

Dr Fücks, Frau Szabados, distinguished guests

- On behalf of the British Council I am delighted that we once again have the opportunity to cooperate with the Heinrich Böll Stiftung on its conference series covering different aspects of migration.
- This is the 3rd conference in the series. At the last conference, my predecessor as British Council Director, Germany, Michael Bird, spoke of British Council as an organisation which has a history of responding to global challenges of instability, especially in 20th and 21st century Europe.
- This morning I would like to illustrate this role with respect to our contribution to the present conference.
 - We are pleased to have this opportunity to showcase some of our specific activities and network of contacts in the area of migration. This contributes directly to the theme of Intercultural Dialogue which is one of the three major focuses for the British Council's current work.
 - Alongside this we are delighted to contribute through the more conventional means of inviting UK artists to perform as part of the conference programme

I would like to draw your attention to the OPENCities photo exhibition, which is displayed in a digital version on the screens in the foyer.

This contributes an artistic view to discussions about migration which allows us to see the individual behind a large scale phenomenon

The project focuses on cities as the largest receptors of migrants worldwide and as the powerhouses of national economies.

The rationale behind the project is that:

- cities need to internationalise their populations if they want to become or remain economically successful.
- to do this, however, requires a profound overview of cities' actual openness to internationalisation
- and a strong commitment by city authorities and leaders to produce and implement a city strategy for internationalising their population

OPENCities aims to support this process. It will:

Produce a measurement tool that will enable cities to identify their individual strengths and weaknesses in this area, i.e. where action is needed and what they are doing well;

And:

Provide a set of guidelines and best-practice examples on how to tackle those challenges where action is needed

I do commend the exhibition to you. Its message is overwhelmingly positive.

Beyond the exhibition I am very happy that we have been able to invite

Professor Jane Hardy from the University of Hertfordshire, as a contributor to the conference. Jane will explore the examples of the UK and Poland as sending and receiving countries of highly-skilled labour migrants.

I am also delighted that **Shams Asadi** from the City of Vienna, who is heading the Economic Migration Group of the EURO CITIES network, has accepted our invitation. She will provide you with the city perspective on the migration of highly skilled labour and will let you know what is happening in cities throughout Europe. Vienna is one of the participating cities in the OPENCities project and so it should be possible to make connections to the exhibition I have previously described.

Finally, I am delighted that we have, as on previous occasions, managed to secure an artistic contribution to the event from the world of performance poetry. The UK poet and performer, **Zena Edwards**, will provide readings from her work, on stage, at the end of today's proceedings and I urge everyone to stay on to listen to her performance which I know will be stimulating and entertaining.

I would like to close with a word of thanks to **Dr Fücks** and his team at the Heinrich Böll Stiftung for the excellent cooperation we have enjoyed in the planning of this event.

This, in fact, is just one element of the wide range of activities our two organisations have engaged in together. The British Council is always conscious of the fact that we can only deliver our programmes overseas with the support of local partners. The Heinrich Böll Stiftung is one of the most supportive partners we work with locally.

I would especially like to pay tribute to the contribution of **Mekonnen Mesghena** and his colleague **Simonetta Neubert**. In addition to close collaboration over this conference, Mekonnen has served in the capacity of external member of the British Council's Diversity Panel in Germany. We are aware of the strong record of the Foundation in this area and appreciate your willingness to share your thinking with us.

It remains to me to thank all the participants for coming and to wish you an interesting, informative and stimulating two days together.

Patrick Hart

Berlin

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