



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENTS  
GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
**HELLENIC FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Online workshop by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation on the subject “H.F.R.I. - An independent pillar of support for unrestricted research: four years of operation”**

On account of the end of its Scientific Council’s term of office, the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) will hold an online workshop entitled “H.F.R.I. - An independent pillar of support for unrestricted research: four years of operation”. The event will take place on **Monday, 29 March 2021, 16:00 to 19:00**.

The workshop aims to highlight the H.F.R.I.’s independent character and purpose, as well as the work that was accomplished during its four years of operation.

The participants of the “digital roundtable” will consist of the nine members of the Scientific Council, who will represent the scientific areas of their concern, as well as three prominent scientists, who will share their scientific opinion and their vision for science. More specifically, the panel will include: Mr. Spyros Artavanis-Tsakonas, President of the National Council for Research, Technology and Innovation, Professor Emeritus of Cell Biology at Harvard University, Professor of the Collège de France and President of the foundation Fondation Santé, Mrs. Athina Athanasiou, Professor of Social Anthropology and Cultural Theory at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, and Mr. Dimitris Lagoudas, Senior Associate Dean for Research, Deputy Director of Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES), Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Distinguished Professor of the US-Texas A&M University.

Furthermore, the event will involve the screening of two films entitled “H.F.R.I.: Works and Days” and “From the slightest clues: Unrestricted research in Science for the benefit of Society”, which will present, inter alia, action projects funded by the H.F.R.I.

Mr. **Christos Dimas**, Deputy Minister of Development and Investments, responsible for issues related to Research and Innovation, Mr. **Athanasios Kyriazis**, General Secretary for Research and Innovation, Mr. **Kostas Fotakis**, former Alternate Minister for Research & Innovation at the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, and Mrs. **Patritsia Kyprianidou**, former General Secretary for Research and Technology will give greetings in their opening statements.

The workshop will close with a discussion, presentation of the conclusions, as well as a live broadcast Q&A session.

The members of the Scientific Council made the following statements regarding the workshop:

**Xenophon Verykios**, President of the H.F.R.I.'s Scientific Council

“Four years of H.F.R.I.: Report to the research community”

*The establishment of the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) four years ago has essentially changed the map of research in our country. The conditions for achieving an, as much as possible, objective evaluation of research proposals have been created, young scientists have been given the opportunity to develop independent research teams in Universities and research centres, curiosity-driven research has been financed without restrictions, funding has been provided for research in humanities and social sciences, while a schedule of research project calls taking place on an annual and long-term basis has been announced and is respected. In parallel to promoting research actions, during these years the H.F.R.I. has also created its own entity ex nihilo and today it can successfully respond to its work. The end of the term of office of the Foundation's first Scientific Council presents an excellent opportunity for us to submit our report to the research community, as well as to the society, which financially supports our endeavour in adverse circumstances.*

**Xenia Chrysochoou**, Professor of Social and Political Psychology, Panteion University, Vice President of the H.F.R.I.'s Scientific Council

“H.F.R.I.: An opportunity for unrestricted research in social sciences that was not lost”

*In Greece there used to be no funding for unrestricted research in social sciences. The H.F.R.I. changed this and made it possible to reveal the research potential of social sciences. This intervention will prove that the opportunity is not lost and that there is a future for social sciences in the country. Support has been provided to the fields of social anthropology, economy, education, psychology, sociology, political sciences, law, social geography and communication. Major infrastructures have been financed: after years of absence, Greece participates again to the European Social Survey (ESS) and it has secured access to a significant database in the economy. Finally, the H.F.R.I broke new ground by supporting a circular, social and solidarity economy, educational hubs focusing on social content and the social consequences of Covid-19.*

**Constantine Galiotis**, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Patras, Collaborating Faculty Member of FORTH/Institute of Chemical Engineering Sciences

“Our philosophy for the evaluation of the proposals submitted to the H.F.R.I. with the purpose to receive funding”

*After 4 years of operation, the H.F.R.I is now appreciated in the scientific community as the sole pillar of unrestricted research in our country. The late lamented Theodoros Papazoglou, senior executive of the European Research Council (ERC), who had also been involved in the creation and organisation of the ERC as an adviser of Fotis Kafatos, the first president of ERC, participated in the committee, which worked on the operation principles of the Foundation. Based on the above mentioned historical evidence, it is obvious that the H.F.R.I has been designed according to the standards of ERC. In my speech I will try to define the notion of unrestricted research and differentiate it from the notion of incremental research. Furthermore, I will refer to the philosophy which characterises the evaluation of research proposals in two phases and to the innovative elements we search for in Physical Science proposals.*

**Ioannis Emiris**, Professor of Theoretical Informatics, Department of Informatics and Telecommunications, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, elected President of the “Athena” Research Centre

“Leading edge research in Informatics and Mathematics”

*Financed projects in mathematics and informatics cover the full spectrum of this area, from algebra, geometry and analysis, through computational mathematics and statistics to signal and data processing, artificial intelligence, software technology and information systems. These are leading edge areas of modern research, which contain a strong component of basic research and have a significant impact on innovation and technology at the same time. The H.F.R.I has won a unique place in our research ecosystem as a pillar of support for high-level projects, thanks to the emphasis placed on the evaluation process and to a bottom-up approach considering principally all the thematic choices, while providing critical aid to targeted emblematic actions at the same time.*

**Nicolas Moussiopoulos**, Professor of Heat Transfer and Environmental Engineering, School of Mechanical Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Member of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina

“Research in Engineering Sciences to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”

*Already during the first years of its operation, the H.F.R.I has financed many important research projects in the thematic area of Engineering Sciences and Technology. Some of them are directly related to various Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted in total 17 goals aiming among others at promoting prosperity, eradicating poverty and achieving a fair non-exclusive development towards 2030. Several Research Centres and Universities worldwide (for example the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece) have committed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals through a series of actions. The integration of the goals in research projects has been the spearhead of this effort. It appears that this is an excellent opportunity to further extend international cooperation in Research and Innovation.*

**Costantinos Biliaderis**, Professor Emeritus of Food Science and Technology, School of Agriculture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

“H.F.R.I.: Supporting research in Agricultural - Food Sciences”

*The agri-food sector is a fundamental pillar of Greek and EU economy. The development and implementation of advanced technologies in the primary sector, during processing as well as in the tertiary sector is necessary in order to increase productivity, improve the competitiveness of agricultural products, reduce negative impact on environment and satisfy market demands for sufficient, quality, safe and specialised products with particular nutritional characteristics. Furthermore, other research topics focus on highlighting the particular nature (quality) of products originating from Greek varieties or indigenous livestock breeds, optimising production processes and developing innovative products with added value. During its four years of operation, the H.F.R.I has financed various research projects in “Agricultural - Food Sciences”, which aim at producing new knowledge and contributing to sustainable development, innovation and sustainability as a way to approach the above mentioned goals.*

**Stylianos Neophytides**, Research Director, Head of the Laboratory for Electrochemistry and Electrochemical Engineering, Institute of Chemical Engineering Sciences, FORTH-ICE-HT

“Deep knowledge of environment as well as energy and environmental technologies is essential for sustainable development”

*The Scientific Area “S.A.8: Environment and Energy” tries to implement a holistic element in the epistemology of environment as well as the sustainable fulfilment and development of human activities. Today the latter ones reflect to a great extent an overconsumption of energy, water and biological resources. Therefore, the purpose of financing the S.A.8 is to fully understand the biosphere and its processes, as well as the impact of technologies affecting the balance and evolution of ecosystems and human activities. The aim is to develop technologies for the production of energy, the management of water and networks as well as the protection of ecosystems, with a vision to assure a*

*sustainable development of human societies within a balanced ecosystem. S.A.8 funding is achieved in such a coordinated way for the first time in Greece within the H.F.R.I.*

**Antonios Rengakos**, Professor of Ancient Greek Philology, Department of Philology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Vice President of the Academy of Athens

“Supporting Research in Humanities and Arts”

*The crisis in humanities and arts is lately more and more frequently discussed in Greece and abroad. This crisis partially results from considering these sciences non-productive as well as non-effective and eventually leads to downgrading them, increasing thus the deficit of humanitarian and artistic education in the country. During its 4 years of operation, the H.F.R.I managed to stop this and act as an important protection shield ensuring aid for Humanities and Arts. Thanks to its actions it was possible to finance excellent research projects of high quality and originality, representing all fields of knowledge in these specific scientific areas.*

**Charalampos Savvakis**, Professor Emeritus of Molecular/Cell Biology and Genetics, Medical School, University of Crete

“Research and Innovation in Life Sciences and Medicine: What does the H.F.R.I. finance?”

*Having quality as a sole criterion, the H.F.R.I selects a relatively small number of proposals among those submitted in the Thematic Area “Life Sciences (Medicine and Health Sciences)”. The evaluation process of proposals by the Thematic Committees is difficult and often painful. Difficult because the Thematic Area covers many different fields of basic and applied research: from molecular/cell biology and genetics to applied medical technology and ecology. Painful, because unavoidably several good proposals are rejected. I will discuss the evaluation philosophy with regard to the elements of research and innovation of the proposed project. How do we evaluate innovative proposals aiming at developing products and/or services, which may have an important practical impact (for instance in medical diagnosis), but do not have a research object (for example checking a scientific assumption)?*

About the H.F.R.I.

The Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation was established (Law No. 4429/2016) in response to the vital need for supporting Greek scientists. It is a legal person governed by private law, monitored by the Ministry of Development and Investments. The H.F.R.I. aims to promote research and innovation in the country. In particular, it aims to evaluate and finance unrestricted research, namely research activities, research infrastructure and their technological applications, arising from scientific curiosity, without any thematic or geographical limitations, having scientific quality and excellence as a unique criterion.

