

Stelios Orphanoudakis

A visionary pioneer

Stelios Orphanoudakis was born in Rethimnon, Crete, Greece, on 13 November 1948. Ever since his earliest school days, he was recognised for his brilliance, extraordinary abilities and performance, obtaining a fellowship at the Greek-American Athens College. Subsequently he was awarded fellowships at Dartmouth University and M.I.T. in the United States, where he completed his studies summa cum laude.

He started his academic and research career at the University of Yale, USA, as Professor of Diagnostic Radiology and Electrical Engineering. In addition, he was the Founder and Director of the Division of Imaging Science of the Yale School of Medicine.

He returned to Greece, in the mid - 1980's, where he was appointed Professor of the newly founded Department of Computer Science of the University of Crete, while at the same time, he was one of the first and most influential researchers at the Institute of Computer Science (ICS) of the Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH).

Twenty years ago, with his visionary scientific foresight, he led FORTH-ICS towards highly innovative research areas. In 1985, he established the Centre for Medical Informatics and Health Telematics Applications of FORTH-ICS. He believed deeply that innovative technologies in the domain of Health Telematics would have a significant impact in improving quality of life. This belief inspired him to create the Integrated Health Telematics Network of Crete (HYGEIAnet), one of his most significant achievements.

In 1985 Stelios Orphanoudakis also established the Laboratory of Computational Vision and Robotics of FORTH-ICS. The laboratory's long-term objective is to create computer-based systems capable of understanding the surrounding environment and exhibiting intelligent behaviour through the analysis of perception data. A variety of highly innovative robotic systems have been developed under his supervision.



His research work is reported in an impressive number of international scientific publications.

From 1994 to 2004, Stelios Orphanoudakis was the Director of FORTH-ICS, which he guided to research excellence at an international level and to a pioneering role in promoting Information Society Technologies worldwide. He founded FORTHnet S.A. in 1995, a spin-off company of FORTH-ICS. Today, FORTHnet is one of the most dynamically developing companies in the Internet and Telecommunications sector in Greece.

He also promoted the active participation of FORTH in a wide variety of European and international initiatives, including the European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics (ERCIM) - of which he was President in 2004 - and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

He participated in many initiatives and activities targeted to promote research and technological development at a national and international level. He had been an active member of high-level committees, amongst others, the National Telecommunications and Post Commission of Greece, the National Advisory Research Council of Greece, and the Hellenic Foundation for Culture.

In January 2004, he was elected Director of FORTH and Chairman of the Board of Directors in recognition of his international scientific prominence, his administrative abilities and experience, and his twenty year long dedication to FORTH. The entire community of FORTH deeply esteemed his personality and his work.

Stelios Orphanoudakis was an extraordinarily warm, charismatic, and deeply human personality that was respected and loved by all his collaborators. With his vision in research and innovation, enthusiasm and exceptional communicative ability, he inspired, encouraged and supported new generations of young scientists, while attracting researchers from all over the world to work at FORTH.

The premature loss of Stelios Orphanoudakis, in March 2005, has deprived FORTH of one of the most influential actors of its history, and Greece of one of the most active advocates of research and technological development.

The continuation of his work and the commitment to further pursue his vision constitute a formidable heritage, a moral duty, and a long-term challenge for FORTH.



“The first time I felt a strong desire to return to Greece and Crete was in 1984, after having spent 16 years in the USA. I wanted to contribute in any possible way to the efforts being made to promote Crete as an international center of Education, Research and Technology.”