

MARIA DAMANAKI

Personal details

- Born in Crete – Greece, 1952
- Divorced
- Three children: Thodoris, 21, Heleni, 21 and Marianna, 15

Current duties

- Chairperson of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense (2009)

Political career

- Active in the underground student opposition to the dictatorship in Greece (1970-1974). Played a leading role in the coordination of its activities. During the 3 days of the popular uprising against the dictatorship, known as "the Polytechnic revolt"(15-17/11/73), speaker of the clandestine radio transmitter set-up inside the occupied National technical University of Athens. Her voice thus became known as "the voice of the uprising".
- Subsequently imprisoned by the dictatorship (November 1973- July 1974)
- Member of Parliament elected continuously between 1977 and 1993). When first elected in 1977 at the age of 25, youngest Greek M.P. ever
Vice-president of the Greek Parliament (1986-1990). First woman ever to be elected Vice-president of the Greek Parliament
- President of the Coalition of Left and Progress (1991-1993). First woman ever to lead a Greek political party.
- Candidate for Mayor of Athens (1994 and 1998). Head of the opposition in the City Council.
- Member of Parliament (2000-2003). Head of the PASOK (Socialist Party) group in the Select Committees on Education and Culture. Member of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, the Western European Union and NATO. Member of the Inter-parliamentary Union.
- Member of the Political Council of PASOK, responsible for education (2004-2006), social affairs (2006-2007) and culture (2008-2009)
- Member of Parliament (2004-2009). Head of the PASOK group in the Select Committees on Social Affairs, Education and Culture and the Environment. Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Western European Union.
- Chairperson of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense (2009)

Professional career

- Pechiney Aluminum Industries (1974)-engineer
- Ministry of Finance of Greece. Department of import-export planning.(1975-1976)-administrator
- Helector S.A. Department of energy and waste management (2003-2004)-Section manager

Initiatives and proposals

Administration

1990: Study and bill of law submitted to Parliament on reforming the Greek Civil Service

Foreign policy

1991: Proposal to set up a National Council on Foreign Policy-adopted and implemented

1992: The first Greek politician to propose, as head of a political party, a settlement on the issue of the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia through a formula mentioning the geographical position of the country

1993: Initiator and leader of the Balkan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee "WIN BALKANS" consisting of 52 women M.P.s from 7 Balkan countries. Active part in the cooperation among the Parliaments of Romania, Albania, Bulgaria and Greece and within the framework of the Stability Pact of the Council of Europe.

Human Rights

1989-90: Initiated important measures, as Vice-President of Parliament, on the rights of the Muslim minority in Thrace, Northern Greece

1996-2000: Head of the N.G.O. "Observatory on Women's Rights", subsidised by the E.U. and offering legal and moral support to women victims of violence

1999: Award by the "SOS Racism" organisation for her work against racism

2000: Award by the Central Israelite Council of Greece for her actions against anti-Semitism

2000-2004: Played a leading role in the setting-up and work of a special Parliament committee on the trafficking of human beings and the approval of Greek legislation still in force

Social issues

2000-2002: Initiated action against drug abuse in cooperation with N.G.O.s and European Commissioner Emma Bonino. Chairperson of an inter-party group of Greek M.P.s that proposed new legislative measures on the issue of addiction

2003: Study and bill of law on aligning Greek legislation on pension rights of divorced people with the legislation in other European countries. Current legislation on this issue is based on that proposal.

2006: Rapporteur of the relevant Committee of the Council of Europe on a recommendation about the new generation of drugs (date-rape drugs). The recommendation has been issued.

2004-2005: Drafted the PASOK framework programme on education

Environment and climate change

1975: Publication of a thesis on the energy dependence of Greece on oil, proposing diversification.

1999-2000: Various actions for the environment and for reducing sea pollution. Special emphasis on the protection of the Attica coastline, the biodiversity of the Aegean islands, the forests and mountain ranges and the safeguard and protection of urban parks and planted areas. Cooperation with Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund and various Greek conservationist groups

2007-2008: Proposals on waste disposal in Attica, fire prevention and regeneration of burnt-down forests

Education

- Master of Science degree in chemical engineering, with honors, from the National Technical University of Athens, Greece (E.M.II) - 1975
- One-year diploma, Lancaster University – Department of Political Sciences on “Women in leading positions in Greece” -1997

Languages

- Mother tongue: Greek
- English
- French

Publications

Books:

- “The female aspect of power”. Survey on women participation in decision-making -1995 Kastaniotis editions.
- “The return of politics – the European perspective” Comparative study on the institutional framework of the E.U.– 2000 Greek Letters editions
- “Associative Democracy”. Study on expressing and implementing the concept 2004 Kastaniotis editions
- “The university in transition”. Survey of the current situation and proposals for adapting the institutional set-up of Greek Universities to European realities – 2006 Metaichmio editions