



President's speech

UIA REGION II PRESIDENTS MEETING

ATHENS, Wednesday 10 March 2021/ (14:00 – 18:00 p.m. Athens –EET time)

Subject of the meeting: “Recovering and Supporting Funds for Architects and Engineers. Next events and activities”

Honorable members of the Administration of our region in the International Union of Architects,

Dear national representatives,

Dear colleagues,

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at today's meeting.

I would like to warmly thank my friend Nikos Fintikakis for the work he does to bridge and network the architects of my country with your countries.

And of course all the members of the administrations of the UIA for the work which is being done.

And I want to tell you that we are trying as we can in the Technical Chamber of Greece to bring the knowledge and information from the action of the UIA closer to the Greek Architects and the Greek Engineers.

But also to the people who make decisions and to society in general. It is not a coincidence and we have tried a lot to manage to make one of the biggest urban regeneration projects in the country in collaboration with the UIA.

This is the architectural competition that is evolving for the planned changes in the largest exhibition center of my country, in Thessaloniki, the 2nd largest city in the country.

It is a complex project that concerns the renovation of an already old exhibition complex in the heart of a historic city.

In the remodeling of a large public space that functions as a reference pole in the city.

In the greening of the buildings, in the improvement of the environmental footprint, in the increase of the public space.

A project that has the support of dozens of public bodies, but as always happens, meets reactions and opposing voices.

It is also wealth, an advantage of Architecture, that it puts social and political, and economic issues on the table, asks questions to the society, and creates new answers.

In this project of the regeneration of the Thessaloniki International Fair, the Technical Chamber of Greece managed to become the architectural competition in collaboration with the UIA.

And we are very happy about this because it helped to gather interest and suggestions from colleagues of many countries. And we hope that this will be seen and in the results of the competition and we would like your help in making the results known and to proceed the planning with a benefit for all.

We know that this is happening in a very difficult conjuncture.

Unprecedented.

That makes the work of all of us difficult.

And it creates new needs and challenges.

Dear friends,

the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented.

But it was not unlikely.

Unfortunately, the governments and many of us, even institutional representatives of scientists' unions, did not take into account the possibility of happening something like this in time.

Even though we had the samples, even though we had the studies.

This should concern all of us a lot.

Mainly the governments.

But also us the scientists.

Because the measures imposed- almost in all countries-influence every act of ours, as professionals.

Our everyday life.

But eventually, they influence even the design.

The design of buildings and spaces.

The architecture itself at the end of the day.

And this is happening without waiting for the government regulatory measures that will surely come at some point.

As an example, measures for better air circulation, and natural ventilation, indoors.

It is happening because the Society needs it.

And we have the tools to make our buildings and spaces safer.

To contribute even more to well-being.

This means more work, emphasis on new knowledge, better solutions.

We have the knowledge and we have the ability.

And we must effectively lead decision-makers and society to make the right choices.

Dear Friends,

To be able to do this job but also our daily work, on which so much depends, architects and engineers need support.

I do not think, that in any country, our colleagues are happy with the support they receive from their governments.

This is because other industries are more affected and gain more support due to the more immediate and dramatic effects - perhaps more obvious - than our profession.

Especially in my country, Greece, I would like to note that in all the lockdowns so far - and they are several, for many months in total - the work of the engineers has never stopped.

The government has explicitly stated that design practices and Construction should continue working on design and infrastructure projects.

To support the economy when other industries are paralyzed.

But this is not easy.

The challenges are many.

And the difficulties are great.

No one is left unaffected.

Collaborations became more difficult. Projects are harder to be done and payments are being delayed.

Because our industry is always intertwined with the overall development.

Some financial support measures are needed. I would like to hear what exactly happened or was planned in your countries.

In my own country, direct financial support has been limited and perhaps ineffective. Many complaints by many, who did not match the requirements. And in the end, there were injustices done.

Most of us have been helped by some measures of suspension of obligations to the state.

But the measures were not enough.

And I am afraid the consequences will be not only the short-term ones, we already see, but also the long-term ones.

That is why I believe we need a development shock as soon as we manage to control the pandemic.

I am not saying anything new.

In the countries of the European Union, an unprecedented program of financial support for projects and activities is planned and scheduled, the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

For my country - but also for others, I believe this is much important.

Because, in the way that it is planned, it emphasizes our own sciences in the end.

So, it will eventually create new jobs and new projects, and, as a result, extra income for the society of engineers.

I believe the same should be done in other countries, at least in those that can afford it financially.

Dear Friends,

Here, I want to emphasize, that recovery from the pandemic should not only be deeply analyzed but should also be related to other needs of the society, in order to improve the social conditions generally.

In this situation, resilience is the dominant criterion.

Resilience to health and safety threats.

Resilience to the effects of climate change.

Resilience to productive model changes.

The resilience of constructions and buildings.

But also social and economic Resilience.

That is why in the EU and in my country as well, we are trying hard to emphasize the field of Sustainability.

For us, a critical tool is the Renovation Wave.

Which has already - in general - been discussed and decided in the EU. And now we are planning the details.

A wave of renovations for buildings that are durable, efficient, safe.

A wave that will give new opportunities for original solutions through design and construction, created by inspired architects and engineers.

A wave that will provide new life to old buildings and infrastructures.

In the end, all the above will help our profession and science to improve not only our lives but also the whole society.

If this is combined with the new design principles, which will connect sustainability with the circular economy, digital transformation, new organizational forms and work habits, new materials, and the whole progress of the 4th Industrial Revolution, we can finally create a miracle.

On the occasion of a tragedy, like the pandemic, let the redemption of a new, better, greener world come.

Tragedy and redemption are concepts that were first offered to the Universe by the ancient Greek civilization, teaching great social values through the art of theater.

I hope that using the universal values as a weapon, we will succeed through cooperation, as we do here in UIA, to face the crisis, and in the end, to come out stronger and better.

The President

Giorgos N. Stasinou