

Europeanization and Socioeconomic Changes in Greece

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Since the 1980s, the EC underwrote democracy in Greece by extending the material resources (agricultural support and structural funds) that enhanced development and modernization, raised the levels of societal welfare, and provided the vital perceived link between democracy and prosperity which is essential for sustaining political and democratic stability. Democratic deepening, however, has been less a function of European financial inflows than one of qualitative transformations in the Greek politico-administrative system, institutional structures, and society, accelerated by Greece's EU membership. Though with a significant time lag, European structural and cohesion funds finally began to generate institutional adjustments and administrative adaptation, among others by energizing social capital in the Greek periphery.

The diffusion of social rights as a result of European social regulation (protection against gender discrimination, equal opportunities for the handicapped, working environment regulation, etc) has been a notable additional factor of qualitative deepening of democracy. Equally notable has been the gradual awakening of a conscious and increasingly autonomous civil society, and the diffusion of "post-materialist" issues and values in a more prosperous, post-cold war environment. EU membership has multiplied the Greek public's knowledge and information about European socioeconomic, political and cultural affairs, enhancing demand for a kind of sociocultural modernization long ago synonymous to "catching up with Europe". The erosion of the intensity of the traditional, vertical, left-right sociopolitical division, the maturing of PASOK into a modern, European social democratic party, and the social learning resulting from growing interaction with EU counterparts, have all contributed to a greater degree of maturity of Greek political and civic life.