

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE, INNOVATION: GREEK SUCCESS STORIES IN SWITZERLAND

*They may be Greek, but it is in Switzerland that they are spectacularly unfolding their talents in cutting-edge fields. Georgos Pallas and Afksendiyos Kalangos excel in medicine, George Koukis in banking IT, and Alexis Georgacopoulos in higher art & design education.*

Georgos Pallas, of dual nationality (Greek and Swiss), worked as the head physician of the Olten Clinic of Ophthalmology in the canton of Solothurn, before setting up his own clinic in 1994. Expansion and advancement came swiftly, transforming his clinic into a group in a matter of years. Nowadays, Pallas clinics are a household name throughout the German-speaking part of Switzerland, counting 11 establishments in various cities, including Bern and Zurich.

These clinics specialize in ophthalmology, offering corneal transplantation and laser vision correction treatments. Dermatology and plastic surgery services are also provided. Pallas clinics are further recognized as training centres in ophthalmology, a status usually reserved to university hospitals.

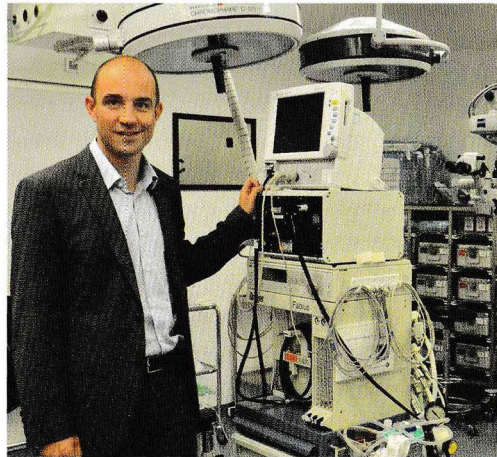
Moreover, Pallas clinics set up and currently co-finance the Keradonum Foundation, a cornea bank. Once grafted, corneas can restore vision in cases of loss due to injury or a cornea-affecting disease; what is more, advancements in medicine in the last few years have made it possible for the success rates of surgical procedure to reach a staggering 90%.

Professor Afksendiyos Kalangos is a heart surgeon who headed the cardiovascular surgery department of the University Hospitals of Geneva (HUG) for many years, from 2001 to 2015. He is also the founder and president of the humanitarian organization "Cœurs pour tous" (Hearts for All). The organization provides

surgery to thousands of underprivileged children with cardiac defects in a dozen countries, such as India and Cyprus, as well as the island of Mauritius and Cameroon, with the help of teams established on site.

Some children are operated on within the HUG network, an incredibly active player in humanitarian medicine, particularly in the highly-specialized field of paediatric surgery. While not divested of all the inherent complexities of a delicate procedure on a vital body organ, paediatric heart surgery also takes on the challenge of hearts that can be tiny. As a matter of fact, in new-borns with severe heart malformations, surgery must be performed as soon as possible, so as to guarantee not just the infants' quality of life, but their very survival. Here too, success rates are rising. Cardiovascular surgery has indeed progressed immensely, thanks to various improvements and innovations, such as endoscopic instruments, allowing surgeons to perform much smaller incisions and having the added benefit that patient recovery is markedly faster and easier.

George Koukis is the founder and one of the directors of Temenos, a company specializing in banking and financial software solutions, currently the world leader in its field. It has supplied software to more than 2,000 companies around the globe, including 41 of the world's 50 largest banks. In other words, its software enables daily transactions for more than 500 million end-customers.



*Georgos Pallas*

By the time he founded Temenos, George Koukis had already acquired a long experience in software. He played a key role in the computerization of the accounting department of Qantas, Australia's largest airline. He then moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where he founded Temenos in 1993. This is where the company is still based and is now listed on the stock exchange. Although little known to the greater public, Temenos is a primary contributor to the operations of the banking sector, one of the most important industries of Swiss economy, together with pharmaceuticals and tourism.

Alexis Georgacopoulos is the director of the Cantonal School of Arts in Lausanne (ECAL), as of 2011. This is where his entire career has evolved from the moment he left his homeland at the age of 18 to study design. He graduated in 1999 and was appointed head of the Industrial Design Department in the following year.

In this capacity, he swiftly became involved in the expansion of ECAL, a school known and renowned throughout the world



*Afksendiyos Kalangos*

for its top-quality studies. ECAL features among the top ten Art & Design Universities in the world, focusing not just on creativity, but also on all practical issues that artists and designers will have to face throughout their career. Students, among other things, learn how to make a name for themselves in the various fields that the ECAL covers: Visual Arts, Cinema, Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Photography, Media & Interaction Design and, last but not least, Type Design.

Alexis Georgacopoulos developed closer collaborations with large companies and established a partnership with the EPFL (the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne), by means of a common workshop aimed at the promotion of innovation, bringing together technology, design and architecture. He also helped further ECAL's international reputation through participations in prestigious international events, such as the Milan Salone Internazionale del Mobile (International Furniture Fair), the most important international fair in interior design.