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The revision of the Constitution should preserve the welfare state

The welfare state is a pillar of democracy, as well as a tool for development. It must not only be guaranteed by the Greek Constitution, but must also be determined by it, even providing sanctions in the case of infringement of its basic structures.

Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, Professor at the Law School of the University of Athens, MP and Former Minister, also agreed with the sanction guarantees in the revision. He referred to the absurdity of monetary integration, without economic integration having preceded, he noted a lack of judicial resistance to unconstitutional provisions and advocated the creation of a Constitutional Court.

The conclusions of the dialogue were presented by Dr. Manolis Benteriotis, Professor at the European University of Cyprus, Former MP and Deputy Minister.

This was the conclusion reached by the speakers and the audience at the event-dialogue on the constitutional revision which was organized by the European Public Law Organization (EPLO), the Association of Greek Constitutionalists and the European University of Cyprus, on Monday, 10 June at the main premises of the EPLO in Kolonaki.

This was the third in a series of events which began at the initiative of the EPLO, an international organization with headquarters in Athens. The topic, on this occasion, was the Welfare State.

The event was chaired by the Emeritus Professor of the University of Athens and President of the Association of Greek Constitutionalists, Prof. Kostas Mavrias, who stressed, among other things, that the welfare state which is currently collapsing in many European countries – particularly in the Mediterranean – must be fortified during the new constitutional revision.

"The welfare state is not a philanthropic luxury. It is a pillar of democracy as well as a condition for development" said Mr. Gerasimos Arsenis, Former Minister and President of the Athens Development & Governance Institute (INERPOST). "International capital has declared war upon it", he continued. "This, however, will evolve into the mother of all battles at a global level. The victory which the financial system seems to be achieving at his point is a Pyrrhic victory".

He also stressed that "the Troika and the welfare state (namely education, health, and social security) are incompatible" and expressed the fear that "by opening the issue of the revision now, we might receive pressure to move even further back".

The Former President of Synaspismos Party and Former Minister, Mr. Nikos Konstantopoulos, said that we are experiencing a national tragedy with the national debt acting as a tool towards exhausting the country, that we are a "debt colony" and that the European Union has put its social identity to the test. He spoke of the need for a new welfare state with guarantee clauses and sanctions in the revised Constitution.

Mr. Savas Robolis, Professor at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, said that we are in the last phase of the industrial era. The economic and the welfare state are separating, and the latter is being

privatized. Along this course, he questioned what purpose any guarantees might serve.

During the discussion that followed, with the participation of the audience – composed of senior judges, academics, legal experts and journalists – the most important issue raised was how the welfare state can be guaranteed through laws and constitutional provisions when the executive can invoke, as now, the "public interest" or "emergency".

The event ended with a brief address by the Director of the EPLO, Mr. Spyridon Flogaitis, underlining that since the 14th century when States began to form, sociality has been one of their fundamental elements. In addition, the welfare state is part of the European Union and we must preserve it.