

REPORT FROM THE OPEN DISCUSSION OF Repo(we)rGreece WITH STUDENTS OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GREECE - DERE

In an event organized by the DERE Student Government in the new Student Lounge, the Repo(we)r Greece team met with approximately forty students on March 29, 2012 to discuss ways of incorporating the student body into the rapidly evolving international campaign. Repo(we)rGreece is a social awareness initiative that seeks to redefine the country by first restoring its credibility. By reflecting the strengths and achievements of Greeks through success stories, snapthoughts, and opinion editorials on RepowerGreece.com, the campaign aims to both improve Greece's international reputation and motivate the Greek morale.

The Repo(we)rGreece team engaged the audience in a brainstorming session on how the DERE student body could contribute to the effort.

For a large part of the discussion, the audience expressed disappointment that more students had not shown up. Some students pointed out that the majority of the audience was not even Greek, explaining that the general study body at DERE will complain continuously, but will never look to act.

The first half of the discussion was characterized by the students' disillusionment, frustration, and exasperation. The students stressed that "the idea of trying to inspire everyone is becoming more and more tiring." The Greeks are overexposed to the constant negativity from both at home and abroad, while fed continuously with empty inspirational messages. The student audience explained that its demographic is well aware that it is referred to as the "last generation" and that it is buried under an imminent decade of harsh austerity.

But then the discussion took an optimistic turn with students agreeing that "We are not in the position to wait. This is no longer just some random initiative; it is our initiative now. We are the campaign." Repo(we)rGreece founder Alex Costopoulos reassured the students that there is much more to Greece than meets the eye. With an overabundance of post-graduate degrees, the country possesses superb human capital, for example, while agribusiness, tourism, and innovation are part of the Greek DNA. The audience agreed that the economic crisis has its roots in an underlying cultural crisis, and that the change so desperately needed in the country's cultural consciousness hinges upon its youth. The youth are the country's future and change must begin first and foremost with the student demographic.

Determined to act, the students made a game plan and put it into motion, creating DERE's Repo(we)rGreece Student Club and suggesting specific ways that the student population could contribute. Students will act as Content Developers, collecting new stories or opinion editorials to upload to the site, and as Community Engagement Coordinators, researching and developing special projects that contribute to the campaign.

It's time for the motivated, honest, and hard-working side of Greece to finally find its voice, engage, and act. This will not be the last generation.