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Penn Researcher and Greek Colleague Offer a “Rule of 3” to Revive Greek Science, Research, and Innovation

Structural Reforms such as Evidence Based Governance Urgently Needed

PHILADELPHIA - Writing that “Greece’s house is now definitely burning,” a Penn researcher and a Greek colleague call for an end to passivity by intellectual forces in the sciences (themselves included) and lay out steps needed to help end the current Greek economic crisis.

In a Commentary piece in the December issue of *Nature Immunology*, [John D. Lambris, PhD](#), the Dr. Ralph and Sallie Weaver Professor of Research Medicine at the **Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania** and George Kollias, PhD, a professor of Physiology at the Medical School of the University of Athens and the Biomedical Sciences Research Center 'Alexander Fleming', Athens, Greece, say that evidence-based governance, strategic restructuring of infrastructure, and a “substantial inflow of fresh human capital” are urgently needed in order to revive Greek science, research, and innovation. The authors note that these ideas are consistent with the proposals of 22 Nobel Prize laureates who wrote a 2012 “Support for Greece” letter.

Declaring that “short-term, short-sighted politicians” have garnered “very little return for the country and its people” despite the large amounts of European funds put into the Greek economy, the authors write that “these funds were made useful only to aid the tumorous growth of corporatism, cronyism and clientelism that is now an established mentality of the Greek state and its people, as difficult to combat as cancer.”

The authors write that “maintaining a large, inefficient public sector in the hope that governmental spending can support employment and market growth is a failed model that has exacted an enormous cost on national prosperity.” Instead, they advocate for a “smaller and efficient de-politicized public sector (that is, disengaged from political party biases) ... balanced with supportive reforms and measures for the expansion of innovation and entrepreneurship.”

First of these needed reforms, they write, is evidence-based policy-making, which the authors note is increasingly being used worldwide to achieve better results in selecting, funding, and implementing public programs. As a model, they cite the European Commission’s “Science meets Parliaments” program, which brings scientists and policy-makers from the European and national levels together to promote a culture of evidence-informed policy-making.

The second calls for reforming the research landscape. Current research units should be strategically reoriented and new units in cross-disciplinary and emerging fields should be developed. This includes forming joint research centers with leading institutions such as universities in other countries. Key goals include technology transfer and development of entrepreneurial, Greece-based incubators.

Declaring that the “Greek research area must be flooded with talented, independent researchers,” in their third rule the authors call for financing 250 new researchers over five years, with €1 million each, “to establish new laboratories and infuse Greek research organizations with new ideas, skills and expertise.”

Fearing further inertia, the authors write that Greek and international researchers and innovators “will need to come together and self-organize into an opinion-leading body to provide high-level consultation to policy makers and to

push toward reforming current structures, procedures and mentalities ... in the hope that these initiatives will propel Greek research toward substantial scientific, economic and social returns.”