Mathew,

I am back in Freiburg from Athens and Corfu, and writing to you in English so as not to waste time. Feel free to write back in Greek. Please make comments on all of the below. As you can see it’s not a small amount of work, and the deadlines are quite tight (April 1 preliminary report, May 1 final). We’ll do it together. We’ll share the pay 50/50, but you’ll have to tell me how to deal with tax issues. I understand you want the contract to be in my name, is that so? Do you want your name to appear alongside mine on the paper? Do make comments on all of the below.

In general, and at your discretion, do not say you are doing this for Open Society because it is likely to close down doors. There’s a lot of suspicion about Open Society in Greece, mainly because of its positions vis-à-vis the former Yugoslavia. As I am simultaneously writing an article for Aspen Review Eastern Europe that can be used as the organisation for which research like this is taking place.

**Structure**

The structure of the work is as follows:

Three page summary and recommendations.

Recommendations:

The recommendations will be for the medium and the short term, cited here based on interviews carried out so far. Medium term recommendations will include a cultural event (to be specified later) and a one-day conference on Ukraine and international law, citing precedents for dealing with the situation in Ukraine (particularly Cyprus). Recommendations may include capacity building for local Ukrainian migrant spokesperson(s). Short term recommendations will include an action pack on what Greece has at stake in Ukraine, and ways to narrate parallels in interactions between nation and empire vis-à-vis Greece / Ukraine. Think about whether these work / what else we might recommend?

Appendices:

1. Media.
2. Political parties and think tanks
3. Opinion polls.
4. Business relations.
5. Religious and cultural ties.
6. Migration and diaspora.
7. Greece and Ukraine in the context of Greece’s economic crisis.
8. Greece, Ukraine and the Cyprus issue.
9. Names and brief description of significant actors: a ‘who is who?’ with information on at least 50 opinion leaders

**Work**

Summary: I am working on the hypotheses largely born out by the interviews carried out so far that Russia has significant soft power in Greece though this does not easily convert into hard power (e.g. vetoing EU sanctions). Greeks are basically not very interested in Ukraine and the crisis there. They reflect and understand that conflict through their own economic crisis and their relations with Europe (nowadays primarily Europe and not US). To the extent that relations with Europe remain the focus and do not go off the rails, Greece will bark but will not bite. If they improve, Greece might not even bark (as can be seen with Greece’s policy on Israel, Kotzias can be very much a realist). If they deteriorate however, Greece will be looking to Russia for increased support and will alter its Ukraine policies accordingly. Do you agree with these hypotheses? Can you find confirmation for or against them in the media outlets examined?

Media: This is the bulk of the work (we have to think about how to divide the work up). We have to provide a ‘who is who?’ with information about at least 6 newspapers, 10 audio-visual outlets (TV and radio) and 6 internet sites. Some of these will be obvious, but, even in these cases, change over time (at least eighteen months) is an important consideration. Here are some suggestions for newspapers: Kathimerini, Avgi, Ta Nea, Vima, Efymerida Syntakton, Eleutherotypia, Proto Thema, Rizospastis? etc. What else? Protagon? Athens Review of Books? (info on Kotzias). As for TV, we’ll just do the main ones. What about left wing blogs? What about commercial radio stations? I think we should cover Aristera sta FM. Sky. What else? Anything from the nationalist and far right? My choice would be Ardin (already looking at this) which at least tries to be serious. Patria is even more unsavoury. I’ll deal with the religious web sites in the culture and religion appendix. I think we should interview Kostas Nisenko (<http://www.kathimerini.gr/757296/article/epikairothta/kosmos/viaih-epi8esh-kata-toy-antapokrith-ths-ka8hmerinhs-sthn-krimaia>) and Kostas Geropoulos of New Europe to get into the issues involved… not at all sure though that it’s advisable to talk to the Russia correspondents Thanasis Avgerinos, Dimitris Liatsos, Achileas Patsoukas etc. (I know all of them). Also if we come across articles with interesting information on any one of the topics, we should mail them to one another.

Political parties and think tanks. Who if anyone deals with Russia / Ukraine within each of the political parties? How important are political parties in formulating policies? (my hunch is totally unimportant). I must admit I have little idea of how to proceed with this one, but I have written to the academic Vassilis Petsinis and I hope I’ll get to skype with him soon. Think-tanks are easier, and, I think, more important. I have already interviewed Thanos Dokos (director Greek foreign policy institute, ELIAMEP) in person.

Opinion polls. Internet research, have already begun and there is some interesting information. Spoke to Vassilis Mourdoukoutas on this one, and he’s given me advice on how to proceed.

Business relations. So far I have interviewed Elena Kondratova, President, Greek-Russian Chamber of Commerce and her deputy Julia Sysalova, Communication Manager, Greek-Russian Chamber of Commerce. On Greek-Ukrainian business ties I received information from Olga Chernova, Second Undersecretary, Ukrainian Embassy to Athens. All of these suggested other people I speak to and have provided extensive data on trade relations.

Culture and religion. This I think is very important, quite probably more important than the media in a Greek context. So far I have interviewed by telephone Metropolitan John of Pergamum (one of the top figures in the inner circle of the Istanbul based Ecumenical Patriarchate). I have read Metropolitan Nektarios of the Argolid’s recent book (2014), “Two bullets for Donetsk”. I have tried but so far not succeeded in contacting Metropolitan Nektarios himself, and have started work on two of the main religious news websites romfea.gr and amen.gr . With respect to culture I intend to contact Georgos Livathinos, leading director of Russian and other plays and Lydia Koniordou, actress. Also the management of the Onassis Centre, particularly Afroditi Panagiotakou, the executive vice-director who is quite knowledgeable in this field having travelled to both Ukraine and Russia. I also led a discussion on this issue with my students at a class at the International Hellenic University in Thessaloniki. I might use my contacts with the Slavic Departments in Athens / Thessaloniki, but basically know what’s going on there myself. The Pushkin centre would be another place to get in touch with. In 2016 Greece and Russia will be hosting each other as the focus of cultural events in the two respective countries. I will be looking to understand the extent to which Russia’s unparalleled cultural soft-power might translate into Greek policy making.

Migrant networks.So far I have interviewed in person Olga Chernova, Second Undersecretary, Ukrainian Embassy to Athens. Tatiana Diko, Athens based Russian teacher and translator. And by phone Anna Kostiouk, Ukrainian-Crimean student organiser based in Athens. Eleni Fasoula / Papaioannou, coordinator Russian migrant network in Greece (who spoke about the way the annexation of Crimea had led to divisions within what was previously a largely post-Soviet mass). Might talk to Eutyhia Voutira for a scholarly perspective. I still have a lot of work to do to understand the role migrant networks do / can play in the broader political context. To be honest, I don’t think they play too much of a role at the moment, but that could change. And then there’s the question of the Russian speaking Pontic Greeks, mainly in northern Greece and not a few from Sukhumi. Do they look to Russia? Do they affect the politics of northern Greece where they mainly reside? Finally, what is the best way to use the discourses related to the Greek diaspora in Ukraine (both Ukraine and Russia have emphasised the role of this diaspora in recent months)?

Foreign policy and the Greek military. So far I have interviewed in person Ambassador Elias Klis (formerly ambassador of Greece to Moscow, advisor to the current Foreign Minister, advisor to the Greek Union of Industrialists. He is perhaps the single most important person for understanding Greek-Russian diplomatic relations at present). Ambassador Alexandros Philon (formerly ambassador of Greece to Washington, to whom I am related). Captain Panos Stamou (submarines, extensive contacts in Crimea, also secretary and leading light of the Greek-Russian historical association) who emphasised the non-political tradition of the Greek armed forces. Tempted to talk to Themos Stoforopoulos for a nationalist left wing view. I have also read foreign minister Kotzias’ latest book. All of this has provided me with useful insights for appendices 7 and 8, and particularly for the connection to the Cyprus issue (which at the moment Greece is very keen to downplay).

Waiting for your response to all of this.

Iannis.