



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

Postal Address: 185 Syggrou Ave. & Sardeon St. 2, 171 21 Nea Smyrni
Website: www.elidek.gr
E-mail: communication@elidek.gr
Tel: +30 210 6412410, 210 6412420

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Post-Event Report: Always Strive for Excellence -Theodore Papazoglou: Supporting Research, Making an Impact

The “Always Strive for Excellence – Theodore Papazoglou: Supporting Research, Making an Impact” event took place on Monday, 23 March, 2026 at the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.), as part of its 10th anniversary, bringing together representatives of the government, the research and academic communities, as well as organisations that contribute strategically to the promotion of innovation.

The main focus of the event was the presentation of the impact of the Action “Science and Society” – “Always Strive for Excellence-Theodore Papazoglou”, which was co-funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) and H.F.R.I. At the same time, the event served as a tribute to the memory of Theodoros Papazoglou, recognising his contribution to the international scientific community and his dedication to the vision and work of the European Research Council (ERC). The event was honoured with the presence of his wife and sister.

Opening remarks were delivered by Dr. Dimitrios Terzis, Secretary General for Research and Innovation; Professor Georgia Andreou, Chair of H.F.R.I. Scientific Council; and Mr. Panos Papoulias, Chief Operating Officer of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). In their statements, they emphasised the importance of the Action in fostering research excellence within the country, a result of the constructive partnership between the two institutions, while praising the contribution of Theodoros Papazoglou to its design and success.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Laura Pontiggia, Senior Policy Analyst at the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA). Reflecting on their long-standing professional collaboration, she spoke about Theodoros Papazoglou, noting that the principle of “Always Strive for Excellence” is synonymous with the ERC’s philosophy and the values he championed. She also presented data on the

participation of Greek researchers in ERC Actions, highlighting that, despite intense competition, Greece maintains a consistently strong presence.

H.F.R.I. Director Dr. Katerina Kouravelou presented the Foundation's work and the outcomes of the Action. Particular emphasis was placed on the initiative's double aim: to support research excellence by rewarding remarkable proposals submitted under a highly competitive funding mechanism, such as the ERC. It also aimed to create the right conditions for harnessing the country's scientific potential and attracting young scientists working abroad.

The event's core consisted of two panel discussions featuring grantees of the Action. The first panel, titled "Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for ERC Greek Applicants", moderated by the member of H.F.R.I. Scientific Council Professor Georgios Karagiannidis, highlighted the key challenges researchers in Greece face when preparing ERC proposals. Special mention was made of the importance of funding tools such as the "bridge funding" provided by the Action, which enabled research teams to strengthen their capacity and refine proposals for resubmission to the ERC. However, participants pointed out the need for a more stable and supportive research environment, with faster procedures and stronger incentives to attract scientific talent.

The second panel, titled "Funding ERC Seal of Excellence", moderated by the member of Scientific Council Professor Athanasios Tsakris, focused on the Action's role in implementing high-quality research projects. Participants noted that the support received was instrumental in developing research teams and infrastructure. They also underscored the importance of complementarity between national and European resources, the need for a stable funding framework, and the development of mentoring mechanisms.

The event reaffirmed the critical role of continuous investment in research and the importance of initiatives that promote the excellence and international competitiveness of Greek researchers.

The video of the event is available on the H.F.R.I. YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/nVqkIYVGhcA>.

The Action "Science and Society" entitled "Always Strive for Excellence - Theodore Papazoglou" was co-funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) and the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.).

About H.F.R.I.

The Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) was established (Law 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. H.F.R.I. aims to promote research and innovation in the country. In particular, it aims to evaluate and fund unrestricted research, namely research activities, research infrastructure and their technological applications, arising from scientific curiosity, without any thematic exclusions or geographical limitations, having scientific quality and excellence as a sole criterion.

