

Deadline for land register extended

Environment and Public Works Minister Giorgos Souflias announced yesterday the extension of the deadline for hundreds of thousands of property owners to submit their land register applications until October 31, admitting that the process had not run as smoothly as authorities had hoped.

Souflias conceded that a backlog had accumulated around mid-August when at least half of staff processing land register claims went on vacation. The process was hindered further as thousands of citizens decided to submit their applications in August, when the capital usually empties out, hoping to

avoid queues.

Souflias apologized to citizens for the aggravation but stressed that October 31 is the final deadline, noting that property owners who fail to meet it will face fines of up to 1,500 euros. The minister also heralded a series of measures to ensure that the process runs smoothly from now on. These measures include extending the opening hours of more than 70 land registry offices so that they operate from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and also receive the public on Saturdays, from 8.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Additionally, citizens will be able to pay land registry charges – 35

euros for each property and 20 euros for each garage or storeroom – at post offices as well as most major banks. The latter measure is expected to encourage more property owners to submit their applications by post and take some pressure off the land registry offices.

"These measures should help the process run smoothly as long as citizens do not wait until the last minute," Souflias said.

According to ministry data released yesterday, just a fifth of property owners' applications have been made so far.

The New Acropolis Museum has been criticized by some people for being too big and too modern. How do you respond to that?

Too big it cannot be, since the starting point is the Parthenon. So the glass and closure at the top is almost the size of the Parthenon itself. Too modern... I don't think in terms of modern or ancient or classical. We are not in 500 BC, we are not in the 19th century. You have to make a building just as the ancient Greeks did, with the extraordinary clarity that they displayed when they built on the Acropolis. I had to put myself in the 21st century and do a building that would speak best of what we do in the 21st century. In my case,



The New Acropolis Museum - too big, too modern? - and the nearby structures

that meant not so much using form, but concept and ideas. It should be like a theorem.

I had to think of Pythagoras, rather than Phidias. I don't think the building is of any particular style.

There is quite a lot of tension in the design.

I hope there is a little bit of tension within it. The fact that you have one part that relates to the excavation and one that relates to the Parthenon indeed brings some sort of dynamic to the building. It's not meant to be a static building; it has to have some dynamic to it. So rather than tension, I would use the word dynamic. Even when you walk into the museum and you go along the glass ramp inside and then through the room with the colonnades and you keep walking up to the Parthenon Gallery, the idea was that it would be like a moving sequence, like a cinematographic sequence.

As you may know, filmmakers have

always been fascinated by how filmic the Acropolis is in terms of the angle and how you discover it as you walk around. In a sense, the New Acropolis Museum was trying to have that cinematic aspect.

Had you been promised that the two buildings on Areopagitou Street would be demolished?

I don't think that there was any discussion about whether they would be demolished. That was not mentioned in our discussion, one way or another.

You were told that the broader area would be revamped, I suppose.

It was clear that when we designed the building nobody knew whether any of the buildings around the museum would stay or not. There was a question mark. So the museum was designed having in mind that all the buildings around the museum could have remained and you would never have to see them. In our case, it is not an issue whether it was planned or not planned.

We have designed the building in such a way that in the event of legal problems we could still build the museum. But it would not necessarily be good for the museum to keep everything.

For example, on Hatzichristou Street, we didn't know whether all the buildings would be demolished or not, because of all the legal issues.

But this could have happened in any country.

Nopromise'I don't think that there was any discussion about whether the two buildings on Areopagitou Street would be demolished. That was not mentioned in our discussion, one way or another' Social functions 'Beauty is relative. The more important question would be everyday life in the city, how you use it, what it does for interaction, for social comprehension' Urban aesthetics and the cities of the 21st century

Turning to the city of Athens: What is its biggest strength and what is its greatest weakness?

The city is much better than what people commonly believe, I mean the overall plan, the organization and the streets. What is unfortunate is that people don't recognize that it's good. On the other hand, I have rarely seen a city where the signage can create such a devastating effect.

It looks like there are no rules and regulations. Most cities, Paris or New York and especially the historical cities, have a clear view about the use of billboards.

I quite often see in Athens the use of strategies that one normally sees on the outskirts of cities and shopping areas, and these are used everywhere.

British 'greasers' reach Athens in cooking oil cars

ATHENS (AFP) - A group of Britons on Wednesday completed a 3,750-kilometre (2,330-mile) 'Grease to Greece' expedition in cars powered by vegetable oil in a bid to raise awareness about conserving fuel, organisers said. Some of the nine cars were converted to run on purified vegetable oil while others had standard engines using biodiesel that was brewed overnight in a 'fuel pod' stored in a lorry accompanying the expedition.

Instead of filling up at petrol stations, the expedition's 'frybrid' cars ran on used frying oil donated by restaurants and cafés along the route.

"A lot of people don't realise that biodiesel, when made properly, will run in any diesel engine," noted expedition leader Andy Pag, 34, a webcasting specialist and trained engineer, who says he got the idea in a road trip from London to Capetown with his wife three years ago.

"We wanted to see if it's possible to do something with biofuels," he said.

"We had a lot of breakdowns (en route) but we managed to fix everything." Setting off from London on August 16, the expedition crossed France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania and arrived in Athens on August 27. On one occasion when the team was pulled over by German traffic police, their press cuttings proved more valuable than passports, noted Pag, who last year led an expedition to Timbuktu on a truck powered by chocolate soya oil.

His next project involves circumnavigating the globe with cars running on cooking oil and a small aircraft using an aviation fuel made from plastic bags.

"It's quite geeky, essentially it's like taking the molecules apart and building a new jigsaw with them to create fuel molecules," he told AFP.



Eurostat on aging population

Three out of every 10 Greeks will be over 65 years of age by the year 2035, according to data publicised by the European Statistical Service (Eurostat) on Tuesday.



According to Eurostat, people over the age of 65 in Greece will account for 26.3 percent of the population by 2035 (compared to 18.6 percent today) and 31.7 percent by 2060. Moreover, Eurostat assessed that Greece's population will increase by 3.2 percent by 2035 and decrease by 0.9 percent from now until 2060.

As regards the population of the European Union, it is expected to increase from the present 495 million to 521 million in 2035.