



Intercultural Dialogue via Organizing International Academic Conferences

Guest post by Margarita Kefalaki

My name is Margarita Kefalaki and I hold a doctorate in Intercultural Communication. When I returned to Greece after 8 years study in France, I knew exactly what I would like to do: to communicate and exchange with people from all around the world.

The organization of international academic conferences was a dream come true. This dream became reality with the Communication Institute of Greece (COMinG, <http://coming.gr/>) in 2013. This association was established originally in France in 2003, under another name, but the focus on communication and interaction was always central. Academics, researchers, PhD students and anyone interested in communication, interaction, education, and exchange is welcome to join the association and/or participate in our conferences.

It is true that “...a more interactive and dialogic conference format creates a space for different voices and experiences to be heard, permitting the emergence of long-term networking and friendships” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 3). This is how communication, exchange, and collaborative projects can be created. This is what COMinG is trying to achieve by proposing small conferences and events, where everyone has the time and the occasion to interact.

COMinG is a non-profit association, established to promote research, education and to facilitate communication among academics, communication and management professionals and generally passionate by the communication and its power to educate, from all around the world.

In 2017 (24-27 April) COMinG organized its 3rd Annual International Conference on Communication and Management (ICCM2017), in Athens, Greece. The presenters comprised academics, professors and researchers, communication and management professionals, and PhD students from around the world: 41 papers and 64 presenters, coming from 20 different continents, universities and countries (Denmark, Cyprus, United Arab Emirates, Italy, New Zealand, Turkey, Albania, Greece, Morocco, United Kingdom, Romania, China, India, Croatia, Singapore, France, USA, Taiwan, Poland and Australia). Details are on the conference site (<http://coming.gr/index.php/conferences/>), including the conference program, abstracts, resulting publications, press releases, and future conferences.

Attending conferences is one important element in the work of the academic community. Researchers, professors, and graduate students need presentations in international conferences to acquire feedback on a paper, learn about the work of others, communicate with colleagues from the same or from other disciplines, and exchange ideas (Borghans et al., 2010). Participation in conferences can also help academics ameliorate their Curriculum Vitae, develop new collaborations, and even combine a work trip with vacation time exploring a new location immediately before or after the conference. In fact, the need of participants to combine their scientific activity with relaxation has been identified by researchers (Kefalaki, 2013)

International academic conference location seems to be an important factor in determining attractiveness of scientific conferences (Terzi et al., 2013). The evaluation criteria regarding this factor include: a) infrastructure to meet the needs of both conference organizers and participants (accommodation, food quality, entertainment services, sightseeing opportunities), b) historical and cultural heritage, c) comfortable weather, d) available travel services, e) variety of transportation modes, f) safe destination (free of terrorism, theft and injuries), g) calm local community environment, h) adequate health conditions, and j) the use of English as an international language that can help the participants communicate.

COMinG wishes grow its activities and I hope that one day this association will be able to propose a number of good quality academic conferences in different disciplines. How can someone not feel blessed when such multicultural interaction take place? Thank you for being a part of this!

Best regards,

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