The right to education, the freedom of parental school choice and the freedom to establish schools on the basis of self-chosen religious, philosophical or pedagogical ideas are well known European values, e.g. mentioned as fundamental citizens’ rights within the EU.

These human rights and fundamental freedoms go as far back as the first Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights, in which article 2 states: ‘No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the rights of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions’.

National school systems can only be ‘read’ as the outcome of a long term cultural-historical process, in many cases strongly connected with the rise and development of the nation state. That’s why in several countries the parents’ right to establish and choose an independent (non-state) school is mentioned in the constitution.

Independent schools all over Europe, each with their own profile and curriculum, offer parents, students and - within the given variety of schools - also teachers, the opportunity to choose just that specific school, that best meets their own expectations, talents and skills.

By so doing, independent schools are completing the different national school systems in Europe and contribute with school choice and innovative school practices to the modern social and economic development of their countries.

A country that neglects the freedom of education will in the long run pay a price for it in terms of the wasted talents of the new generation.

In some countries, freedom of education is seen by the government as a privilege for the elite, leading to the misunderstanding that independent schools can do without any legislative recognition and public funding.

In this conference we want to focus on the different perspectives of the freedom of education, such as the economic, social, juridical and last but not least the pedagogical perspective.

The empowering effect of the freedom of education for society as a whole will become more clear when we have a better understanding of these different perspectives.

It is important to realize that not only the independent schools, but also the public schools need a certain degree of autonomy to educate the new generation in the best possible way for the future they will face.
Thursday 14th April

8:30  WELCOME & REGISTRATION

9:00  OPENING

9:05  (5')  Kyrailidis Charalampos
      Chairmen of the NAIS
      Hellenic Association of Independent Schools

9:10  (5')  Simon Steen
      ECNAIS Chairman

9:15  Representative of the Greek Ministry
      of Education

9:25  Andrew Lewer
      Member of the European Parliament
      (Conservatives and Reformists Group)

9:35  Fortsakis Theodore
      New Democracy MP

9:45  Mavrotas George
      Potami MP

9:55  Christofilopoulou Evi
      Pasok MP

10:15  COFFEE BREAK
      CONFERENCE

10:45  Kostas Gouliamos
      Rector of the European University of Cyprus
      President of Rector’s Conference in Cyprus

11:00  Alivizatos Nikos
      Professor of Constitutional Law at the Athens
      University Law School

11:15  Koskos Phoebus Leonidas
      President of the Hellenic American
      University

11:30  Papandropoulos Athanasios
      International Honorary President of the
      European Union of Reporters

11:45  Pagoulatos Georgios
      Professor of European Policy and Economy at
      the Economic University of Athens

12:00  Vettas Nikos
      Professor of Economics University of Athens

13:00  LUNCH

14:30  Simon Walker
      Learning Group Leader of the Future of
      Learning Institute at Harvard Graduate
      School of Education

14:50  Veremis Athanasios
      Professor of Political Science and Public
      Administration at the Athens University

15:10  Kurt Ernst
      Former chairman of Danmarks
      Privatskoleforening

15:30  Rodrigo Melo
      Director of the Portuguese Association for
      Independent Schools

16:00  COFFEE BREAK

16:30  Schools’ presentations
      Preview of the school visits: 9 schools

19:30  CULTURAL EVENT: DINNER INCLUDED

Friday 15th April

9:00  Departure from the hotel

School visits (lunch included)
Return of participants to the hotel

14:30  Tsakanikas Aggelos
      Research Director at the Foundation of Economic
      and Industrial Research

14:50  Maarten Simons
      Associate Professor at the Faculty of Psychology and
      Educational Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium

15:30  Activating key issues and exchange from
      personal perspective in small groups
      (coffee or tea included)

16:30  CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE

20:00  Departure from hotel
      OFFICIAL ECNAIS DINNER
      Walking distance to restaurant approx 15 min.

Open for MCM members only

Saturday 16th April

9:00  Formal Annual General Meeting
      and Management Committee Meeting

12:00  Lunch will NOT be served after the meeting