro-2013-2014.html>

¹⁰⁷ Available at: <http://www.iefimerida.gr/node/141436>

original Ancient Greek texts at the end of the program. It is remarkable that Stavros Niarchos Foundation¹⁰⁸ and Bodossaki Foundation are graciously supporting the cultural activity in Sismanoglio Megaro.

3.4.3 Greek books in Turkish

Since 2010 Sismanoglio Megaro has edited a rather valuable catalogue which can be used as a tool to help, not only in the counting of the books, but also all those who are interested in the Greek books translated into Turkish. The catalogue is the first organized effort to publish Greek books in Turkish, starting from the Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy to the Modern Greek Poetry and Prose. The catalogue is also a first attempt to concentrate on the work of Greek and Rum authors and scientists who have already been translated into Turkish from other languages except Greek. Furthermore, the catalogue includes some individual cases of works which have been written in Turkish.

Another aspect which is worthy to note is that responsible for the compiling of the list is the National Book Center, which granted the detailed catalogue with the Greek books translated into the Turkish language; Mr Aris Tsokonas who offered the personal catalogue with the translations of the Modern Greek Literature in Turkish, as well as the philosophy professor Dr. Iwanna Koutsouradi for the detailed catalogue of translation of the Ancient Greek Philosophy. Last but not least, responsible for the coordination and the publication of the catalogue are Miss Katerina Kayiadelen and Miss Artemi Papatheodorou.

¹⁰⁸ Available at: http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=grants_EN&Rec_ID=5394

In that point it is worth mentioning that today there are fortunately good, although few, translators from Greek into Turkish, to whom we owe many of the projects which are hosted in Sismanoglio Megaro. However, there are young people who dare to be tested in this demanding art, even if they learned Greek as a foreign language. The first samples have already been given in the historical novel ‘At the heart of the Empire’ by Spyros Gogolos, published by ‘Istos’ where the translator Asli Damar was a student of Sismanoglio Megaro.¹⁰⁹

3.4.4 Sakkoulidis library

Sismanoglio Megaro owns now the part of the collection of the blessed Father Meletios Sakkoulidis, which his daughter Ivi Sakkoulidi granted to the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul. The blessed Father, Meletios Sakkoulidis was born in Halkidona in 1926. The collection of books, magazines and postcards played a significant role in his life, starting after his graduation from the Theological School of Halki, until his death.

The library of the blessed Father Meletios Sakkoulidis, which is located in the Sismanoglio Megaro, constitutes a research library which aims to support the study of the history of Greeks in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁰ Consisted of about 30.000 tomes, the library of the blessed Father Meletios Sakkoulidis houses a unique collection of Greek books, which were published in Istanbul in 19th century and 20th century. The library also includes an important number of books of the 18th century as well as books in «Caramanli», books in Turkish but in Greek writing, which were used by the Greek

¹⁰⁹ Available at: <http://sismanogliomegaro.tumblr.com/post/74369454478/h>

¹¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/anakoinwseis-bibliothiki/xronologountai-apo-to-1600-kai-meta.html>

Orthodox people of the region of Cappadocia; also, the collection disposes rare titles about the topography and the history of Istanbul.¹¹¹

Worth mentioning is that the responsible of Sakkoulidis collection, Miss Eva Achladi, participated in the Third International Seminar on Karamanlidika which was organized by the National Research Foundation of Greece and Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları on November 2, 2013 in Cappadocia on "The Reverend Father Meletios Sakkoulidis and his Karamanlidika collection".¹¹²

The library is open to use for research from Greece, Turkey and other countries according to the regulation of the library. It offers the opportunity of electronic access in the catalogue of the library, which is renewed every month in cooperation with the Public Library of Veroia. The researcher can find the digitized items in the digital repository «Medusa»,¹¹³ as well as in the European database «Europeana».¹¹⁴

3.4.5 The bilingual lending library

Since December 2013 a small lending library with works by Modern Greek literature has been operated in the building of Sismanoglio Megaro. However, the special feature of the library is that it includes Turkish translations of Greek works that have been released in Turkey.

Thus, library users can borrow, in Greek or Turkish, works of Kazantzakis Myrivilis Vizyinos, Sotiriou, Tachtsis, John, Galanaki, Doxiadis, poetry of Cavafy,

¹¹¹ Romaiiko Imerologio 2013, text written by Euaggelia Achladi, Library of the blessed Father Meletios Sakkoulidis, published by Istos, 2013, pg 145

¹¹² Available at: http://www.eie.gr/nhrf/institutes/inr/news/2013/synedrio_karamanlidika2013.pdf

¹¹³ Available at: <http://medusa.libver.gr/?locale=eng>

¹¹⁴ Available at: <http://medusa.libver.gr/?locale=eng>

Seferis, and some works of ancient classical and Medieval Greek literature. It is no coincidence that the idea to create such a bilingual lending library came from the students of Sismanoglio Megaro. Some of them have gone into learning Greek at such a standard that they can read Greek literature from the original text. Most of them still cannot do that, but they show a great interest in learning more about the Greek Literature.

The Greek Consul Mr Victor Maligoudis states that *“You do not have to do much to encourage the Turkish-speaking readers to explore the Greek literature. It is true that the interest of one portion Turks, especially young, for their neighboring Greece increases. Even more, the interest about history is increased when we are talking about their history and they discover it through the experiences which recounted in Modern Greek literary works. When last March, Mr. Orhan Turker talked to Sismanoglio Megaro in Greek and Turkish, about "Istanbul through the eyes of three Greek writers of George Theotokas, Helen Chalkousi and Sophia Spanoudi" the room was filled with Turkish listeners”*.¹¹⁵

Even more promising, however, is another development. The "kid's corner of the love of reading (filanagnosia)" has also been created in the same room with the library, which is addressed mainly to parents whose children live in the City and grow up in a mixed language family environment. For the moment, the "Kids Corner" hosts only children's books in Greek. Soon, the first Greek children's books translated into Turkish will be a reality. Sismanoglio Megaro, as has been explained above, presents an intensive cultural activity with various actions. The people who work there feel proud because they consider that in a short time it succeeded to be a point of reference in Istanbul. This belief stems from the great response from the public who visits Sismanoglio Megaro.

¹¹⁵ Available at: <http://sismanogliomegaro.tumblr.com/post/74369454478/h>

According to the current Consular the future plan of Sismanoglio Megaro is to provide an even more systematic and organized work.

IV. SISMANOGLIO MEGARO CULTURAL ACTIVITY ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The events and services offered by Sismanoglio Megaro have all emerged as possible means through which intercultural awareness and practices of cultural exchange between Turkey and Greece can be further consolidated and improved, and hence, they form a major focus of the present study. In tracking the activities of Sismanoglio Megaro from 2008 to 2013 and utilizing several methodological approaches, I have attempted to collect data regarding its aims, infrastructure and contribution into inter-cultural exchange, as well as to provide insights into diverse actors' experiences.

4.2 Greek language courses and translated literary work: data from 2008-2013

To a great extent, the contribution of Sismanoglio Megaro to the advancement of cultural exchange between Greece and Turkey takes the form of educational services. Two notable examples are: first, a project aiming at the collection and dissemination of information regarding literary work that has been translated from Greek into Turkish and second, the provision of Greek language courses.

4.2.1 Sismanoglio's Catalogue: The Greek books in Turkish

In order to understand the importance of documenting, organizing and cataloguing of Greek literary work that has been translated into the Turkish language, one needs to examine the manifestation of Greek literary work within Turkish culture throughout the years. Worth noting is that the first record of Greek prose translated into the Turkish language comes from the year 1867. With the exception of years 1878 and 1896, no other similar initiatives had been taken until 1935, whereby the translation of Greek texts gradually became systematic and can be traced up to date (further information is provided in graphs 1 and 2). Despite however, the increasing presence of Greek authors within Turkey's literary scene, up until recently, there was a notable lack of relevant documentation.

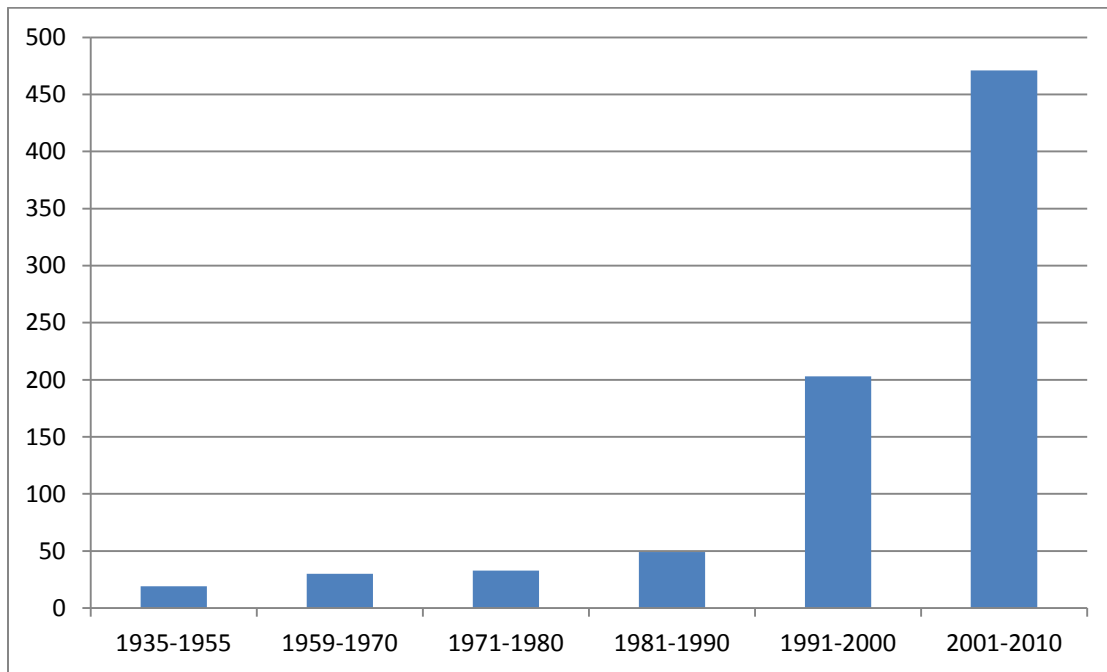
In an attempt to address this issue, on October 2010 Sismanoglio Megaro published the very first catalogue of Greek literary work that had been translated up to date into the Turkish language. It is important to say that the catalogue documents texts have been translated and published both in Greece and Turkey. Also, the catalogue provides a genre-based categorization of translated literary work. For instance, in the Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy section, one can find the "Aesop's Fables" which had already started being translated since 1995-2009¹¹⁶, "Lysistrata" by Aristophanes which was translated in 2006,¹¹⁷ "Alkistis" by Euripides which was translated in 1943 and "Electra" which was published in 2008.¹¹⁸ Other important categories include Byzantine literature and Historiography, Poetry, Theatrical texts, Prose

¹¹⁶ The Sismanoglio's Catalogue: The Greek books in Turkish, Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy, pg 10

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pg 11

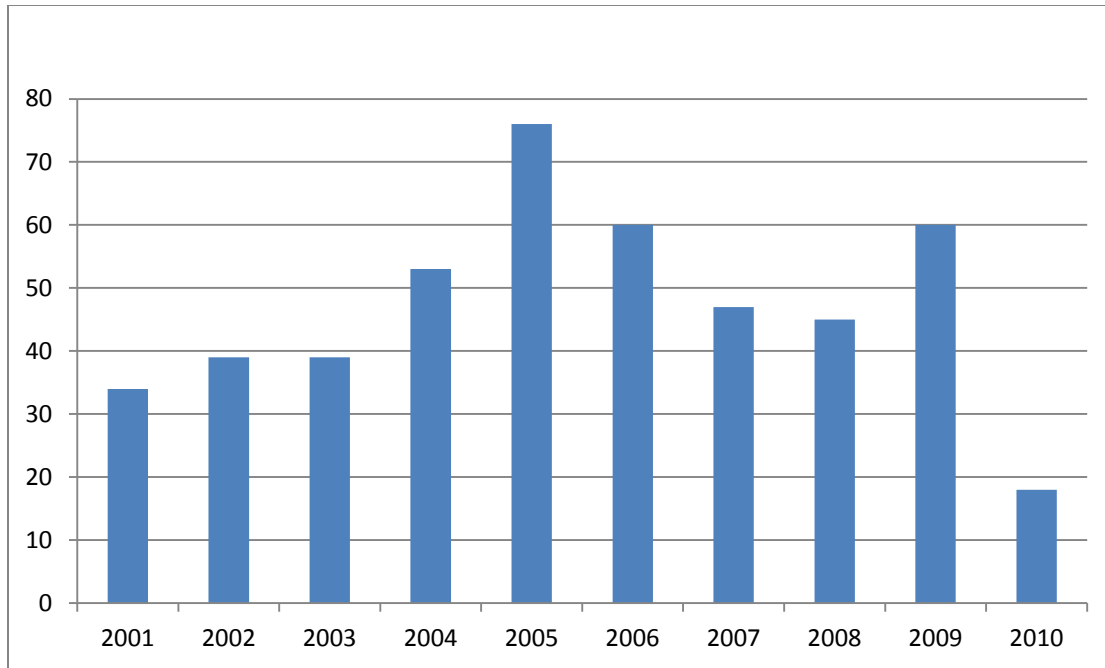
¹¹⁸ Ibid., pg 18

and Memoirs, Books for children and young people. Hence, in addition to providing a well-informed archive that aims at facilitating the Turkish public's access to Greek literary work, Sismanoglu Megaro's catalogue aims at providing an organized guide to a multitude of diverse authors, titles, and literary genres (for an extended list see Appendix).



Graph 1: The number of Greek literary texts that have been translated to Turkish between the years 1935 and 2010¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ The number of the Greek literary texts after 2010 is not available yet.



Graph 2: The number of Greek literary texts that have been translated to Turkish between the years 2001 and 2010

As the above graphs suggest, during the period between 1935 and 1990 only a limited number of Greek books was translated and published into the Turkish language. According to the database that was used for the purposes of the present dissertation, a total of one hundred thirty nine books became available during this period to the Turkish speaking public. It is however interesting that there has been a consistent increase of such initiatives throughout the years. Specifically, a steep increase in the number of translated and published Greek texts is observed between the years 1991 and 2000, whereby the number of Greek books translated into the Turkish language hurred from 49 to 203 compared to the previous decade. Finally, as the graphs suggest, during the period between 2001 and 2010, the Turkish literary scene witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of Greek literary texts available to the Turkish speaking public as the number of translated books doubled.

The reasons behind the increase of Greek literary work translated into the Turkish language and the trends that have been guiding the selection of Greek genres and authors are beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, a speculation regarding the contribution of Sismanoglu Megaro's cataloguing project towards the establishment of further cultural diplomatic practices, as well as its contribution to the further advancement of intercultural awareness and exchange, can be attempted in the future. The effects of concentration and categorization of Greek literary work translated into the Turkish language can only be visible in the future, since the publicity is pretty recent. Worth mentioning at this stage however, is that the presence of the catalogue facilitates students' understanding of Greek literature and culture, and forms an important tool in the conduct of research. Additionally, the catalogue can contribute to comparative literary studies, and alike it forms a solid guide for libraries and individuals.

4.2.2 Greek language courses

Since its establishment, Sismanoglu Megaro has been offering members of the Turkish public the possibility to engage with modern and ancient Greek language courses. The syllabus used by Simanoglu Megaro is compatible with the Common European Framework of Reference of the Council of Europe. And, currently, Sismanoglu Megaro is the only center in Turkey that has been certified to provide the Certificate of Attainment in Greek issued by the Center for the Greek Language. Although some important information regarding the Greek language courses provided by Sismanoglu Megaro emerged through questionnaires that were completed by Greek language course attendees and interviews with Greek Language course instructors, and

hence they will be presented in further detail below, it is worth providing here some general information.

According to Sismanoglio Megaro’s Secretary, who is responsible for dealing with attendees’ applications, the annual demand for Greek language courses has been fluctuating between 600 and 1000 applications.¹²⁰ However, the policy of Sismanoglio Megaro states that the number of attendees cannot exceed that of five hundred per academic year, since the provision of high quality language classes forms a major priority and can be achieved only within the context of small classes. Hence, as suggested by the chart below, the number of attendees of Greek language courses has remained more or less stable throughout the past three years.¹²¹

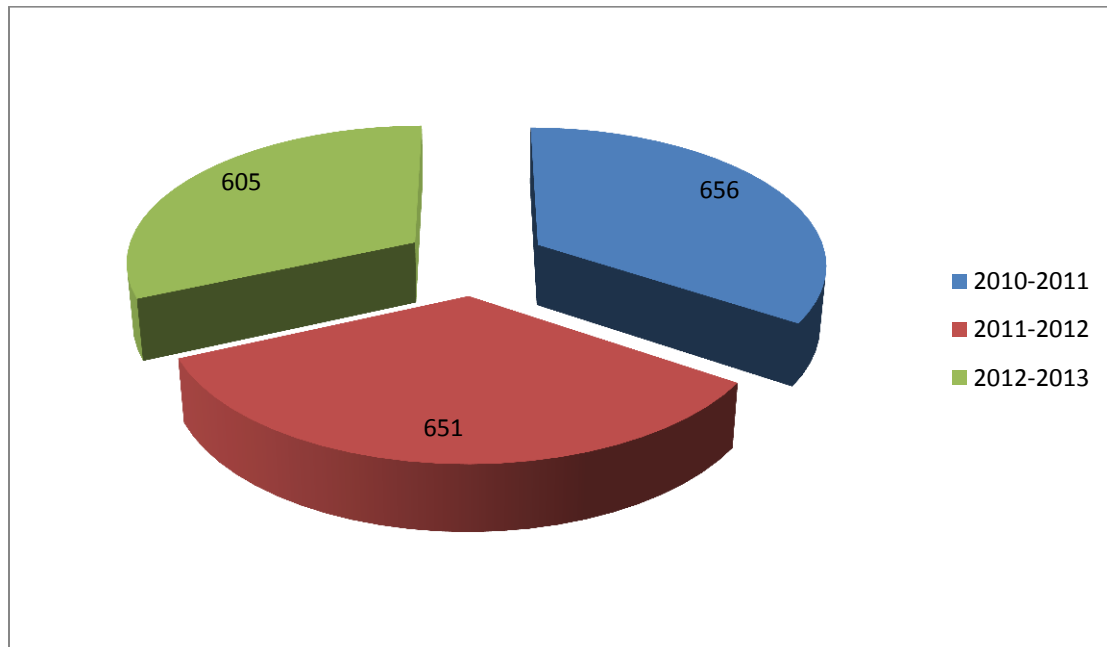


Chart 1: The number of students that have attended the modern Greek language courses offered by Sismanoglio Megaro between the years 2010 and 2013

¹²⁰ Source data from the personal archive of the Secretariat of Sismanogleiou Megaro.

¹²¹ For the academic years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, the number of enrolled students is not specified, because the program was still experimental and was not receiving any financial support.

Some speculations regarding the importance of the Greek language courses offered by Sismanoglio Megaro in further advancing cultural awareness and exchange between Greece and Turkey can be attempted too. The Greek Language Courses offered by Sismanoglio Megaro can facilitate the conduct of research, can advance intercultural communication and can establish both cultural and professional links between the two countries. Ultimately, the aim of these courses is to attract both individuals who are interested in the Greek language for educational purposes, as well as professionals.

4.3 The motivation behind Sismanoglio Megaro, its realization, and current infrastructure: interviews with key figures.

According to Earl R. Babbie, *“the interview, involving face-to-face encounters between the researcher and the participant, and hence allowing for individualized responses and clarifications as well as facilitating the collection of more nuanced information emerging from observation, provides a sensitive methodological approach which can yield rich data”*.¹²² Aiming at reaching further insights into the experiences of individuals that have played a significant role in the operation of Sismanoglio Megaro, I conducted eleven semi-structured interviews with some of Sismanoglio Megaro’s key figures. Adhering to the principles of ethical research, the interviewees received sufficient information regarding the project’s aims prior to interviewing, they were advised to avoid answering any questions that they did not wish to, and their anonymity was ensured if they wished so. Below follows an extensive presentation of the findings of

¹²²Earl Babbie “The practice of Social Research”, 11th Edition, Thomson Wadsworth, 2007, Chapter 9, p. 244

the interview, which have been organized on the basis of interviewees' position within Sismanoglio Megaro, as well as on that of thematic categories.

4.3.1 Teachers

The instructors of Greek language courses, comprise a major part of Sismanoglio Megaro personnel and contribute one of its most important services, formed a great focus on this project. More specifically, Sismanoglio Megaro provides oral courses,¹²³ literature courses,¹²⁴ as well as Ancient Greek language courses.¹²⁵ Moreover, some of Sismanoglio Megaro's instructors participate in the program «I learn your language»,¹²⁶ which seeks to facilitate exchange programs between Greek and Turkish universities. My interviews with Sismanoglio Megaro's teachers aimed at a better comprehension of their teaching methods and experience, as well as the rest of the activities and services provided by Sismanoglio Megaro, and whether these tools might contribute to the improvement of bilateral relations. Here, it is necessary to mention that in order to have an overall view in my research all the teaching staff participated in this. The Greek language teaching staff mainly consists of six Greek women who have been working at Sismanoglio Megaro for the last three years. In their majority the instructors have studied Greek or Turkish Literature and they have attended seminars about the teaching of Greek Language. I have to mention here that the salary of instructors of Sismanoglio Megaro is kindly sponsored by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.¹²⁷ The actual point behind the interviews was that of

¹²³ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/mathimata-ellinikon/nea-tmemata-ellenikon-sto-sismanogleio-megaro.html>

¹²⁴ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/mathimata-ellinikon/nea-tmemata-ellenikon-sto-sismanogleio-megaro.html>

¹²⁵ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/mathimata-ellinikon/dorean-arkhaia-ellenika-sto-sismanogleio.html>, http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/w_articles_ell_1_13/11/2010_422315

¹²⁶ Available at: <http://sismanogliomegaro.tumblr.com/post/55074941169>

¹²⁷ Available at: http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=grants_EN&Rec_ID=5394

an informal and simultaneous discussion with all instructors, and hence the model of semi-structured interviews was adopted.

According to Sismanoglio Megaro's Greek language instructors, the courses comprise both a pleasant educational process for the students and also act as a tool of motivating a further exploration and understanding of the Greek culture and civilization. As they explained, the courses' role is twofold. On one hand, the instructors hold that a grammar and vocabulary-based approach to language training is not efficient. Hence, by utilizing new teaching methods, whereby the courses are enriched by sociological and cultural references, the instructors believe that in addition to improving students' linguistic skills they also provide them with valuable information regarding Greek civilization and culture, as well as the Greek contemporary reality.

According to "M"¹²⁸ intercultural awareness can be promoted in two ways: first, by the utilization of modern communicative approaches which can help students to penetrate in Greek reality and subsequently communicate with the native speakers and secondly, by the identification of linguistic and cultural similarities. Interestingly, "S" supports that the two languages share many words in common, thus both allowing students to further understand the interaction of the Greek and Turkish culture, as well as to advance their knowledge of the Greek vocabulary. "K", on the other hand, argued that due to the limited availability of Greek language teaching material, the instructors are responsible for collecting and distributing further material that might advance students' linguistic skills, and hence, according to "F", their teaching offers moves beyond the

¹²⁸ For personal reasons, the names of the instructors will remain anonymous

strict scope of language learning and into that of a wider understanding of Greek culture and contemporary reality.

The provision of high quality courses is a major priority for Sismanoglio Megaro and it is ensured through several means. First, the selection of Sismanoglio Megaro's instructors is based on their educational accomplishments and previous experience, thus allowing the establishment of a qualified Greek language team that can deliver classes of exceptional quality. Moreover, the policy of Sismanoglio Megaro is to create small student groups, so as to monitor students' progress and instructors' efficiency. According to the interview findings, the instructors' feel that the small number of students facilitates their interaction with students, allows them to better know one another, and contributes to more constructive teaching methods. Additionally, those interested in Sismanoglio Megaro's Greek language courses, need to complete a form that the instructors believe allows them both to identify the students' level, as well as the degree to which they desire to engage with the Greek language. While the students' wish to further explore the Greek culture and philosophy of the Greek language is a major motivation, the teachers argued that the free nature of the courses and the provision of scholarships¹²⁹ also form major motivation factors.

In addition to the utilization of teaching material that is developed for the particular purposes of Greek language courses, Sismanoglio Megaro aims at providing a series of services and activities that will enrich their learning experience and will ensure that the courses are of high quality. Often faced with the hardships of language training, the instructors seek to turn classrooms into inspiring and creative platforms. They achieve

¹²⁹ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/sismanogleiomegaro/mathimata-ellinikon/>

this through participating in Sismanoglio Megaro's cultural events and exhibitions, as well as through educational games, music, movie screenings and theater visits. It must be pointed here, that the instructors unequivocally expressed their belief that they comprise bodies of Greek culture and awareness promotion, and also that they feel that a major motivation of students' stems from their desire to both learn how to speak Greek, as well as to further explore Greece's civilization and contemporary reality.

4.3.2 The former coordinator of Sismanoglio Megaro from 2008-2010

By the time Sismanoglio Megaro opened its doors to the public in 2008, a great deal of its cultural identity and its logistical and organizational structure had already been established. An interview with the former coordinator of Sismanoglio Megaro from 2008 until 2010, Miss Artemis Papatheodorou, who is greatly responsible for the realization of this important project, provided very interesting information. While greatly successful, the establishment of Sismanoglio Megaro was not free of difficulties. Currently, it does not comprise an independent institute or foundation, and hence, its action is bound under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, as the former coordinator argued, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been unable to finance the activities of Sismanoglio Megaro during the period of the Greek economic crisis, and that further increased the difficulties that had to be faced. In order to deal with the lack of economic support, Sismanoglio Megaro sought private financial support. Notably, the Greek language courses, which are provided free of charge, are currently being financially

supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center,¹³⁰ as well as by Bodossaki Foundation.¹³¹

According to the former coordinator, the motivation behind the establishment of these libraries is to attract young people not only to learn more about the presence of Greek culture in Turkey, and particular that of Istanbul, but also to spread their experience through the journey of knowledge.

4.3.3 Interviews with the former Consul General and the Consul of Greece in Istanbul

The existence of Sismanoglio Megaro, and its presence in the Turkish society, is greatly to be attributed to the effective role of the two Consuls General. In 2008 the former Consul General took the very important decision to create a cultural center aiming at the promotion of the Greek Culture in Istanbul. Following the end of his service in 2011, the new Consul General continued engaging with this important initiative, through further emphasizing the Sisanoglio Megaro's cultural activity, as well as through invigorating the extroverted character of Sismanoglio Megaro.

According to the former Consul General, Mr Vasileios Bornovas, Sismanoglio Megaro initially aimed at a completely separate presence to that of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul. Hence, a new logo was created and the activities of Sismanoglio Megaro were hosted in a distinct web site.¹³² In the former Consul General's view, the success of the establishment of Sismanoglio Megaro is largely to be attributed to a

¹³⁰ Available at: http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=grants_EN&Rec_ID=4431

¹³¹ Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/xorigoi/xorigoi.html>

¹³² Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/>

rapprochement of the relations between the two countries. During the period of its establishment, both sides were making important efforts to enhance bilateral relations. Also, during this period, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's policy was characterized by democratic openings.¹³³ Within the framework of a more democratic society, the government improved its relations with neighboring countries, as well as with Greek Orthodox Minority. According to the former Consul General, the Turkish government is currently putting great emphasis on the Turkish educational system, and as a result the educational level of young people has significantly improved, helped by the fact that young people are increasingly interested in learning the Greek Language and exploring the Greek Culture. The former Consul General agreed that the successful work of Sismanoglio Megaro is to be attributed to the creation of a circle of young people, both Greeks and Turks, who have been working vibrantly for the purposes of turning it into an exciting platform.

According to the current Consul and Head of Sismanoglio Megaro, Mr Victor Maligoudis, the basic aim of Sismanoglio Megaro is the preservation and further invigoration of the extroversion of Sismanoglio Megaro as a basic platform for the promotion of Greek culture and awareness in Istanbul. According to him, it constitutes a space for the promotion and spreading of Greek Culture, for the exchange of views and opinions, as well as the improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey through culture. Moreover, it is worth noting that the establishment of Sismanoglio Megaro was not a personal initiative, but a conscious political decision on behalf of Greece to promote

¹³³ "From Hardware to Software, Charity to Strategy: A Roadmap for Progressive Philanthropy in Turkey" by Filiz Bikmen, published in Turkish Policy Quarterly, Spring 2008

modern Greece and its culture, as well as to acquire a cultural presence within Turkey's society. Indeed, in the consul's opinion, the progress of Sismanoglio Megaro has been immense and its activities have been particularly effective.

According to the Consul and Head of Sismanoglio Megaro, thousands of people visit every year Sismanoglio Megaro's exhibitions and events, and more than a thousand applications for the Greek language courses are received every year. Furthermore, the systematic monitoring of the work of many important foreign Foundations, like Goethe Institute, not only allows the cooperation between them – which resulted in the institution of the European Day of Languages¹³⁴ in Sismanoglio Megaro every year - but also adds a positive sign in its effort. The immense mobility found in Sismanoglio Megaro, on the one hand denotes the intense activity of Sismanoglio Megaro, and on the other it declares the desire of visitors and students to learn more about Greek Culture.

The Consul argued that the prospect of improvement constitutes important motivation in keeping Sismanoglio Megaro an active and vibrant platform. The Consul and the Head of Sismanoglio Megaro argued that the performance of the staff is evaluated through domestic processes that seek to improve the quality of the services offered by the Sismanoglio Megaro. For instance, in an attempt to ensure the quality of Greek language courses, the vice president of the Greek Language Center held a three-day visit in order to talk with the staff and attend the courses offered. At the end of the visit he issued a detailed assessment report. Also, worth mentioning is that since September 2013 there are no beginners classes offered, as Sismanoglio Megaro's policy

¹³⁴Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/turkey/tr/consulate-general-in-istanbul/news/28-eylulde-sismanoglio-megaroda-avrupa-dil-gunu.html>

only allows a yearly admission of 500 students. Hence, all those beginners interested in learning the Greek language are directed by Sismanoglio Megaro to be evaluated by private schools. According to the consulate, Sismanoglio Megaro, through its extroversive practices, aims at introducing Greek culture particularly to the vibrant audiences of Turkey. Hence, it does not constitute a platform of “mass culture” or “mass consumption”.

4.4 Survey Analysis

4.4.1 Introduction

For the purpose of getting insights into Sismanoglio Megaro’s students’ and visitors’ expectations, perceptions and experiences, the present study utilized the methodological tool of survey analysis. According to E.Babbie “*surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. They are chiefly used in studies that have individual people as the units of analysis. Survey research is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly*”.¹³⁵ A total of 161 questionnaires were distributed among Greek language course attendees and cultural events’ and exhibitions’ visitors. 111 questionnaires were completed from a total of 350 students that attended the spring term of classes, and a total of 50 questionnaires were distributed to Sismanoglio Megaro visitors of talks, exhibitions, presentations, documentaries, and concerts. The size of the sample hence allows for representative results.

¹³⁵ Earl Babbie “The practice of Social Research”, 11th Edition, Thomson Wadsworth, 2007, Chapter 9, p. 244

The questionnaires were closed-ended questions, meaning that they required participants to select an answer among a set of fixed possible answers, and followed the Contingency Questions Format, which offers a structure for exploring subject areas in certain depth.¹³⁶ The participants were required to complete a total of twenty questions. The questions were provided both in Turkish and Greek, so as to allow students to choose the language in which they wish to respond. Moreover, the questionnaire provided detailed information regarding the researcher's identity, the aims of the thesis and the significance of respondents' participation. Finally, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point; they were free not to answer any questions they did not wish to, as well as to provide answers that were not offered as multiple choice options. Below follows a detailed analysis of the participants' responses.

4.4.2 Greek language course students' responses

The responses of Greek language course attendees will be presented and analyzed in the following categories: 1) General Information, 2) Bureaucratic Questions, 3) Relation between Greece and courses, 4) Cultural Diplomacy Questions.

The *first category* of questions sought to provide general information about Sismanoglio Megaro and its role. One of the questions under this section inquired about how students got to know about Sismanoglio Megaro and its services. As chart 2 suggests, the majority of students were informed through Sismanoglio Megaro's website,

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 253

followed by information that was provided to them by Greek friends. While these results are very positive regarding the effectiveness of Sismanoglio Megaro's website, they also suggest that Sismanoglio Megaro's promoting techniques (advertisements) have not been such strong. Another question was to what extend students believed that it is easy to find out more about the Sismanoglio Megaro's Greek language courses. Only 7 students found it "very difficult", 15 students found it "difficult", 30 students claimed to have found it "very easy", and the majority of 58 students said it was "easy". In another question students were required to state if they were happy to suggest Sismanoglio Megaro's Greek language courses to other students. As chart 3 illustrates, most respondents felt content by the level and quality of the courses, and as a result they would suggest these courses, while only 11 students answered that they would not advice others to participate.

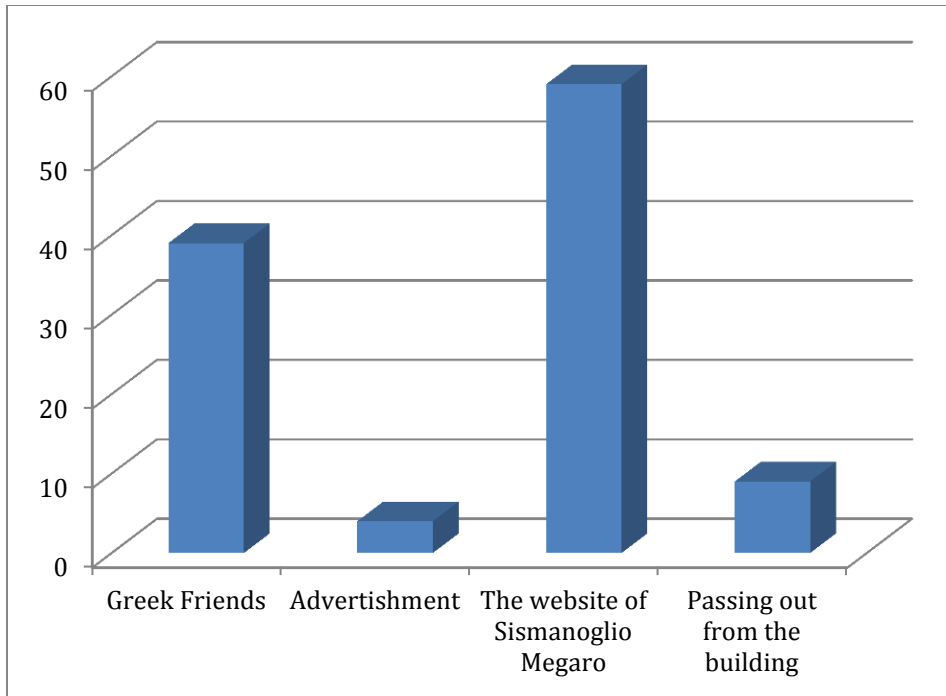


Chart 2: How did students find out about Sismanoglio Megaro and its services?

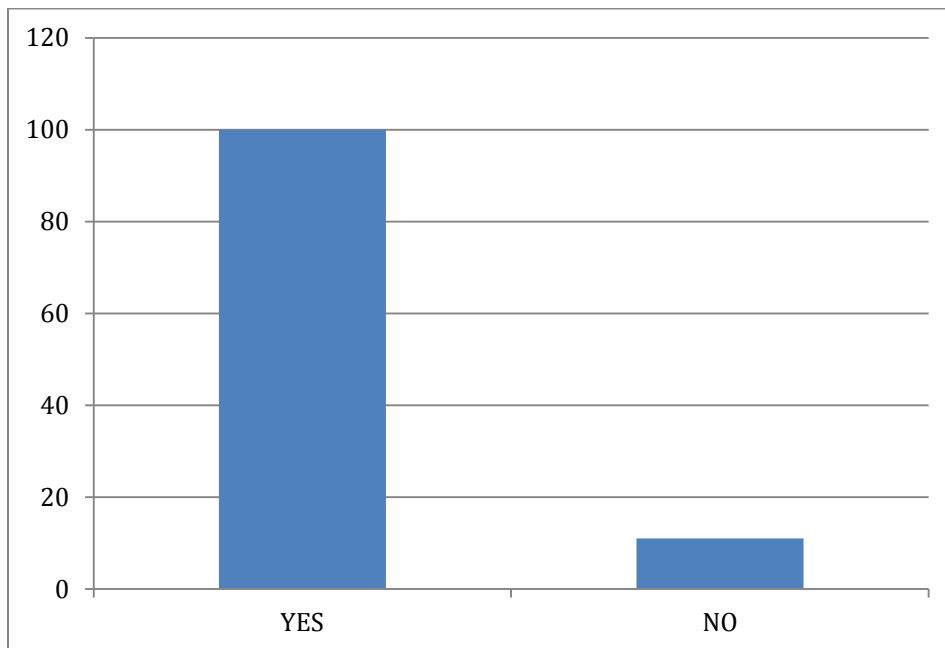


Chart 3: Would students of Sismanoglio Megaro's Greek Language Courses refer others to Sismanoglio Megaro?

The *second category* of questions sought to provide more practical questions about the courses. One of the questions under this section was about how long students have been attending the Greek language courses. Only 4 students had been attending the

lessons for “4 years”, 21 students had been attending them for “3 years”, 40 students answered “2 years” and 40 students had been attending the lessons for “a year”. Another question was about the free nature of courses. As pie 4 illustrates, most respondents found the free nature of courses to be an important incentive, while only 21 students answered that they would not support the free nature of courses. In another question students were required to state if they are satisfied with the way the courses are organized and instructed. Most respondents felt content, while only 3 students answered that they were not satisfied by the lessons. Another question was why students chose Sismanoglio Megaro and not another private school for learning the Greek. As chart 5 illustrates, the majority of students chose Sismanoglio Megaro on the basis of its Greek teachers, 24 students answered with reference to the teachers’ previous experience in teaching, 22 students stated the free nature of courses as their main incentive, 20 students wanted to familiarize themselves with the Greek Culture and only 8 students gave the school as their main reason of choice.

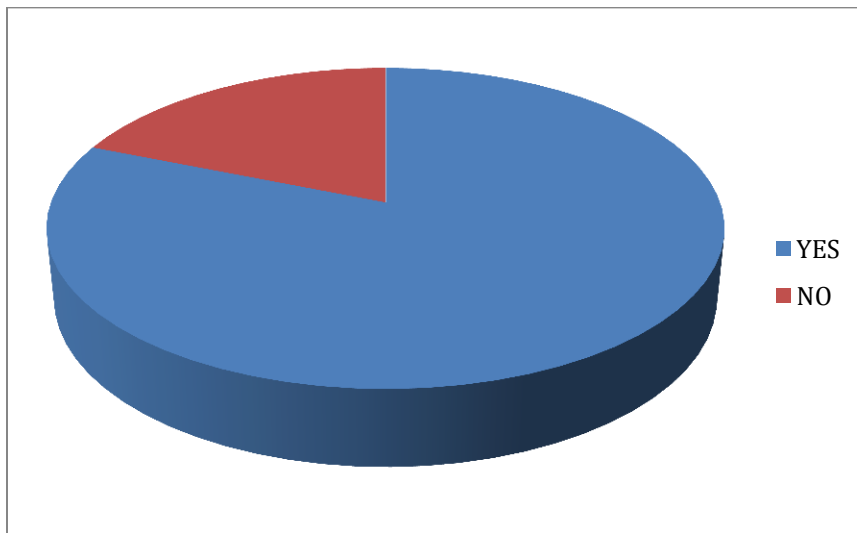


Chart 4: Does their being free of charge constitute an important factor for attending the lessons?

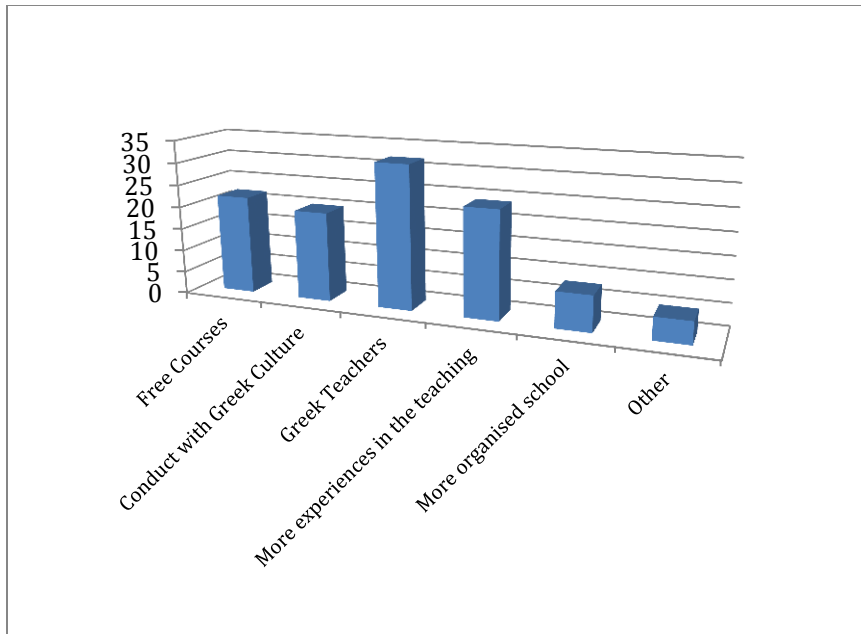


Chart 5: Why did you choose Sismanoglio Megaro to learn Greek?

The *third category* of questions sought to make clear the relation between Greek language courses and Greece. One of the questions under this section was about students' links to Greece prior to the courses. Only 19 students answered "NO" and 92 students answered "YES". The students that answered that it is their first time to contact with the Greek Language are 80, while the students that answered "NO" are only 31. Another question was why students wanted to learn Greek. As chart 6 suggests, only 8 students thought of the Greek language as a means of receiving employment in Greece. 11 students stated that they wanted to study in Greece, 26 students wanted to learn Greek in order to communicate with their Greek friends and 44 students wanted to further familiarize themselves with the Greek culture. In another question students were required to state how important it is for them to learn Greek. Only 2 respondents answered "little", 43 respondents answered "quite" and the majority of the respondents answered "very". Another important question under this section was why it is important to learn the Greek language. According to Chart 7, only 12 students answered that they wanted to learn how

to think in Greek, 14 students chose personal reasons, 38 students wanted to be able to communicate with their friends, while 47 students expressed their desire to improve their knowledge on the Greek culture.

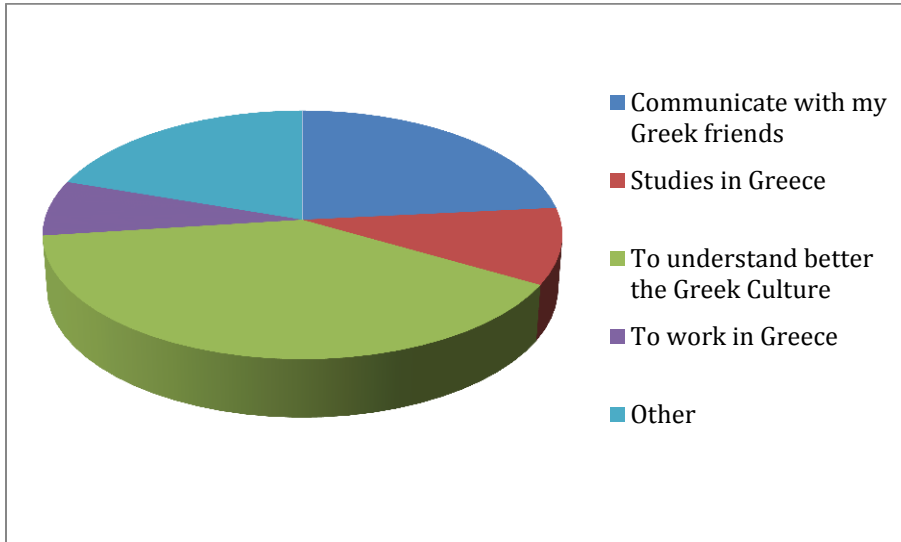


Chart 6: Why did you choose to study the Greek Language?

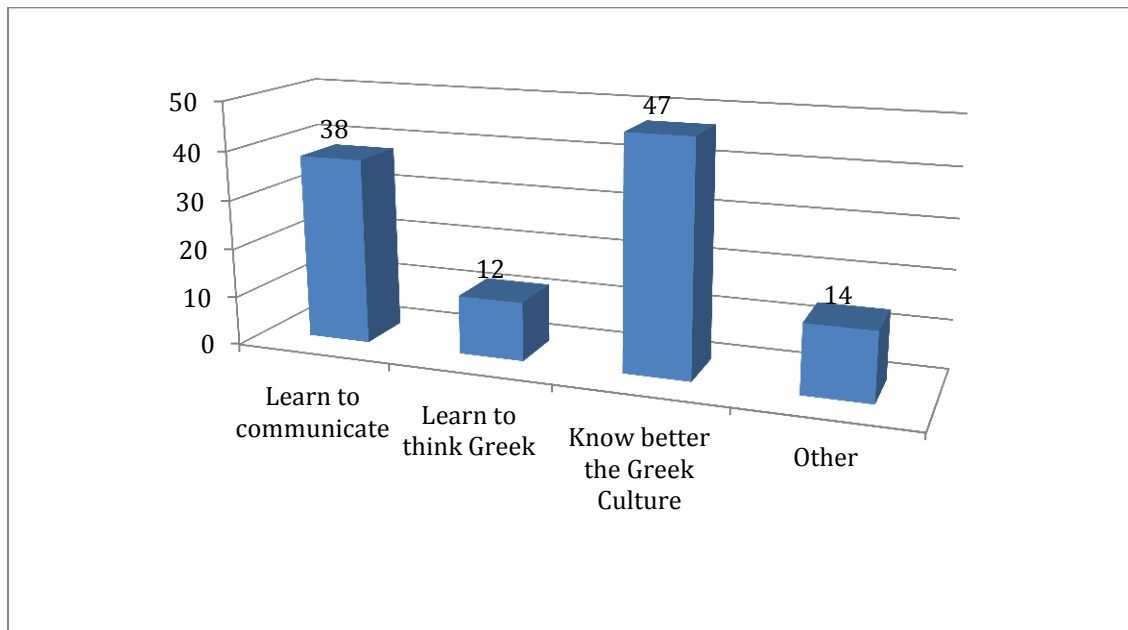


Chart 7: Why is it important to learn Greek?

The *last category* of questions is related to Cultural Diplomacy and its links to Greek language courses. One of the questions under this section was about students' opinions regarding the possibility of characterizing Greek language lessons as a way of transmitting the Greek Culture. As chart 8 illustrates, most respondents do believe that Greek language can act as means of cultural diplomacy, while only 8 respondents had the contrary view. Another question was about the style of the lessons, and if the students believe that the lessons have only educational character or if they also promote the Greek Culture. Most respondents noted that the lessons are characterized by both, while 12 respondents considered that the lessons have only educational character and 13 respondents answered that they only promote the Greek Culture. Another question to students was about whether they feel the necessity as students to learn more about the Greek Culture after attending the lessons. According to chart 9, only 3 students do not feel the necessity, 13 students answered "a little", 46 students answered "enough", while 49 students feel "very much" the necessity to learn more things. In another question students were required to state if their opinion about Greece has changed for the better. According to the chart 10, students that answered "a little" was only 18, 22 students answered "quite", 35 students answered enough, while 36 students answered "very much". In another question students were required to state if they feel that they learn more things about the Greek Culture through the program of the Greek language courses. Most of the students were satisfied with the program, while only 6 students felt that they did not learn anything about the Greek Culture. In the next question which was addressed to the significance of learning the Greek language in understanding Greek Culture (chart 11) 7 students answered "of little importance", 33 students answered "moderately

important” and 71 students answered “very important”. The last question under this section asked students if they believe that the Greek language courses program improves the relations between Greece and Turkey. As chart 12 illustrates, most of the students believe that the program helps bilateral relations, while only 1 student stated that the program does not help the relations between Greece and Turkey.

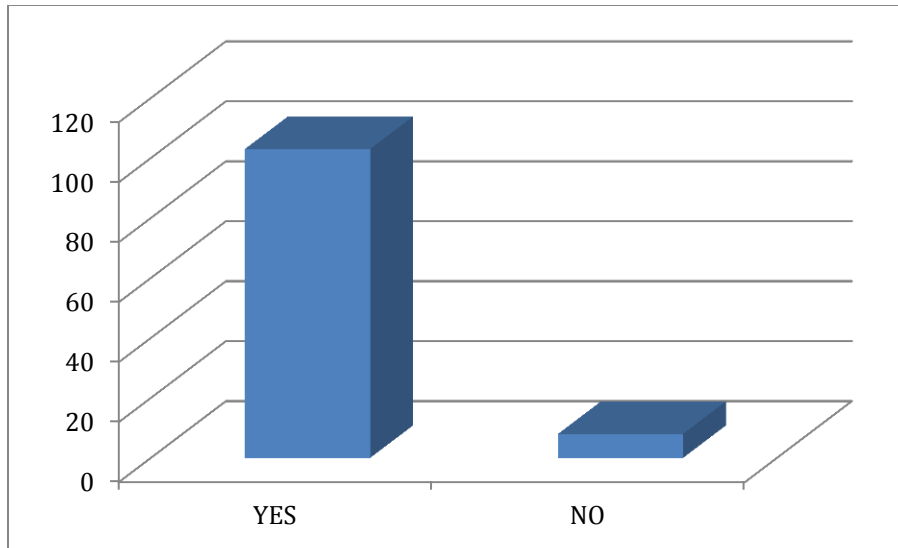


Chart 8: Can the lessons be characterized as a way of transmission to the Greek Culture?

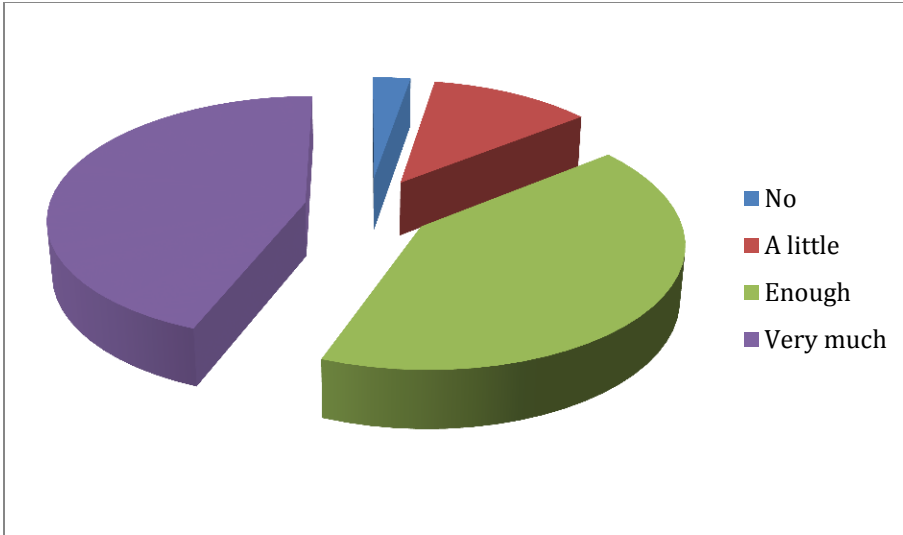


Chart 9: Do students feel the necessity to learn more things about the Greek Culture after the courses?

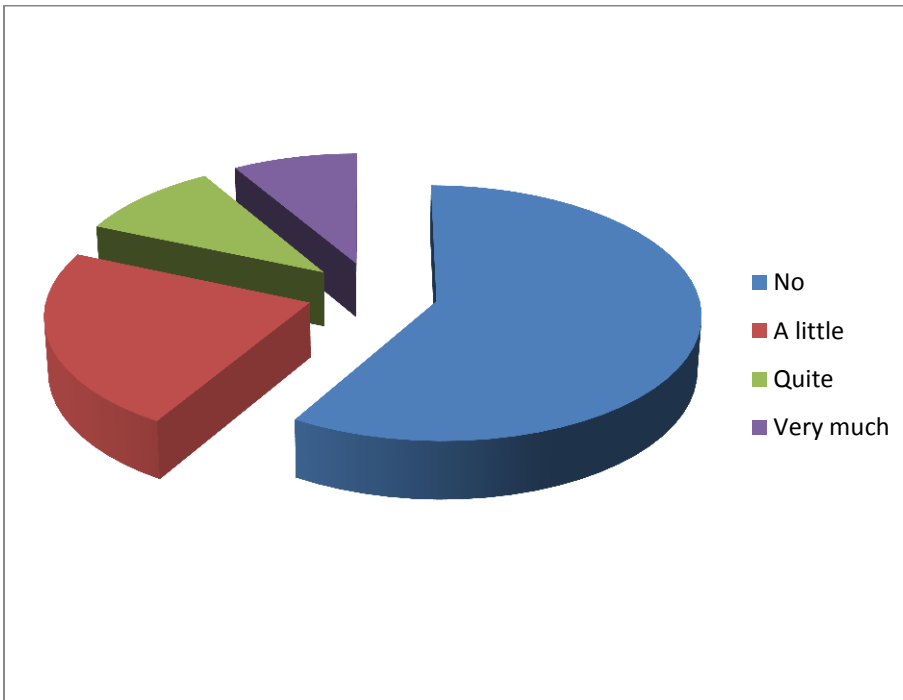


Chart 10: Has the students' opinion about Greece changed for the better?

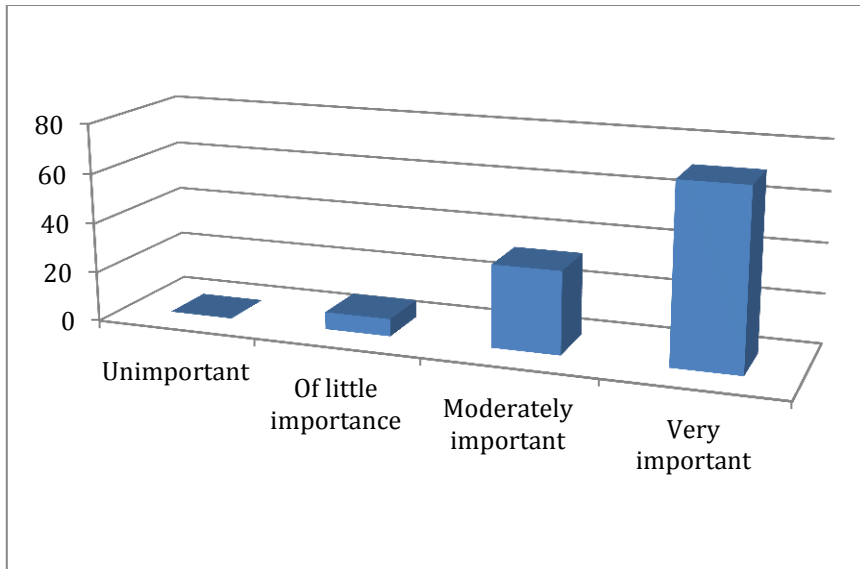


Chart 11: What is the significance of learning the Greek language in order to understand the Greek Culture?

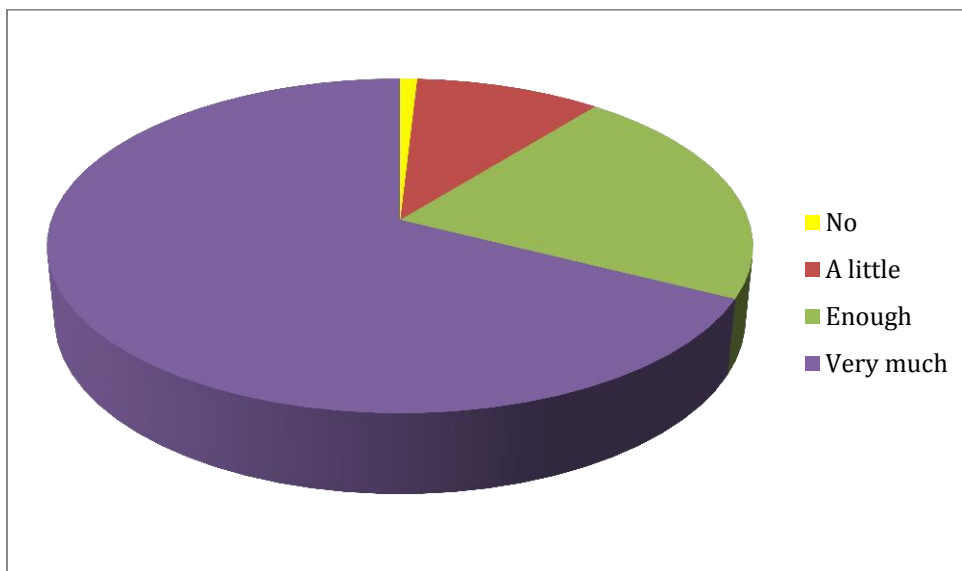


Chart 12: Do Greek language courses improve the relations between Greece and Turkey?

4.4.3 Cultural events visitors' responses

The results in this category, which contain the Sismanoglio Megaro's cultural events and attendees' responses, have been divided in the following categories: 1)

General Information, 2) Bureaucratic questions, 3) The relation between Culture and events, 4) Cultural Diplomacy. In the *first category* some general information about Sismanoglio Megaro is presented. One of the questions under this section was about how attendees got to know about Sismanoglio Megaro and its culture events. As chart 13 suggests, the majority of attendees were informed through Sismanoglio Megaro's website, but useful information was also provided to them by Greek friends. On the other hand, the advertisements proved not to be so effective in informing visitors. Another question was whether they know which the role of Sismanoglio Megaro is? 20 of the visitors answered "NO" and 30 visitors answered "YES" about the role of Sismanoglio Megaro. In another question visitors were required to state how easy it was to receive information about the cultural events. As chart 14 illustrates, only 3 visitors found it "very difficult", 5 visitors found it "difficult", 19 visitors claimed to have found it "very easy", and the majority of 23 visitors said it was "easy". Most of the visitors did not face any problem, while 4 visitors answered that it was difficult to understand the theme of the event.

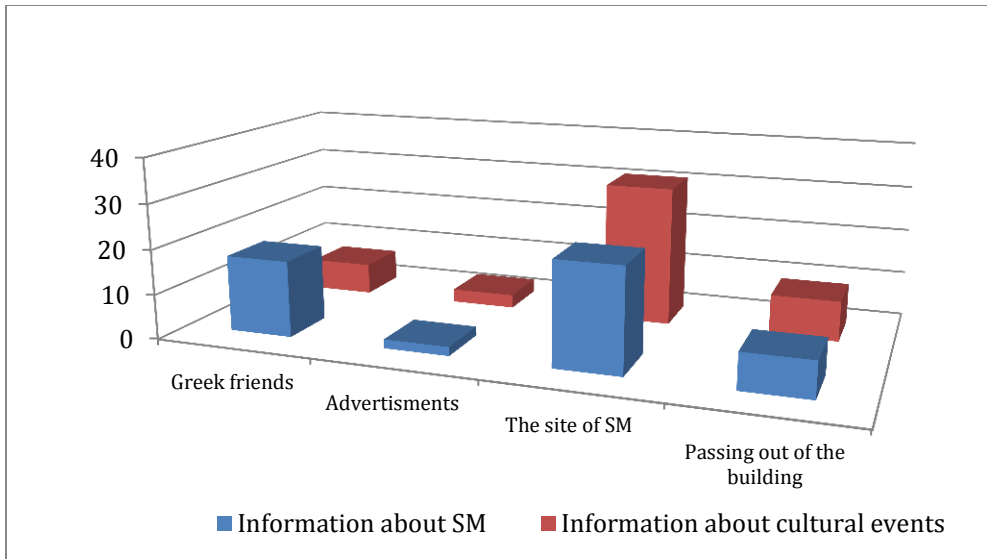


Chart 13: Where did you find Information about Sismanoglio Megaro and its cultural events?

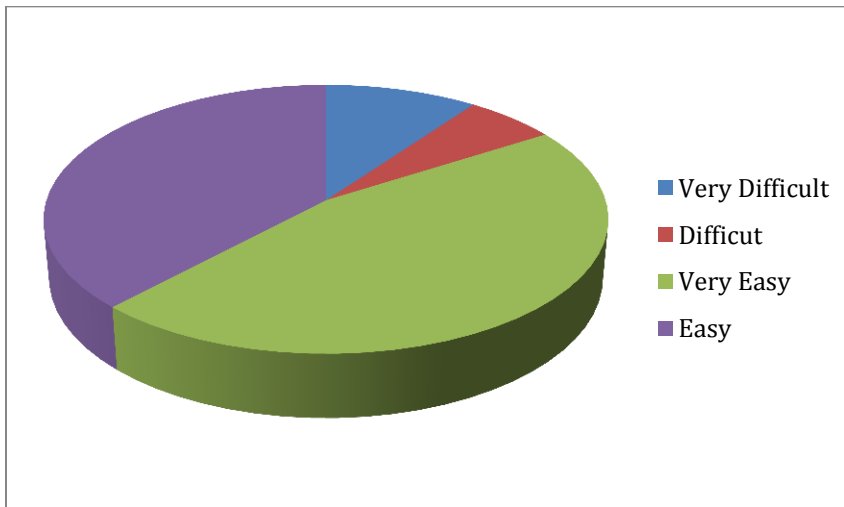


Chart 14: How easy was it to find information about Sismanoglio Megaro's cultural events?

The *second category* of questions contained more practical questions about the events. One of the questions under this section was about the number of events attended last year. Only 10 visitors attended “6-10 events”, while most of the visitors attended “1-5 events”. Another question focused on the types of events. According to chart 16, only 4

visitors selected to attend the “documentary”, 5 visitors found interest in the “concerts”, 6 visitors preferred the “speeches”, 15 visitors found attractive the “presentations of books”, while most visitors selected the “exhibitions”. In the question “did you enroll on the newsletter after visiting Sismanoglio Megaro for the first time”, most of the visitors answered positively while 14 answered negatively. Another interesting question sought to address the frequency with which visitors attended cultural events. As chart 17 illustrates, only 1 visitor answered “never”, 5 visitors selected “always”, 10 visitors answered “seldom”, while 34 visitors selected “occasionally”. Another question inquired about the way in which visitors select the cultural events they attend. According to chart 18, only 5 respondents selected the events “randomly”, 10 respondents selected them on the basis of expectations, 17 respondents on the basis of their ability to participate, while 18 respondents on the basis of the event’s topic.

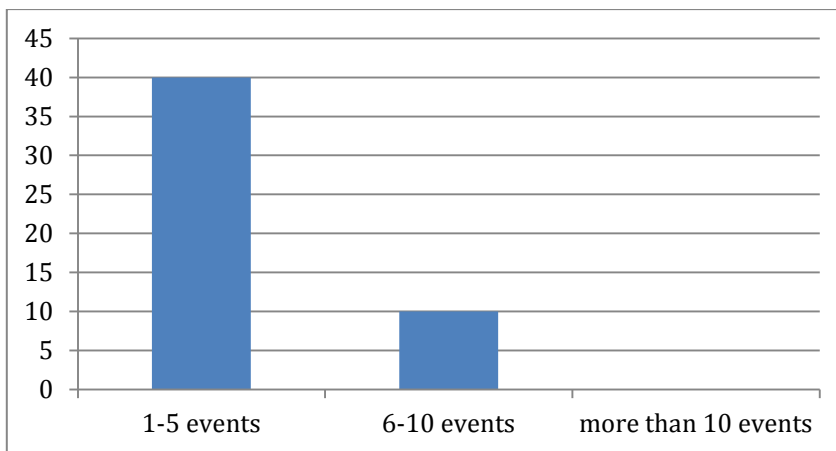


Chart 15: How many events did you attend since last year?

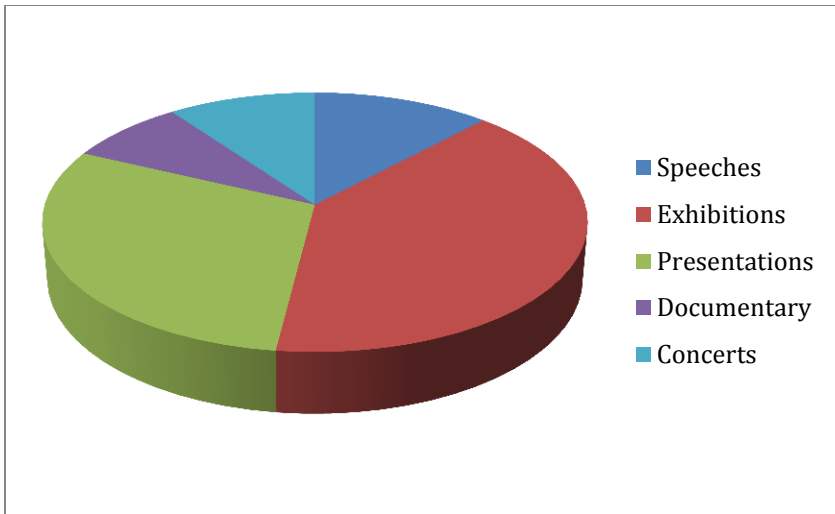


Chart 16: What types of events do you prefer to attend?

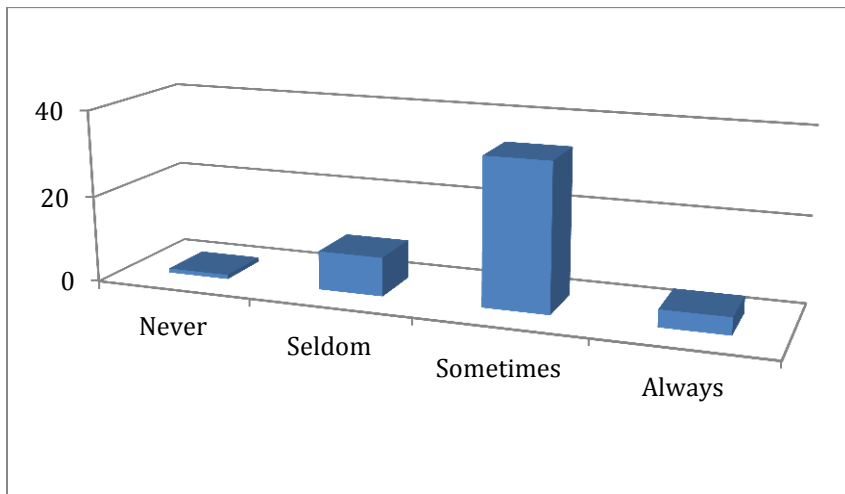


Chart 17: How often do you attend the events?

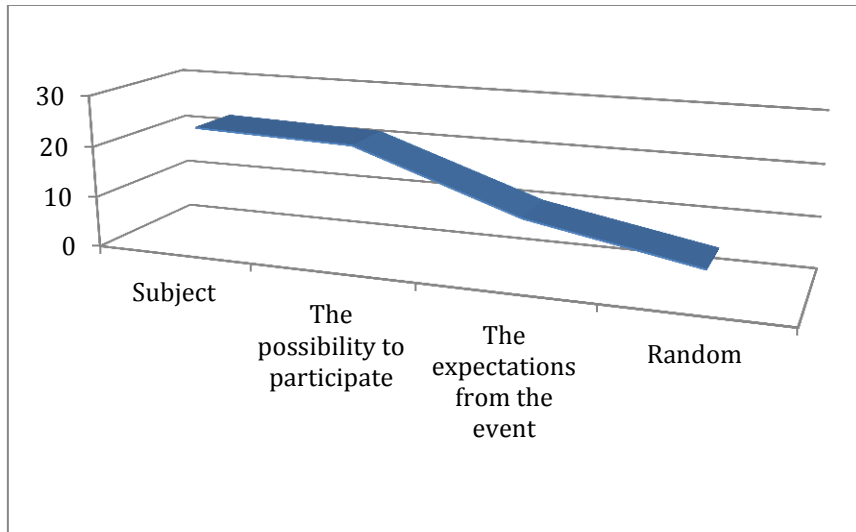


Chart 18: On what basis do you decide which events to attend?

In the *third category* the questions involved culture issues and the country of Greece. One of the questions under this section asked about the relevancy of the attended event to Greece. As chart 19 suggests, only 2 visitors found the subject “irrelevant” to Greece, 7 visitors found the subject “very relevant”, 13 visitors found the subject “a little relevant” to Greece and 28 visitors found the subject “somewhat relevant” to Greece. Another question wanted to know the visitors’ relations with Greece. According to chart 20, only 5 visitors are visiting Greece for work, 10 visitors want to study in Greece, 15 visitors have Greek friends, while 20 visitors often travel to Greece. In another question visitors were required to state if the events of Sismanoglio Megaro have contributed to a general understanding of the Greek culture. For most respondents the events did help them get an idea about Greek Culture, while only 2 respondents answered negatively.

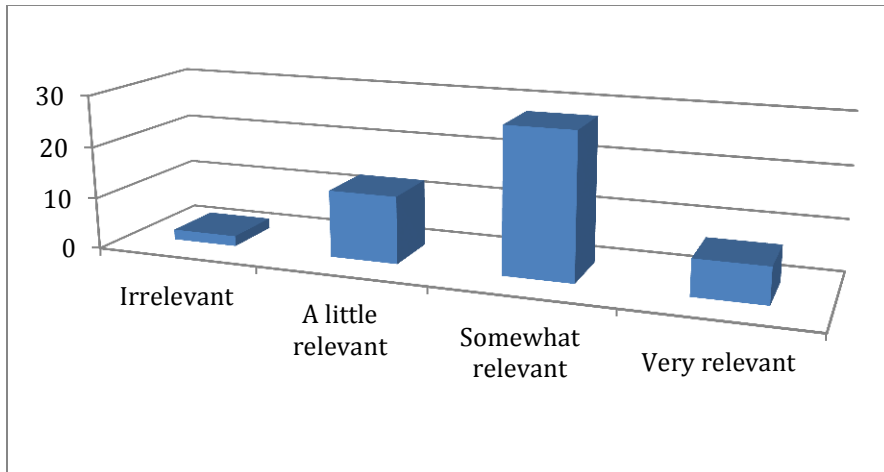


Chart 19: How relevant is the subject of the event that you attended with Greece?

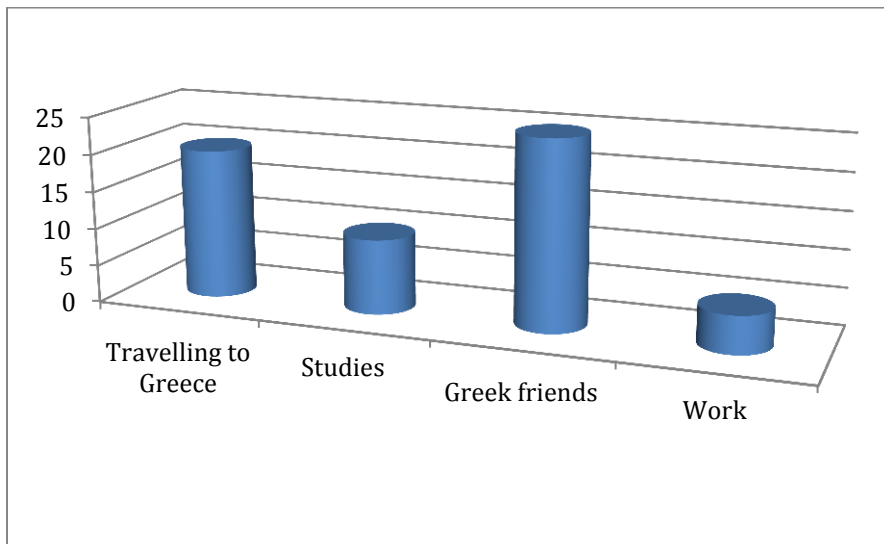


Chart 20: What is your relation with Greece?

The *last category* of questions referred to Cultural Diplomacy and its influence on the relations between Greece and Turkey. One important question in that category was about the extent to which the visitors felt influenced by the event they attended. Only 8 visitors answered “little”, 12 visitors answered “very much”, while 30 visitors answered “enough” (chart 21). In the question “did your previous picture of Greece change during the event you attended” (chart 22), only 3 visitors answered “very much”, 12 visitors

answered “a little”, 13 visitors answered “no”, 22 visitors answered “enough”. One of the questions of this section was about the extent to which the respondents felt that they learnt more things about Greece after attending the event. According to chart 23 most of the respondents feel that they had learnt more things about Greece, and as a result felt satisfied, while only 8 respondents answered negatively. Another question focused on the issue of language, and asked if the events could be presented in both languages. Only 1 visitor answered negatively, while most visitors answered that it would be better to provide both languages. One of the most important questions was about to which extent the relations between Greece and Turkey is improved through Sismanoglio Megaro’s cultural events. As chart 24 illustrates, only 2 respondents answered “never”, 3 respondents answered “seldom”, 10 respondents answered “enough”, while 35 respondents found that Sismanoglio Megaro’s cultural events always improve the relations between the two countries.

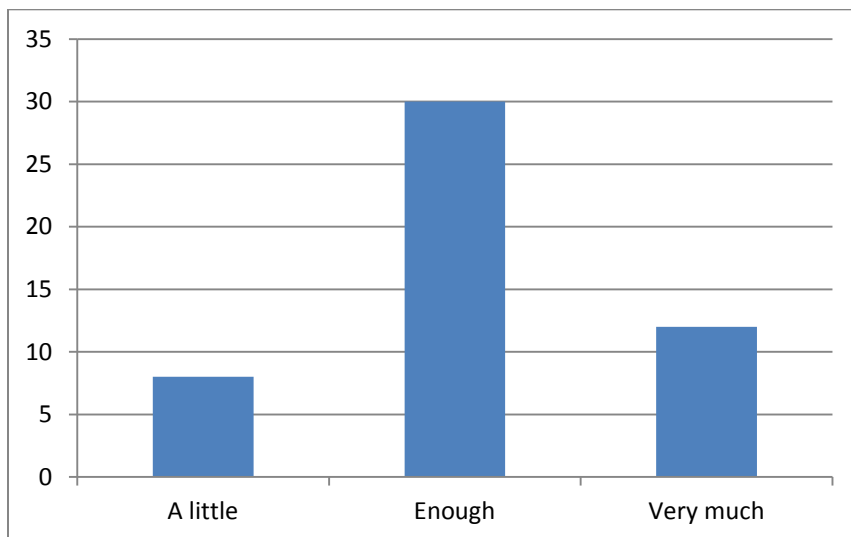


Chart 21: Did you feel influenced by the event you attended?

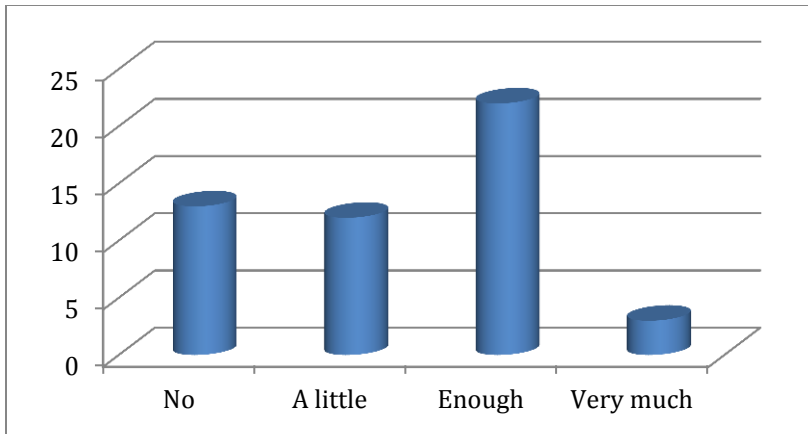


Chart 22: Did your understanding of Greece change after attending this event?

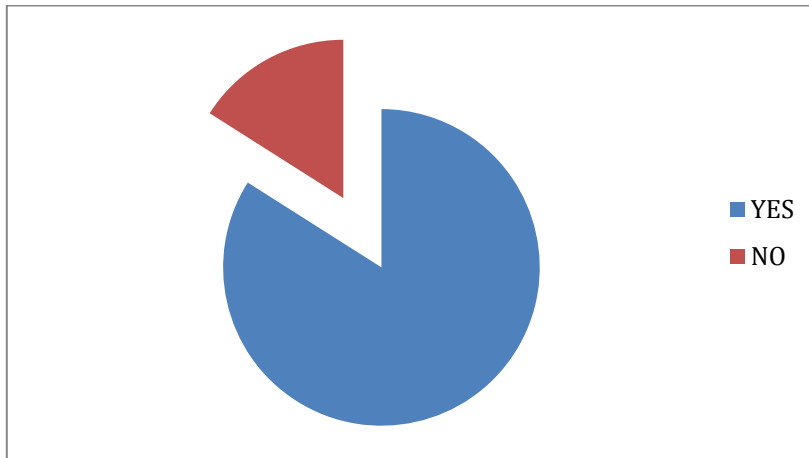


Chart 23: Do you feel that you have learnt more things about Greece after attending the event?

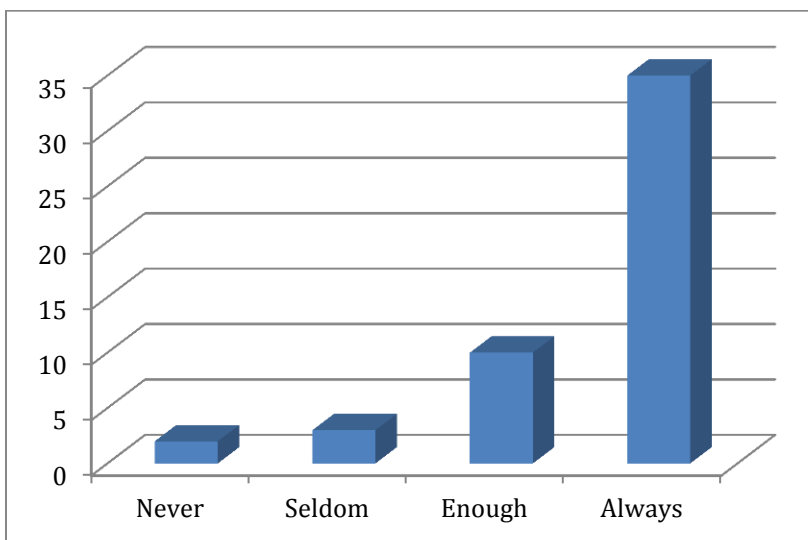


Chart 24: Do you think that Sismanoglio Megaro's events contribute to the improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey?

V. CONCLUSIONS

The thesis's aim was to examine the Cultural Diplomacy between Greece and Turkey, focusing on the cultural activity of Sismanoglio Megaro, the cultural center of Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul for the last six years, beginning in 2008 and ending in 2014.

Sismanoglio Megaro was selected as a representative case for the study of the Greek cultural diplomacy because its main tool of operation involves cultural diplomatic practices, on the one hand, and it promotes the cooperation and intercultural dialogue, on the other. The policy of interculturalism encompasses pointing out similarities and differences in different cultures, while guaranteeing their right on culture and acquainting with other cultures and at the same time removing prejudices and stereotypes about others and yourself.¹³⁷ Moreover, Sismanoglio Megaro was the first scheme organized by the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul that aimed at promoting the Greek culture and improving the relations between Greece and Turkey. Worth mentioning is that my research was organized on the basis of two axes: the first one consisted of the theoretical part of my study, and addressed Cultural diplomacy and its practice through relevant bibliography that I had at my disposal. The second part consisted of the particular case study of Sismanoglio Megaro, and was carried through research involving the conduct of interviews and questionnaires as well as the examination of archives and internet

¹³⁷ Dina Dotlić, *Greek Cultural Presence in Belgrade. Experiences from the Near Past and Perspectives for the Future*, Belgrade, 2008, p. 94

entries.¹³⁸ A detailed discussion about the results of my research is presented in the following paragraphs.

Since the late 1990s', and more specifically after the devastating earthquake of 1999 that struck both Greece and Turkey, the two countries have been making steps to come closer. Both countries participated in the humanitarian mission in order to assist one another and in that sense the earthquake could be characterized as a hub regarding the redefinition of relations between Greece and Turkey. Following this terrible natural disaster, both governments endorsed Greek-Turkish rapprochement¹³⁹ and as a result the bilateral relations between the countries were significantly reinforced on a social, political, economic and especially in a cultural level.

In this context, the presence of Greek culture in the Turkish society became more intensive in 2008, when the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul decided to establish Sismanoglio Megaro. Worth mentioning is that the foreign policy of Greece is not only shaped by the country's geographical reality, but also by its historical and cultural relations with other people and nations, as well as by its dedication to the cultural values and principles of peace, democracy and stability. Moving to that direction, it has the opportunity to promote its aims either independently, or through the international organizations and formations in which it is included.¹⁴⁰ One last dimension of Greek foreign policy practices includes the common consciousness, the mores, the cultural heritage and development, as well as the values, the religion, the interesting and generally

¹³⁸ Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/>

¹³⁹ Available at: <http://www.mfa.gr/blog/dimereis-sheseis-tis-ellados/tourkia/>,
<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>

¹⁴⁰ Giannos Kranidiwtis, *The Greek Foreign Policy: Thoughts and Reflections on the Threshold of the 21st Century*, I.Sideris, Athena 1999.

the timeless cultural interconnection. In that sense, the strategic position of Greece in the international system is determined as ‘geo-cultural’.

While examining the elements that determine the shaping of the Greek Foreign Policy a very important question raises: Can the cultural activity of Sismanoglio Megaro improve the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey? The results of my research suggest that the people who work for Sismanoglio Megaro hold that in a few years’ time Sismanoglio Megaro managed to become a point of reference in one of the busiest streets in Istanbul. Most events that are held there were met with a strong response from the public. An analytical study of Sismanoglio Megaro’s operation and position within Turkish society suggests that its functions cross-cuts across diverse domains including the fields of cultural heritage, language, literature, theater, music, cinema and visual arts. Furthermore, Sismanoglio Megaro constitutes a unique source of free Greek language courses. Sismanoglio Megaro not only offers an opportunity for the intercultural exchange of individuals, ideas and artistic expressions, but it also gives the opportunity for young local artists to express their creativity.

Indeed, my findings suggest that one of the most important roles of Sismanoglio Megaro is the development of cultural policy in Istanbul. In that sense, a fertile ground for the development of cultural tourism in Istanbul is created. This is further implied by the presence of the Minister of Culture and Tourism in Sismanoglio Megaro in 2011,¹⁴¹ promoting the project about the presence of different cultural elements from various

¹⁴¹ Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/ekdilwseis/the-greek-minister-of-culture-and-tourism-mr-pavlos-geroulanos-at-the-sismanoglio-megaro-06072011.html>

regions in Greece in Istanbul, such as from Eastern Macedonia and Thrace¹⁴² in the framework of development of cultural tourism. Another important issue that derives from this research is Sismanoglio Megaro's active participation in cultural networks through partnership and collaboration. Worth noting is the collaboration of Sismanoglio Megaro with global rich foundations and institutes like Goethe-Institute and British Council. Equally important is the fact that the European Day of Language has been materialized in Sismanoglio Megaro annually since 2010. On the other hand, the cultural center of Sismanoglio Megaro presents some weaknesses due to the fact that it still comprises a new venture, but there is a wide consensus that with the passing of time and the gaining of experience these weaknesses will be converted into strengths. Some of the weaknesses that were observed were discussed below.

Sismanoglio Megaro constitutes the cultural center of the Consulate General of Greece in Istanbul, and as a result it is greatly dependent on Greek public authorities. In that sense, the operation of Sismanoglio Megaro could be characterized as being both directly connected, as well as restricted to an extent, by Greek Public authorities. Another issue that could be characterized as a weakness according to Sismanoglio Megaro's visitors is the low media coverage of cultural events. Also, a lack of concrete Public Relations and marketing practices is observed, resulting to the promotion of Sismanoglio Megaro's cultural activities being often inadequate. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the activities and operation of Sismanoglio Megaro are often largely determined by the fact that it comprises a very recent initiative, and hence, time and experience might resolve many of the aforementioned weaknesses.

¹⁴²Available at: <http://www.sismanogliomegaro.net/gr/ekdilwseis/basn-buelteni-dou-makedonya-ve-trakya-sismanoglio-megaroda-17-21062011-17-21062011-press-release-east-macedonia-and-thrace-at-the-sismanoglio-megaro-17-21062011.html>

The study of the cultural activity of Sismanoglu Megaro, as well as the study of its reception by the Turkish society, concludes that the cultural differences between the two countries do not comprise causes of conflict. A characteristic example of conflict, and one which is particularly relevant in this case, is offered by Samuel Huntington in his theory of «the clash of civilizations» which focuses on the relations between West and Islam.¹⁴³ These relations are not presented as being impossible just because of cultural difference, but mainly because of isolation, common ignorance, lack of understanding, negative stereotypes cultivated by Media, as well as from politicians who seek to serve selfish goals.

These are some of the issues that the Greek Minister of Culture sought to address, primarily with reference to the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey, in an informal meeting of the European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs in Strasbourg, 17- 18 February 2003 *“one very important aspect has been getting rid of ideological and historical stereotypes. Culture is not just a matter of heritage and the arts. It is a matter of life - of everyday life, which is changing all the time, and of all the contradictory things that go into it. Many national or community cultures embody stereotypes and prejudices, which are spread, not just by civil society, but by school systems too.”*¹⁴⁴ Indeed, with the purpose of exploitation, the cultural differences between Greece and Turkey have been frequently used in order to explain political crises. This approach however, prevents the establishment of dialogue between the conflicting sides. The creation and development of soft approaches though, could give rise to cultural exchanges that ultimately create cooperation opportunities.

¹⁴³ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”, published by Simon and Schuster, 1996

¹⁴⁴ Available at: <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,42852/council-of-europe-interview-brings-greek-and-turkish-cu-html>

An overall conclusion of this thesis is that Cultural diplomacy is neither an abstraction nor simply comprised by a few programs for cultural events. Cultural diplomacy is a continuous action of a country's displaying of extroversion abroad. In the case of Sismanoglio Megaro, the appropriation of cultural diplomacy and its practices aims to familiarize the Turkish society with the Greek Culture. Nevertheless, as an overall effort of peoples, cultural diplomacy can contribute to a better world.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

My name is Thomai Zianna and I am student at the graduate program in the field of International Relations in Bilgi University in Istanbul. One part of my research is consisted from questionnaires concerning the Cultural Diplomacy between Greece and Turkey and as a case study was chosen the Sismanoglio Megaro. The aim of this questionnaire is to get a sample of how the cultural events of Sismanoglio Megaro help in the improvement of bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. The successful completion of this part of my study concerning the questionnaires will help me a lot to complete my master successfully.

How does the Sismanoglio Megaro help in the improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey?

1. Do you know what Sismanoglio Megaro is?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

2. If the answer is yes, how did it become known to you?
 - a) From Greek friends
 - b) From advertisements
 - c) From Sismanoglio's Megaro website
 - d) Accidentally coming by out of the building

3. Are you aware of the role of Sismanoglio Megaro?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

4. How many events have you attended since last year?
 - a) 0-5
 - b) 5-10
 - c) 10-15
 - d) 15-20

5. What kind of cultural events?
 - a) Lectures
 - b) Exhibitions
 - c) Book presentation
 - d) Documentary
 - e) Concerts

6. How did you find out about the events?
 - a) Article in the Turkish/ Greek press
 - b) Sismanoglio's Megaro website
 - c) Advertisement
 - d) From the Greek Consulate
 - e) From other sources

7. How easy was to inform about the cultural events?
 - a) Very difficult
 - b) Difficult
 - c) Easy
 - d) Very easy

8. Do you get newsletter from Sismanoglio Megaro?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

9. Do you feel influenced from what you are watching?
 - a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Enough
 - d) Very much

10. Do you think that the opinion of someone had about Greece change watching the event he/she attended?
 - a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Enough
 - d) Very much

11. How often do you choose the content of the events in Sismanoglio Megaro?
- a) Never
 - b) Seldom
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Always
12. I choose events according to:
- a) The subject
 - b) My ability to take part in
 - c) The expectations that i have from the event
 - d) By chance
13. Do you think that such events help in the improvement of relations between two countries?
- a) Never
 - b) Seldom
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Always
14. Do you believe that the subject of the event that you attended is directly related with Greece?
- a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Enough
 - d) Very much
15. My connection with Greece:
- a) Often travel to Greece
 - b) Get informed for what is happening in Greece through the press or from other sources
 - c) Have Greek friends
 - d) Cooperate professionally in Greece
16. Do you expect to form an idea about the Greek culture through the events in Sismanoglio Megaro?
- a) Yes
 - b) No

17. Do you believe that through the events you learn more things about Greece than you already know?

- a) Yes
- b) No

18. Did you have any problem to understand the subject of the event?

- a) Yes
- b) No

19. Do you think it is important to be held events in both languages?

- a) Yes
- b) No

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

My name is Thomai Zianna and I am student at the graduate program in the field of International Relations in Bilgi University in Istanbul. One part of my research is consisted from questionnaires concerning the Cultural Diplomacy between Greece and Turkey and as a case study was chosen the Sismanoglio Megaro. The aim of this questionnaire is to get a sample of how the Greek Language courses of Sismanoglio Megaro help in the improvement of bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. The successful completion of this part of my study concerning the questionnaires will help me a lot to complete my master successfully.

How the Sismanoglio Megaro help in the improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey?

1. Do you know what Sismanoglio Megaro is?

- a) Yes
- b) No

2. If the answer is yes, how did it become known to you?
 - a) From Greek friends
 - b) From advertisements
 - c) From Sismanoglio's Megaro website
 - d) Accidentally coming by out of the building

3. Did you have any relation with Greece before attending the Greek Language courses?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

4. How long have you been attending the Greek Language courses?
 - a) 1 year
 - b) 2 years
 - c) 3 years
 - d) 4 years

5. Is it the first time you have been in contact with Greek language?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

6. How did you find out about the courses?
 - a) From friends
 - b) Sismanoglio Megaro's website
 - c) From Media
 - d) Random

7. How easy was to get informed about the courses?
 - a) Very difficult
 - b) Difficult
 - c) Easy
 - d) Very easy

8. What is the reason you want to learn Greek?
 - a) To communicate with Greek friends
 - b) To study in Greece
 - c) To understand better the Greek Culture
 - d) To Work in Greece
 - e) Other

9. How important is for you to learn Greek?
- a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Quite
 - d) Very much
10. Why is it important?
- a) To learn to communicate
 - b) To learn the way of thinking
 - c) To understand better the Greek Culture
 - d) Other
11. Is it a motive that the courses are free of charge?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
12. Could the courses be regarded as a way to promote the Greek Culture?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
13. Are you satisfied with the way the courses are conducted?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
14. Would you recommend other friends attend Greek Courses?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
15. Do the lessons have only educational purpose or promote the Greek culture as well?
- a) Educational purpose
 - b) Promote the Greek culture
 - c) Both of them
16. Do you feel the need to learn more about the Greek Culture after attending the Greek courses?
- a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Quite
 - d) Very much

17. Did your opinion about Greece change the moment you start attending the courses?
- a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Quite
 - d) Very much
18. Do you think that the Greek language courses help in the improvement of relations between the two countries?
- a) Never
 - b) Rarely
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Always
19. Do you believe that through the Greek language courses you learn more things about Greece than you had already known?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
20. How important is the learning of the Greek language in the understanding of Greek culture?
- a) None
 - b) Little
 - c) Quite
 - d) Very much
21. Why did you choose Sismanoglio Megaro instead of other private school to learn the Greek language?
- e) Free lessons
 - f) Contact with the Greek culture
 - g) Greek teachers
 - h) More experience in teaching methods
 - i) More organized school
 - j) Other

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