



## **MEETING BRIEF: THENSA/THEA COLLOQUIUM ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CLUSTER OF SCIENCE PARKS AND I-HUBS ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2021**

As the challenges facing the global community become more complex and interdependent, global partnerships between Industry, Universities, Research institutes and groups, Innovation Hubs, and product Laboratories, as well as State actors have gained momentum as the key means of implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

At the same time, science has become significantly more collaborative, and we have seen an increase in the number of international collaborations, co-authored papers, and multi-investigator grant proposals and the rising frequency of “interdisciplinarity” and “multi-disciplinary research and innovation and product development. A case in point is collaborative research, product design and manufacturing during Covid 19 pandemic. The reasons for these developments are the urgency, complexity, and scope of unsolved scientific problems; the need for access to new technologies and the often expensive, research instruments and technologies that are required. Therefore, collaboration amongst the right individuals, teams, and institutions is becoming ever more crucial for progress in science and innovation.

In early 2020 THENSA constituted a task team to explore the need for the establishment of a Consortium of Science Parks and Business Units (TCSB). The intent of the initiative was to identify the interest of the various science parks / business units/ innovations hubs to:

- **promote collaboration in the interest of finding solutions,**
- **sharing technologies,**
- **technology transfer**
- **engaging in collaborative research and product design**
- **preparing joint/collaborative funding proposals to fund innovation and**
- **share international expertise and training**
- **promote commercialisation of products.**

This process began with a study visit by the VCs to various institutions hosting science parts/ business units and innovation hubs in Ireland, Netherlands, Korea, and India, amongst the many others. Subsequently, a team of staff members from the THENSA (then SATN) member institutions visited these countries and institutions on their waste management. As a result, thereof the DPSA, TIA and EWSETA funded the training and establishment of e-waste container-based plants at six institutions in South Africa and encouraged the commercialisation of products from e-waste. Whilst collaboration amongst the partners proved helpful and successful, commercialising products remains a challenge and require further expertise, training and partnerships with industry, other institutions etc.

It became clear that an environmental scan (a desktop survey) to determine the status quo at the THENSA member institutions and their various business units, was necessary. Having visited the different international models of the countries visited, THEA was identified as a key stakeholder, and an inaugural meeting was held on 15 June 2021 between THENSA and THEA with representation from key stakeholders.

**The colloquium incorporating a wider stakeholder-base, set for 17 September 2021 aims to:**

- **Share the results of the environmental scan**
- **Perspectives from our THEA partners**
- **Focus on opportunities of mutual interest.**
- **Obtain broader inputs from national supporting and regulating entities such as NRF, DSI, NIMPO, TIA as well as representation from industry.**
- **Develop a way forward in respect to establishing a research and innovation cluster on science parks/business units.**