



Your Excellency the Deputy Minister of Justice,
Honorable Madam President of GEMME,
Honorable Mr President of the Piraeus Bar
Other prominent participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I address to all of you and I say “welcome”. On behalf of the Greek Section of GEMME I express my gratitude to the Board of Directors of GEMME Europe for their decision to organize this great event in our country and to the Ministry of Justice for hosting it. *Thank you Mr Minister!* And we must admit that the topic of the debate chosen is particularly important for us. It is about the ancient Greek philosophy and its influence to today’s mediators...

In addition we have one more reason to be happy. We are the newer member of GEMME Europe and this is the reason why the Board decided to honour us by holding this event here. We are still at the beginning, having just recently established an association under the Greek law with twenty-five (25) members, judges and mediators. We aspire to reach the status of other members who have struggled all these years to their present position.

If one desires to address the state of mediation in Greece, they may be disappointed. This method of resolving disputes, despite its establishment by law as early as 2010, remained unfamiliar to the Greek citizen. Instead, the litigants and their legal representatives engage in endless legal battles spending time and money and filling up the dockets of the courts. This phenomenon happens not only in our country but in most member states of the European Union.

The main reason for the lack of social acceptance in most member states was the absence -in the greater part of the continental European tradition- of extrajudicial settlement of private disputes by resorting to a mediator, paid privately by



the parties. And this precisely because of the absence here of all those determining factors that in the Anglo-American area of law contributed to the birth and gradual spread of the institution. Favorable circumstances were, in principle, a long-established tradition of familiarity with the institution, mainly among various religious communities of the North American settlers. As time passed by, the institution became established in the social consciousness of individuals and, to a certain extent, businesses due to two more factors, the very high cost of legal fees and in parallel lawyers' fees, often higher than the value of the object of the dispute. With the result that the administration of justice through adversarial proceedings before courts is financially prohibitive for the average citizen. So they turn more easily to mediation.

The opposite is the reality in continental Europe. European judicial systems have always been and still are affordable to the average citizen, and legal fees are equally affordable. Thus, recourse to the natural judge remains in the social conscience as the appropriate way to resolve private disputes, since it is also surrounded by all the institutional legal guarantees. The same conditions exist in our country, even more so as we have the third highest ratio of lawyers among the population in Europe. That explains there was no social need for the parties to resort to a private mediator, paid by the parties.

We and the Ministry of Justice with the Central Mediation Committee aim to transform this mentality, taking inspiration from the GEMME European counterparts, for if people in our country become accustomed to mediating their disputes, society will be more serene. And little by little the results of this effort are sure to be seen.

For example, looking at the last years' statistics of the Ministry of Justice we see a small increase in the numbers of settlements through mediation, especially in Family, Real Property and hereditary disputes by a percentage which begins at 5% and reaches in some sectors to 16%.



So, having in mind that we are an association of judges and not an association of mediation practitioners or mediators or a mediation training organization, we would like to spread to the whole society the idea of mediation as the best way of resolving disputes.

Finally, I'd like to offer you my best wishes for your stay in our country.

I am so very thankful for your attention!

Miltiadis Chatzigeorgiou
Friday, 10th November 2023