
Universities and Research Centers as Agents for Economic Development

John S. Baras

**Institute for Systems Research and
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Department of Computer Science
Fischell Department of Bioengineering
Applied Mathematics, Statistics and Scientific Computation Program
University of Maryland College Park**

November 9, 2011

Panel Discussion on Science and Technology in Greece:

“Greece at the Crossroads- How can we help?”

Hellenic Society Prometheas , Bethesda, MD

- **Challenging times for higher (read post high-school) education – world wide**
- **Major socioeconomic changes are transforming the way we live, work and communicate**
- **New Strategies are needed for success in the new so-called “information-knowledge economy”**
- **Society is “scrutinizing” ever more closely the behavior and performance of higher education institutions**
- **Great challenges  great opportunities**
- **Critical role of ICT (Information and communication technologies)**

- **Changing role of Universities in modern societies**
 - *Impact on Quality of life:* educate “better” citizens
graduate “productive” citizens – careers – economic development
- **Universities must be “open” and more integrated with society**
- **Our students and their careers are our best ambassadors to society at large**
 - Must produce students that are more agile in their career pursuit
 - Must be able to succeed in the global economy – exchange programs
 - Cross-disciplinary education – out-of-school cooperative experience a must
- **Industry an important factor in this integration – programmatically and financially**

Universities and Society: Examples

- Universities and K-12 education
- Research experiences for undergraduates
- Research experiences for high school students
- Educating high school teachers (math, science, technology, ...)
- Universities and life-long learning
- Universities as knowledge sources
- Universities as key contributors to solving problems of significant impact to society
- Universities and economic development – innovation – jobs
- Universities and quality of life and work
- Universities as contributors to art and culture
- Universities for international collaboration and peaceful co-existence
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- High quality human capital present
- R&D nests of excellence in several places – competent and winning tough EU funding
- Lack of infrastructure – needs to be created, but not via total reliance on government
- Utilize EU funding opportunities – attract other funds
- Work with “mentors” from successful programs
- Decentralized development and implementation – areas must have strong “local” component for jobs
- Layered post high-school education
- Consolidation of Universities – link them to the various layers and to high schools

- **Infrastructure supporting Economic Development**
- **Infrastructure supporting innovation and entrepreneurship**
- **Implementing something like the European “Competence Centres” in Greece; across the country in business areas where Greece can be competitive**
- **Such centers can have social focus, quality of life focus, not just technology focus**
 - **Agriculture**
 - **Shipping**
 - **Health care – local mini-clinics, assisted living, etc.**
 - **e-Apps for archeology, tourism, restaurants, etc.**

- ICT for decentralization – take location away, provide education, healthcare, jobs
- Developing “Total Innovation Systems” (e.g. MTECH at UMD, Sweden, Austria, Germany, France, ...)
- Teaching and cultivating entrepreneurship -- “Guided Entrepreneurship” programs
- Government (EU, central, regional) matching of industry funding in projects
- Venture Capital support
- Business Incubators – Technology parks
- Supporting SMEs

**Note: Students in Greece are trying on their own –
but there is no supporting infrastructure**

- **A small “task force” is needed to investigate several ideas and develop an implementation plan for Greece, including identification of the “best” areas to invest in**
- **Use EU funding opportunities and EU structural funds**
- **Use Centers, or other cross-constituencies organizations, to attract companies to Greece world-wide**
- **Use them to create SMEs in targeted areas**
- **Capitalize on the rich international network of Greek-origin scientists, engineers, business people – exchange programs, advisors, international collaboration and ventures**
- **Encourage volunteers in Greece to help – e.g. retired people to “professors of Practice”, advisors, etc.**

- **Some examples of Center topical areas for Greece:**
 - Health IT
 - Sensors and improvement of agricultural processes
 - Maintenance and repair of merchant marine ships
 - Sustainable management of fisheries
 - Location aware e-Apps for tourism
 - Energy-photovoltaic systems
 - All electric cars
 - Fast trains
 - Efficient ethanol production from diverse plants via biotechnology
- **Can Greece still play a major role in SE Europe and the Middle East? R&D, Education, Economic Development**
- **International R&D collaboration programs that include economic development impact (with US, Europe, China, ...)**



- Project and extensive study by the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA) -- 2009
- **The question posed:** What should Sweden do to preserve its quality of life in the 21st century?
- **The answer:** Educate its people so that they can get the best jobs world-wide
- **Compared R&D strategies and economic development** in Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Finland, Taiwan, South Korea

Table 1. Preliminary comparisons based on interview data. Blue denotes agreement with the statement while dark blue denotes disagreement (and/or the opposite is true); light blue reflects an intermediate/unknown state/no change – for many of the statements the colours are not absolute, but relational in nature (e.g. in comparison to Switzerland, Sweden has been and is less stable in its research structures).

	Sweden	Switzerland	Netherlands	Finland	Taiwan	South Korea
Formal inter-ministerial/inter-departmental coordinating bodies	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Science and innovation council/platform headed by President/ Prime Minister	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
National roadmaps for research performed regularly	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Special additional funding for elite universities	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Ministry of Enterprise active in research policy debate and research policy-making	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Private sector representation in top policy bodies	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Frequent use of consultants for governmental foresights	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Frequent use of international advisory/review panels for government programmes (other than university audits)	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Current balance in favour of prioritised funding to universities	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
"Efficiency more important than fairness"	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Agency for International Business and/or technology transfer (facilitating access to international markets)	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Presence of major institute facilitating innovation-to-market development (e.g. TNO, VTT, ITRI)	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Infrastructure roadmaps are officially coordinated with neighbouring/associated countries	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Major recent mergers of universities	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Long-lasting stability of research & policy structures	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Current balance in favour of block funding to universities	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Ministry of Education opposed to prioritising research	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Strong civil service or direct democratic influence on research policy	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
High level of regional autonomy in research policy	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Tendency to further increase prioritisation of university funding	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree

Legend:
 = agree
 = disagree
 = intermediate

Difficult/sensitive issues

- Funding for Universities: Prioritized or block? Mixed?
- Role of *Government research institutes?*
- Need for a major institute/agency to facilitate innovation and commercialization?
- Regional vs. national competence centres, programs?

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT WILL
MAKE SWEDEN EUROPE'S MOST ATTRACTIVE NATION
CONCLUSIONS FROM IVA'S AND VINNOVA'S RESEARCH & INNOVATION FORESIGHT



Most important findings/considerations:

A general principle for all research:
Research results must benefit society.

The insights that lead to this principle:

- Global competition necessitates relevance, excellence and critical mass.
- The need for new knowledge should determine the focus of research.
- Government funding of civil R&D should be stable, long term and amount to at least one per cent of GNP.
- Close collaboration between researchers, business and industry and society's other players will result in an effective innovative system.
- International cooperation and greater EU integration will increase the impact of investment in research.