



Innovation first in our way of thinking, and then in our actions

THE EXAMPLE SET BY ELPEN'S EXPERIMENTAL & RESEARCH CENTER



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2015 marks 19 years of continuous operation for the Experimental & Research Center of ELPEN Pharmaceutical Company. ELPEN is the largest Greek pharmaceutical industry, which also houses the largest laboratory of applied research and education in our country, originating from the manufacturing sector. This center is a pioneer of a substantial and productive collaboration (both qualitatively and quantitatively) between the public and the private sectors.

Even though it is absolutely essential for our country's advancement, innovation is a concept whose content has not been fully understood; even more so, in the way it can be implemented through very specific actions. Thus, let us first and foremost, take a look at the big picture.

We find ourselves living in a nation which has encountered one of its toughest challenges since World War II. Certainly, we have been through rougher situations, which were subsequently followed by periods of substantial growth. It is therefore a proven fact that, perennially, the Greek people have the physical and mental reserves to win!

The basic questions- Today, we know for a certain fact that our country will change. Yet, there are two basic questions. The first, is whether it will change towards the better; the second question is whether this change will also regard our way of thinking, since any positive change has a true meaning only if it is based on strong foundations. The human factor is what allows for these foundations to have duration. Hence, what is in question here, is whether we will have the intellectual armor, so as to not overlook the institutions for the sake of other interests. In other words, my humble opinion is that our country's problem is primarily an institutional and organizational problem, it is not economic one. The economic problem was created by the perennial, improper functioning of our institutions. The economic crisis is the resulting grave complication of our basic problem: that is, of the institutions and the



organization both of which have neither been modernized nor characterized by stability. According to research conducted by the Foundation of Economic & Industrial Research (IOBE), published in 2009, the bureaucracy cost towards businesses is estimated between 5,4 and 6,8% of the GDP, while a mere 0,6% of the GDP is spent on Research (this is true up until today). For our National Defense, the cost was at 4,3%, meaning that the country's bureaucracy costs more than the budget of our National Defense! What's more, our Research could be actually funded by the computer restructuring of our

administration!

Allow me therefore, to bring forth a question with regards to the sector to which I have dedicated my life: the sector of Research and Education. Which are the most significant geopolitical or geostrategic advantages of Greece? We will all agree on two of them: the virtually global universality of Greece's civilization, and its geographical position. Can these two factors be linked to Research and Education? Absolutely!

Let us see an example. Our country is very rich in archeological discoveries; yet, we are lacking in research, while with great effort we conserve and guard our museums. If we were to create in Greece a faculty in international, post-graduate studies, on the various eras of our history, with the analogous tuition fees, how many students do you think we would be attracting from all over the world? We would start from a few hundred and we'd reach in the thousands of students. Would there be a funding issue for our research in archaeology, in its safeguarding and conservation?

The example- At ELPEN's Experimental & Research Center, we have proven in practice, that the public and private sectors can successfully collaborate, based on a healthy framework; that they can produce rich research and educational work, and that they can inspire new generations of Greeks to think innovatively. In our Laboratory, the public and private sectors have 'shook hands' and have thought "out of the box", innovatively. Research and Education, in their broader sense, when placed in the hands of individuals with knowledge and vision, they can bring enormous geopolitical advantages for our country. Our merchant shipping comes to mind: a sector, which today ranks first worldwide, amidst this depressing environment. No one could have predicted such a rise. Yet in fact, with hard work and vision, tradition became a force, and marine stewardship became a dynamic geopolitical advantage. The same applies to Research and Education, if we all contribute with Innovative actions.

In the pharmaceutical industry's Laboratory of applied research and education, the public and private sectors can successfully collaborate, based on a healthy framework; they have produced significant work, thus inspiring new generations of Greeks to think innovatively.

