

New Initiative Might Make Professionals Consider Returning to Greece

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There is a new opportunity on the horizon for Greeks currently residing abroad.

According to research conducted by *Endeavor Greece* (2008 to 2016), Greek expatriates are contributing about 50 billion euros in total to the countries in which they currently reside. It therefore goes without question that the Greek government had to come up with a motive to bring highly-educated ex-pats back home.

The *Rebrain Greece* program was recently presented by Giannis Vrotsis, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs. This government-run initiative is solely focused on promoting the return of scientific personnel currently residing abroad. It is specifically aimed at Greeks who fled the country in the midst of the economic crisis for the hope of a better future with a fair-paying job and career opportunities.

What Incentives Does *Rebrain Greece* Provide?

Rebrain Greece is comprised of 4 pillars. The primary aim for the pilot program (in its developmental phase since December 2019) is to provide incentive for the repatriation of 500 Greeks. According to Minister Giannis Vrotsis, the goal is to launch the pilot program by late February 2020.

Highly-specialized scientific personnel (ages 28 to 40) are being presented with incentives to return to Greece on the grounds of receiving a minimum monthly allowance of €3.000 (\$3,343). According to the proposed design for the pilot program, prospective employees who consign to this program can select which business(es) he/she would like to work for and the state will contribute ~70% of the proposed monthly allowance.

Other Incentives

In addition to the anticipated pilot program, *Rebrain Greece* will also develop a private Nonprofit legal entity, the *Rebrain Greece CoLab* platform, to provide proactive technical assistance and effective strategic consultation for the creation and design of new products. This initiative is based on the analysis of the Greek market and a digital registry of Greeks residing abroad.

Lastly, the *Act of Smart Policies of the Market* will apply smart initiatives – modern data visualization technologies and collective intelligence – towards and analysis of public policies.

Impact on Participating Businesses

As mentioned, the pilot program is geared towards the recruitment of scientific specialists currently residing abroad. The platform will be open to employees and businesses interested in participating within the first fiscal quarter of 2020. Young scientists registered to the program will be allowed to choose which business that are of interest to them as prospective employers.

Similarly, participating businesses will register through the available platform, choosing the type of scientific specialist they are interested in recruiting from abroad. Qualifying business must employ a minimum of 20 personnel and can hire up to 2 employees through the *Rebrain Greece* program. Additionally, employers must not have other employees currently working in the position for which they are recruiting through *Rebrain Greece*.

Successful Recruitment Model

Charis Karanatsios, a 32-year-old expatriate who lived in the U.K. always hoped to return back to his homeland. He studied computer science at the University of Piraeus and earned a Masters in Human-

Centered Computing at the University of London, however he was unable to find a job that matched his skill set until he registered for a special repatriation program run by a private online company offering to cover the costs of (1) his return to Greece along, (2) a bonus equal to three monthly allowances, and (3) re-adaptation support services. To date, 15 trained specialists have returned to Greece through this program, which has the potential to lead to a significant improvement in the revitalization of the country.

Critiques Against the Proposed Program

According to IOBE research (2017), the *Rebrain Greece* initiative has already received some criticism for solely targeting 4.8% of the Greek population with advanced graduate or doctoral degrees.

At present, the average monthly allowance in Greece for employees with graduate degrees is €1.420. The fact that the Greek government is currently contributing more than €14million to employees with high salaries leads to some unfavorable critiques.

Minister Giannis Vrotsis addresses this occurrence to *Euronews*, stating: “These people...are Greek citizens with great studies who fled the country in the hope for a better future. These people want to return back to their home country, work for Greek business, and bring their knowledge and experience with them.”

Is *Rebrain Greece* Enough?

Minister Giannis Vrotsis clarifies that the *Rebrain Greece* initiative alone will not be enough to solve the problem at hand and points out that there have to be more structural reforms in tax and insurance and states that once all the appropriate reforms take place it will completely change Greece, leading to a new era of advancement and flourishing.