From Athens to New Delhi (and Back): Toward a Shared Science Diplomacy Agenda

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Introduction

India and Greece are poised at a pivotal juncture in their bilateral relationship, following the political decision to elevate their ties to a Strategic Partnership in August 2023. Science diplomacy has been receiving increased policy attention[1] and, thus, holds the potential to act as a bridge for such bilateral partnerships and, moreover, enable wider Europe–Asia linkages.[2] Indeed, there is a timely element to this, as both nations are seeking to expand their scientific, technological, and cultural outreach—India via its global science diplomacy network, led by the Ministry of External Affairs, and Greece through its own respective initiatives. As already explored,[3] this creates substantial potential for a partnership that unites innovation, research, and soft power diplomacy for mutual benefit.[4]

The importance of an Indo-Hellenic collaboration is also underscored by the current global strategic environment. As outlined in the OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2025, governments tend to leverage science to secure national interests.[5] Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) securitisation policies can foster bilateral partnerships for the co-development of critical technologies, while effectively balancing Greece's European orientation with India's Indo-Pacific outreach.

Anchored in recent developments such as the reaffirmed 2024 India–Greece Strategic Partnership Agreement and the co-development priorities identified in their Joint Statement, covering maritime, space science, nano-technology, bio-technology, clean technologies/ renewable energy, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT),[6] the Horasis India Meeting in Athens in 2024,[7] and the growing academic and technological cooperation between the two countries (e.g., the MoU between the Indian Institute of Technology Patna and the University of Patras),[8] this article is policy focused in exploring how science diplomacy can become a key pillar in their evolving relationship. It proposes a threefold framework to institutionalise Indo-Hellenic science collaboration.

First, regarding policy and institutional cooperation, the establishment of a bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Council could align joint priorities in areas such as renewable energy, blue economy research, maritime technology, digital governance, ICT, and sustainable infrastructure. Second, in the academic and innovation sphere, launching Indo-Hellenic research fellowships, co-funded doctoral programs, and innovation hubs would connect Greek universities, research institutions and firms and India's premier scientific institutions and enterprises through common participation in Horizon Europe, access to G20 research platforms, and the launch of dedicated bilateral R&D programs. Finally, at the societal and soft diplomacy level, promoting joint science festivals, digital education initiatives, and youth exchange programs would reinforce people-to-people connectivity and public visibility of scientific collaboration.

By integrating India's experience in leveraging science for global influence with Greece's strategic role as Europe's gateway to Asia, this partnership can redefine Asia–Europe cooperation. The envisioned Indo-Hellenic science diplomacy model would contribute not only to enhancing bilateral innovation capacity but also to addressing broader transregional challenges—energy transition, maritime security, and digital inclusion—through dialogue, co-creation, and sustainable scientific exchange.

The Four Pillars of the Indo–Hellenic Science Diplomacy Agenda

Our proposed framework focuses on integrating policy, innovation, soft power, and multilateral engagement across four strategic pillars to ensure sustained and impactful collaboration. Our framework is strategically validated by the documented needs and opportunities in the Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Report country narratives (ASEF SciTech reports) for Greece[9] and India[10], as exemplified by the authors of this article in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. Four Pillars of the Indo–Hellenic Science Diplomacy Agenda

Pillar 1: Institutional and Policy Coordination

The development of this pillar is directly motivated by the challenges and opportunities cited in the ASEF SciTech reports, ensuring mutual benefit: The establishment of formal mechanisms (S&T Dialogue Mechanism, joint Science Attaché posts, the authoring of Bilateral Roadmap) is essential for Greece. Indeed, such steps could help highlight the importance of S&T diplomacy, which is currently hindered by fragmented actions and a lack of coordination and lacks dedicated S&T attachés[9], thus addressing a critical institutional gap. In return, Greece offers a promising entry point into the EU for India's established and expansive system of 83 S&T Cooperation Agreements.[10] We propose three actionable measures designed to result in enhanced policy agility and coordination across ministries (Foreign Affairs, Science and Research, Defence, etc.):

- Create an Indo–Hellenic Science & Technology (S&T) Dialogue Mechanism: This platform will facilitate structured, high-level exchanges between policy, academic, and industry stakeholders to drive long-term scientific collaboration.
- Establish joint Science Attaché posts: These positions will serve as permanent liaisons embedded within embassies to ensure continuous information flow, strategic foresight, and coordination between both nations.
- Develop a Bilateral Roadmap on Science Diplomacy 2030: The roadmap will outline shared goals, implementation milestones, and evaluation mechanisms to maintain focus and accountability through successive administrations.

Pillar 2: Research, Innovation, and Academic Collaboration

The necessity of this pillar is underscored by the strategic objectives of both partners as discussed in the ASEF SciTech reports. On the one hand, it is strategically developed to meet India's core objective of strengthening national security through the co-development of capabilities in critical sectors like space and ICT.[10] Simultaneously, it enables Greece to maximise the value of its R&D ecosystem by integrating its institutions into powerful Asian research networks and securing participation in joint Horizon Europe projects.[9] It contains the following key actions with the goal of co-funding projects in critical technologies and mitigating shared risks:

- Initiate researcher mobility and exchange schemes: Design and undertake programs that will foster talent circulation, enhance cross-cultural understanding, and build joint research capacity in strategically significant scientific domains.
- Create a Co-Funded Indo–Hellenic Innovation Hub in Athens: Commit resources for the establishment and operation of a hub that will act as a central (place-based) platform for collaborative R&D, technology transfer, and start-up incubation, linking innovators and investors from both nations.
- Enhance collaborative participation in R&D projects: Actively seek out potential partners between the two countries to establish collaborative R&D projects within the scope of Horizon Europe. Also, the two countries should design a dedicated bilateral R&D project funding instrument (as e.g. Greece has initiated with Germany and Israel).

Pillar 3: Diaspora and Soft Power Engagement

Both countries have significant and highly regarded science diasporas in multiple countries worldwide. This pillar is proposed as a shared strategy. As identified in the *ASEF SciTech reports*, there is a recognised need for the Greek establishment of a structured mechanism to network its highly educated diaspora[9], an effort that can benefit from India's successful VAIBHAV model for promoting "brain circulation" and increasing global influence.[10] This pillar focuses on leveraging human capital through the following soft diplomacy actions:

- Establishment of collaborative science diaspora initiatives: Linking India's scientific diaspora initiatives with Greece's respective pool of experts to connect expatriate researchers for co-developed projects, mentoring, and industry collaboration. This network will strengthen cross-border R&D ecosystems and create long-term partnerships that channel global expertise toward national development goals.
- Nominate joint "Science Ambassadors": Nominating renowned scientists or innovators—to promote bilateral collaboration at international conferences and multilateral platforms such as BRICS, ASEAN-EU, or ASEM, these ambassadors will act as visible advocates for Indo–Hellenic scientific excellence, helping attract global recognition and fostering new avenues for cooperative projects.
- Indo–Hellenic Science and Innovation Forums: Organisation of bi-annual Indo–Hellenic Science and Innovation Forums in collaboration with universities and industry councils to showcase joint technology development, inspired by the India Science Congress and ASEF's science-policy dialogues. Additionally, this format will serve as a practical interface for government, academia, and industry to identify emerging opportunities and align future innovation agendas.

Pillar 4: Trilateral and Multilateral Engagement

The proposed Indo-Hellenic science diplomacy framework could contribute not only at the bilateral level but also at the transregional level. This pillar directly supports Greece's suggested strategic objective to enhance scientific collaboration with Asia, as outlined in the ASEF SciTech report for Greece. It establishes the Indo-Hellenic collaboration as a practical model for Asia-Europe scientific exchange, reinforced by the active participation of both countries in ASEF. As such, this pillar should:

- Institutionalise participation in Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) science tracks: Capitalising on both countries' ASEF engagement as an entry point for broader Asian cooperation, this initiative will

position the Indo–Hellenic partnership as a regional connector, promoting policy alignment, joint research outputs, and shared innovation initiatives across Europe and Asia.

Actionable Roadmap and Expected Outcomes

The proposed collaboration framework is anticipated to have a meaningful impact on each pillar and its associated actions. Table 1 outlines the expected outcomes of each pillar.

Table 1: Actionable Roadmap and Expected Outcomes of the Four Pillars

Pillar	Expected Outcomes
Institutional and Policy Coordination	Increased South–North and East–West policy integration linking India's Indo-Pacific diplomacy with Greece's European and Mediterranean agenda.
Research, Innovation, and Academic Collaboration	Co-development of capabilities in strategic technologies (e.g., space, ICT); Maximised R&D value through joint funding, Horizon Europe collaboration, and shared risk in frontier technologies.
Soft Power and Diaspora Engagement	Strengthened diaspora-driven innovation ecosystems, converting brain circulation into tangible joint industrial and research outputs.
Trilateral and Multilateral Engagement	Enhanced scientific visibility and innovation exchange, turning both countries into co-shapers of transregional science diplomacy and creating an actionable model for Asia-Europe scientific exchange.

Conclusion

Science diplomacy has been gaining increasing attention in both academic and policy circles in its capacity to enhance collaboration between countries and help initiate (and sustain) knowledge and scientific networks.[11] It is, thus, a useful concept upon which to explore the ways in which Greece and India can enhance their bilateral R&D and innovation collaboration. The upgrade of India-Greece relations through the Strategic Partnership in 2023 offers a unique opportunity to strengthen science diplomacy between the two countries. For this article, our four-pillar collaboration framework outlines practical steps and expected results designed to establish a robust model for regional and cross-regional cooperation.

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