

SPEECH SIMON STEEN AS CHAIRMAN OF ECNAIS FOR THE OPENING SESSION ECNAIS CONFERENCE 16-18 APRIL 2015 IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY

I welcome you all on behalf of the Executive Committee of ECNAIS (Sofia Reis, Secretary-General, Per Kristensen, Treasurer and Simon Steen, Chairman)

This is the first ECNAIS Conference in Asia.

A special word of welcome for

- The Presidency of the Turkish Private Schools Association
Cem Gülan and Yusuf Tavukçuoğlu (co chairs) and Mrs Jale Onur (scientific advisor)

- The speakers (who I will introduce later)
 - Prof. dr. Üstün Ergüder from Turkey
 - Mrs Cristovalina Afonso from Portugal (video presentation)
 - Prof. Patrick Sins from the Netherlands
 - Mrs Simone Dalsgaard from Denmark

- The ECNAIS honorary vice-president and honorary member Mr. Carlos Díaz Muñíz

The Conference

There are more the 80 participants from 16 countries also outside the EU (Turkey, Ukraine and Iceland).

The theme of the conference is "*Self-evaluation as part of a culture of school improvement*".

It is a follow-up of the successful ECNAIS Seminar "*How to avoid unification of diversity*" in Vienna, Austria, November 2014.

We are grateful for the hosting of this Seminar by our Austrian member association and for the active role of Beatrice Lukas.

This seminar was about how to develop and protect diversity in education on the level of the education system

Self-evaluation of schools is important for the flourishing of diversity on the school level.

To clarify the underlying ideas of the Executive Committee about the theme of the conference I quote some paragraphs of the text in the box of the conference program

"In the last few decades, schools have become increasingly accountable to students, parents and society; in response they have developed procedures for evaluating their own practice and performance.

As external evaluation and inspection of schools has developed, internal evaluation and assessment by schools has become increasingly necessary. In order to develop a vision of school-wide aims and goals, a culture of self-evaluation has become increasingly important to drive developing standards and school improvement.

Each school must develop its own procedure of self-evaluation to reflect its own vision and structure; this will include both the leadership's and the teachers' contribution as individuals and as part of a team to the learning process.

As an ongoing and developing process, self-evaluation should actively involve all stakeholders in order to give them a sense of ownership of the process itself, their role in the process, and the school in general."

During the conference we will also pay attention to key questions about feedback as form of self-evaluation such as:

- Where am I going?, How am I doing?, What's next ?

ECNAIS Conferences

- are never only sitting and listening and looking around
- it is also about taking an active part in the dialogue
- the variety of the program is an invitation to share your ideas with speakers and colleagues
- not only inspired by people in the room but hopefully also by a video presentation of a transnational project about schools self assessment in Norway and Portugal (the first ECNAIS podcast)
- 9 schools are being visit on Friday morning. This will give us a first impression of the variety of Turkish schools

On Friday afternoon we will learn more from

- Patrick Sins about feed back and peer review and
- Simone Dalsgaard how a Danish Association of Independent Schools supports schools in using self-evaluation in daily practice as an alternative for external state inspection

ECNAIS own development

I can mention a growing number of members

- Last year the Austrian Support Association for Independent Schools became member and the Swiss Parents Support Association and the Dutch foundation The travelling school became associate members
- This year we can welcome the Spanish Association for Private and Independent schools as a new member and also the Hellenic Private Schools Association from Greece

We are proud that we could manage to organize the first ECNAIS Roundtable in the EU parliament in Brussels. This event was initiated and coordinated by Sofia Reis, our Secretary General, and took place on 27 January this year.

We are grateful to the AEEP, the Portuguese member association of ECNAIS, that they allowed Sofia Reis to spend a lot of her time to make this Roundtable about '*Right to education: Freedom of Choice*' to a success.

- 34 representatives of 28 different organizations and institutions (reflecting diversity) presented in the EU Parliament in Brussels their own ideas and values in education.

An ECNAIS manifest and a press release of the roundtable are published.

I quote some lines from this important ECNAIS manifest:

'The public arena is no longer occupied by single players with dualistic and fragmented roles. Nowadays networks of collaboration and partnership strongly embedded in the civil society attract more and more citizens who share with each other a growing social responsibility based on diverse cultural, religious, philosophical or pedagogical convictions. Beyond the obsolete 'public' versus 'private' dichotomy more promising solutions and more convenient educational provisions are made available. The original and unique local, regional and national combination of policies, institutions and programs (initiatives and investments) together with schools and teachers initiatives generate a variety in education enhancing quality. There are no children alike as there are no schools alike. The possibility to innovate and the diversity of ethos connected to autonomy, responsibility and accountability has shown that the independent education sector has been fuelling change and innovation, with its own knowledge and practical experience, throughout the whole educational system.'

The ECNAIS Executives could also have a meeting with the educational advisor of the EU Commissioner for Culture, Education and Sport and with the coordinator of the Committee

for Culture and Education of the EU Parliament on the same day of the Roundtable in Brussels.

In the first week of June 2015 we will have the annual European Meeting of Independent Education (EMIE) coordinated by ECNAIS with participants of the Roundtable and the traditional EMIE partners.

We are building in this way a strong coalition to convince the EU Parliament of the importance of

- freedom of education
- freedom of parental school choice
- equity
- equal public funding of public and private schools

As last part of my speech

I want you to remind that we must not forget that constitutional rights on democracy and freedom of speech and freedom of education won't automatically last forever.

They need constantly be maintained by citizens who take a firm stand in the public debate. The Dutch philosopher Prof. Marli Huyer, who is recently appointed as the Dutch Thinker of the Motherland, referred recently during her first public lesson in The Hague to the saying of Hannah Arendt, who stressed the importance of 'inter-est'.

She pointed out that in the public debate we are in a way challenged to think 'in between' and this offers us a possibility to share with each other what we really find important

The ideals of Europe as an integrated peaceful area with a strong notion of tolerance and respect for different opinions and convictions are under pressure in a global world full of conflicts far a way and near by.

More and more the organizations from the civil society need to fuel the values of a democratic Europe, where parents have the right and the possibility to choice the kind of school for their children which fits the best with their philosophical, pedagogical or religious ideas.

For that reason we will discuss in the coming EMIE meeting the common declaration on 'Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination through Education' from the Ministers of Education in the EU in Paris 17 march 2015

I wish you all a good conference and a lot of meaningful network contacts

And now I want to invite Mr Yildiz, Director of the Ministry of Education for Istanbul to take the floor.

Thank you for your attention.