

Triple Helix Association Chapter of Greece

Report of the Roundtable Discussion on Triple Helix Interactions

Held on 21st September 2013

Thessaloniki, Greece

About the THA Chapter of Greece

The THA Chapter of Greece intends to promote analysis and studies on the interaction between universities, firms and government aimed at translating academic models into practical achievements. It will support international exchange of scholars and educate scholars in the field of THA's mission. It will also organize international symposia of relevant scientific interest, provide a common discussion framework for triple helix actors in order to engage in regional development of Greece and of the South East European Region, boost the innovation capacity, encourage and support entrepreneurship and fight the regional brain drain.

Intended outcomes of the roundtable discussion:

- **Establish how the Triple Helix can:**
 - Create a better mode of coordination to enhance growth, and what are the challenges to universities, businesses and government.
 - Enhance universities as interactive partners in our systems, and what are the challenges to the absorptive capacity of academic knowledge within firms and by other users.
 - Develop the enterprising state, and what is the role of local systems and local key institutions to build and accelerate regional clusters.

Coordinator: *Prof Panayiotis H. Ketikidis (President of the THA Chapter of Greece)*

Panellists:

Prof ANAGNOSTOPOULOS Demosthenes(Rector of Harokopio University of Athens)

Mr LAKASAS Dimitrios (President of the Greek International Business Association (SEVE))

Prof LOUKOPOULOS Pericles (Professor of Information Systems Business School Loughborough University)

Mr MILONAS Theofilos (President of the Association of ICT Companies of Northern Greece SEPVE)

Prof TSOUKALAS Ioannis (MEP Committee on Industry, Research and Energy ITRE, European Parliament)

Dr VASILAKOS Christos(Secretary General of the GSRT, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs)

Mr VLACHOGIANNIS Manolis (1stVice-President of the Thessaloniki Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

Prof VLAHAVAS Ioannis (Dean of the School of Science and Technology, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki)

Prof VLAHOPOULOU Maro (Head of the Department of Applied Informatics, University of Macedonia)

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Roundtable discussion transcript

How the involvement of the government could assist triple helix interactions/relations?

- Answer from Dr Vasilakos
 - The government focuses on EU2020 goals for entrepreneurship, Innovation Union and Smart Specialization Strategy.
There are 4 levels of intervention:
 - International (enable funds to support access to information for business related to EU2020 funding).
 - National.
 - Sectoral.
 - Regional.
- Answer from Prof Tsoukalas
 - European Commission, European Council and European Parliament agreed on a general schedule plan for Horizon 2020, and in the context of the THA, the major focus of Horizon 2020 program will be on technology innovation oriented SMEs.
 - Also, in Greece a regional innovation scheme will be set up to enable both academics and researchers to use structural funds.

How the current/future policy specifically supports university-industry collaborations?

- Answer from Dr Vasilakos
 - At the current stage, GSRT is in the process of formulating the policies. At the end of this year it will be published the National Strategy for the next year, with main focus on how to better support the link between academia, research centres and SMEs.

How can you (Academia) pro-actively collaborate/communicate with the industry so that your expectations from industry are met?

- Answer from Prof Anagnostopoulos
 - The main aspect to consider regarding this issue is whether all actors involved are willing to change at both cultural and political level.
 - Secondly, the issue of combining Research outputs with economic growth must also be understood.
 - Greece could become a research/technological service oriented country such as Estonia where all policies are based on technology.
 - Specific recommendations for Greece:
 - Courses at universities promoting knowledge on innovation and entrepreneurship.
 - Create a new vision especially for academia.

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- Simplify policies.
 - Stability of Starting a business procedures.
 - Openness of government especially for the student to know how establish business.
- Answer from Prof Vlahavas
 - What does academia expect from industry:
 - Address real everyday problems.
 - Fund research (PhDs, MSc).
 - Cooperate in EU and national funded projects and don't wait for.
 - HEI to do the work and just collect the money.
 - More clearly expressed needs.
 - Change of roles:
 - HEI could have a more business oriented profile.
 - Industry could have a more academic profile (i.e. internal research department).
 - Answer from Prof Vlahopoulou
 - The cooperation between HEI and Industry is noticeably increasing because:
 - Industry is facing rapid product lifecycles, fierce global competitions, technological advancement and economic crisis.
 - HEI is facing pressure to the immense request for knowledge output and thus seeks relations with industry especially for common funded projects.
 - HEI also faces increased societal pressure, being seen as the main engine of growth.
 - However, there are still many problems:
 - Lack of common conceptual framework as well as of any integrated agreement.
 - What should the aim of HEI be:
 - Focus on the final user of their outputted knowledge.
 - Take into account what kind of customization is required for knowledge commercialization.

What is the bridge to industry?

- Common answer:
 - Technology transfer offices.

Do we need Entrepreneurial courses in the non-Business Academic Curricula? (and general views on the broad THA topic)

- Answer from Prof Loucopoulos

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- “Others are running while we are talking”.
- UK has advanced much more in this context especially from the point of view research concentration and on the quality of the graduates.
- Regarding research:
 - We cannot rely on Horizon2020 to guide our agendas.
 - We need more reliance on THA.
 - Need confluence of ideas facilitated by the government.
- Regarding government: encourage banks to invest.
- Regarding industry and academia: innovation in practice leads to creation of new jobs.
- Examples: Daresbury Scientific Park, and <http://www.e-skills.com/>, ITMB Master Programme.
- Knowledgeable working force is the key in the knowledge based economy.
- 1 million IU Graduates shortage in the next years.
- IT job market in the next years – 5 Billion dollars.

How can we (industry) enhance the cooperation with academia?

- Answer from Mr Lakasas
 - In Greece we have these TH pillars as 3 big empires in one big kingdom. Very limited cooperation among these 3 actors.
 - We need to restructure this cooperation
 - **Solution:** We need to establish a COMMON goal !
 - Current status:
 - Academia: produces knowledge.
 - Government: absorbs EU money.
 - Business: produce products for the market.
 - What else?
 - Increase the governmental budget allowance for applied research.
 - Make TH interaction work appropriately.
 - Venture capital and funding does not work appropriately in Greece since there is no assessment of the innovation state of the art technology.
- Answer from Mr Milonas
 - ICT sector is rapidly growing (social media, big data, etc).
 - The “cloud” is the new game changer.
 - For ICT companies – big opportunities (market growth, + 65% of population is still not online).
 - We have great brains in Greece.
 - Greece, selected as one of the 33 global countries where a potential technological innovation/research boom could take place.
 - Companies have to invest in innovation and make connections to universities.

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- Think global !

Question for Mr Milonas: Is CS/IT curriculum progressively adapted in Greece by the cooperation of Industry and Academia ? Did academia invite you to adjust their curriculum?

- Not really. Very hard. IT curriculum should to be updated every 6 months (impossible). We need better cooperation with academia
 - Academics need to be more extrovert.
- Answer from Mr Vlachogiannis
- Apparently there is a failure to solve these issues, which lasts for years. Nevertheless we have to realize the magnitude of these issues which have an immense impact on restructuring of the Greek economy and on future growth and development.
 - There are three possible reasons for failure. One explanation may be an organizational failure which focuses on the differences of types of corresponding organizations e.g. universities and/or research centers and private companies and due to this fact there might be some concrete impediments for establishing a smooth organization between the two actors. If this is the case, proper forms to organize the exchange between the two institutions shall be developed. The second focuses on the mismatch of culture, meaning that different aspects of engagement in both types of organization do result into different cultures having also a deep impact on the readiness of this type of exchange.
 - But the most important is I think an explanation that focuses on the misalignment of incentives. It implicates that in order to establish a “market” or cooperation the two types of organizations involved have to develop parallel sets of incentives.
 - For many reasons business is not engaged in research and probably more preparations are needed to develop an efficient way of communications and establishment of cooperation between business and academia.
 - Above all bureaucracy should be reduced, as it has the side effect that industry focuses on how to overcome bureaucracy instead of how to find costumers. It is clear that problems of academia are founded by a blocker’s mentality.
 - In the attempt to tackle the existing problems organizational issues are not very often included in the different plans to enhance the cooperation

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between business and academia. As this happens very often there is indeed a very high risk of generating alienation.

- So my advice is for academia to develop a more entrepreneurial culture and shift the focus on the management studies to entrepreneurship.

○ Answer from Dr Vasilakos

Further question enlargement by Prof Ketikidis: Rules and policies need to be clear to academia and industry. How do we achieve this?

- The contribution of the budget to research and technology from 2007-2011 has been increased by 30%.
- There is a general plan to formulate actions to support this increase.
- At the international level: support to access EU funds.
- At the national level: a Platform based on McKinsey framework in relation to the national priorities – bring together TH actors to structure common goals.
 - Exists: 1st platform for food.
 - In construction: 1st platform for ICT

Question/Remark from the public (Prof Manalopoulos – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

- To what extent is EU taking into account international competition.
- There is a missing parameter.
- Global distribution of patents.
- There are many patents and citations from India, China.
- Brazil allocates 10% of GDP for education.

Question/Remark from the public (Anonymous)

- Greece is introvert and we must consider the quality of publications and of citations before we measure the success/output.

Question/Remark from the public (Prof Kefalas – The University of Sheffield International Faculty, CITY College, Thessaloniki)

- Focus on 3 controversial terms. Where are we standing? What are the next steps ?
 - Entrepreneurial university.
 - *Prof Vlahavas*: IHU has an MSc in Innovation.
 - Business oriented government.
 - *Mr Lakasas*: this requires a change of the economic model.
 - Move from knowledge era to wisdom era.
 - Do not overproduce knowledge – just fit the market.
 - Knowledge driven business.

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Final Remarks

- Prof *Loucopoulos*: “We teach students to create jobs, not to find jobs”.
- Prof *Vlahopoulou*: “Severe brain drain”.
- Prof *Loucopoulos*: Academics need to practice entrepreneurship, collaborate with industry and industrialize research (exploit internally developed research).
- Dr *Vasilakos*:
 - EU should adopt international best practices
 - Not only change incentives, but create new ones !
- Prof *Tsoukalas*:
 - EU2020 initiative cannot solve the problem by itself!
 - In EU the 7 healthy economies did invest properly, believed in the Lisbon strategy and treat very seriously the long term strategy of HEL.
 - In Greece we need:
 - Real universities.
 - Real research centres.
 - Real businesses.
 - Check Denmark educational reform.
 - Tackle mediocrity from TH actors as Finland did after URSS
 - destruction.
 - We need a structural reform so that THA to work.
 - EU is not a leader in R&D.
 - Check EU Institute of Technology.

Summary of the workshop

The main outcome of this roundtable discussion is the fact that the entire triple helix ecosystem (university, industry, government) has to evolve and adapt together in order to properly achieve the co-creation stage with the desired outcomes. While academia is keener to develop business orientations towards entrepreneurialism, innovation and technology transfer, and industry is less willing to integrate more and more academia in its operations, the government is trying to provide policies and programmes that will help both academia and industry succeed. Nevertheless, these shifts encounter substantial behavioural change issues and the process is lengthy. However, progress is still underway. Furthermore, relying on EU policies and programs is not enough for achieving cutting edge outcomes. The Greek triple helix ecosystem should co-evolve towards their own established goals, while also having in mind successful cases of other countries that undertook this transition.

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Photos

