Welcome speech by the Director of the British Council in Greece,
Mr. Tony Buckby

Distinguished participants

Welcome to the conference. I’m Tony Buckby, Director of the British Council in Greece. We are delighted to have been invited to be involved in organising this conference and I want to say a huge thanks above all to the Municipality of Thessaloniki and to Navarino Network.

The partnership with the Municipality is part of a wider and long-lasting collaboration across many areas including Higher Education, innovation, entrepreneurship and intercultural dialogue and it is a partnership we value enormously. Also we very much welcome now the opportunity to work alongside Navarino Network. We have a strong and continuing wish to work in and with Thessaloniki, we greatly respect the mission and approach of Navarino Network and we are therefore really pleased to have been given the chance to share opportunities to contribute to understanding of policy and to promote innovation in ways which might contribute to the success of the city.

Education is central the British Council’s work and we focus on internationalising education, sharing the UK’s expertise and innovation globally, and bringing partners together to work on collaborative projects. So the internationalization of Higher Education is very much a priority area for us and we support students, international academics and researchers in getting access to high-quality international opportunities whether they are going to the UK or coming from the UK.

The range of our work in education in Greece therefore reflects that focus. We organise annual education exhibitions, (and these are coming up shortly on 5/6 April in Athens and 8 April here in Thessaloniki), we provide student consultancy services, international education marketing services for UK institutions and partners in country and training for education agents. We have activity which reflects solid relationships with education authorities and the academic community... and for example we contribute to policy dialogue events which we co-develop with local partners.

The UK Higher Education sector is one of the most internationalised in the world and more than 80% of UK institutions are involved in international partnerships.

So there’s obviously huge experience but equally obviously there can be great challenges as joint ventures are we know generally complex and adapting to a new competitive environment can be difficult. So if we can facilitate the process and the partnership in any way then we feel we really are contributing those outcomes which are quite central to our work - creating opportunities particularly for young people to develop their skills and indeed to prosper in the work place. Those opportunities (as
a result of mobility across countries), involve gaining an international outlook, openness and intercultural awareness and we know, also through our own research, how much these aspects of skills development are valued so highly by employers.

In the British Council these outcomes linked to support for young people and their employment and the economy in general are ones we need to concentrate on more and more, and for example an analysis the impact of transnational education on the economy, skills, society and institutions in host countries is one of the main topics of the our education conference Going Global at the end of next month, so I’m taking the opportunity to mention that. This year it takes place in the United States, in Miami, from 29 April to 1 May – please consider it – it’s not too late! Details are in your conference folder.

So once again, I express our appreciation for the Mayor’s invitation to co-operate in the organisation of this conference. We hope,. and indeed do so with great confidence, that this conference will be able to create opportunities for the institutions involved and the local education community to further enrich and to further expand their international strategies in Higher Education. And that this will assist Thessaloniki in becoming an education hub and will further grow its much deserved international reputation.

Thank you

Tony Buckby
Director
British Council Greece