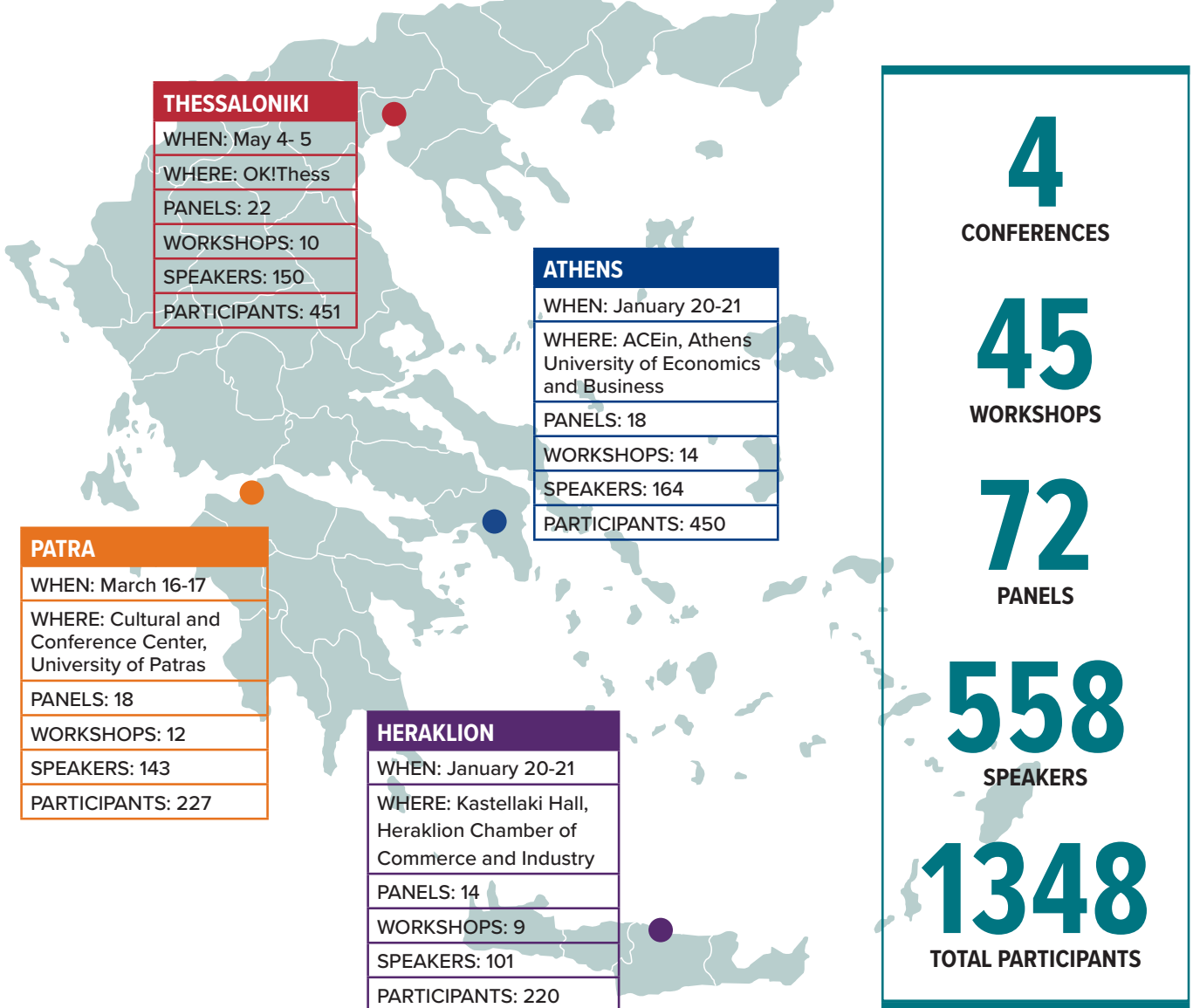


SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN GREECE

In 2023, the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce was the proud co-organizer of NBG Business Seeds' *Innovation in Greece* initiative, a series of highly-focused conferences that set out to map out and support innovation across the country.



Committed to supporting the growth of innovation and entrepreneurship in Greece, the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, through its Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee, joined forces with NBG Business Seeds—a National Bank of Greece program to support innovative startups through education, mentorship, infrastructure, networking and financial support—to co-organize the 2023 Innovation in Greece series of conferences. Held for the fourth consecutive year, the series this year took place between January and May in select locations across Greece: Athens, Heraklion, Patra, and Thessaloniki. With the goal of mapping out the Greek innovation ecosystem, the Innovation in Greece initiative posed and endeavored to

answer key questions: How is innovation implemented in Greece today? Who can benefit? Which sectors of the economy are affected? Which organizations support the effort of teams and companies to innovate? What financing tools are there? What other forms of support are provided? In the aftermath of the pandemic, what is the future outlook?

To this end, the conferences brought together industry stakeholders, business leaders and entrepreneurs, startups, innovators and various experts to share their insights and experience through a range of panel discussions and workshops. The panels explored the Greek innovation ecosystem's potential, the interest and involvement of international companies, and the role of the institutional framework in fostering entrepreneurship in the country,

reflecting on key issues at both the national and local levels. The workshops, in turn, provided a forum for presenting innovation competitions as well as innovation support structures and microfinancing solutions for early stage startups and also examined important topics including: the institutional bodies that support entrepreneurship in Greece, the role of established companies in the development of the innovation ecosystem, the role and activity of the country's universities and research centers in innovation, the impact of international companies in Greece, current initiatives supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, innovation investments, Funds in Growth, and women's entrepreneurship.

The series kicked off in Athens in January, going on to Heraklion and Patra and concluding in Thessaloniki in May.

The successful development of the Greek innovation ecosystem is inextricably tied to initiatives that place the regional dimension at the heart of a comprehensive strategy, in terms of both operations and communication. At the same time, it requires strong partnerships and synergies that can bolster relevant actions and enable the integration of startups into Greek society and the economy while also setting the right tone for outward-looking entrepreneurship. With this in mind, the Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (EIE) Committee of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce joined the National Bank of Greece and an impressive array of institutions in co-organizing the Innovation in Greece and the Bodies that Support It 4.0, a thorough and far-reaching initiative that used Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra and Heraklion as anchor points to unite stakeholders from across the country's innovation ecosystem. In the course of completion of the initiative's substantive events, key questions were raised and

answered: What does innovation mean today in Greece? Who does it concern? Which economic sectors does it involve? Which bodies support innovation? What financing tools are available? What other kinds of support are provided? What is the current situation in the wake of the pandemic and what is the outlook for the time ahead? Meanwhile, targeted workshops, bootcamps, and startup presentations held as part of the respective events painted a vivid picture of the ecosystem's vibrancy and its capacity to meet the demands and requirements of our times. Notably, the dialogue that emerged centered on the idea of total reform, of the kind that acts as a catalyst not only for business but for society as a whole, and also highlighted the significance of establishing a common platform of mutual understanding that will allow us to draw a sustainable roadmap for startups as they navigate the great challenges of tomorrow.

— LITSA PANAYOTOPOULOS, EIE COMMITTEE CHAIR

ATHENS

Innovation in Greece and the Bodies that Support it 4.0

Held on January 20-21, 2023, at the Athens Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ACEin), which is part of the Athens University of Economics and Business, the conference featured 18 panels, 14 workshops and 164 speakers. It was co-organized by NBG Business Seeds, with the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, the Archimedes Center at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUoA), the Athens Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ACEin) at the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUeB), Bayer Hellas, Endeavor Greece, the Hellenic Development Bank of Investments (HDBI), Metavallon, Smart Attica European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), and Uni.fund, and was supported by the Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub.

We are proud to see that an initiative launched by the National Bank of Greece in 2018 has been embraced by national and local bodies and businesses and recognized as the country's foremost hub for innovation-related information and networking. This year's Innovation in Greece conferences in Athens, Thessaloniki, Heraklion, and Patra saw the participation of 1348 people, and 558 speakers from a range of organizations, companies, universities and research centers took part in a total of 72 panels and 45 workshops. Each of the regional conferences further saw the participation of 40-50 key innovation-focused bodies and organizations, whose representatives travelled from Athens to inform and be informed and to get to know the local ecosystems. We'll be starting again in January 2024 with a conference in Athens, organized for the first time by the Demokritos National Center for Scientific Research.

— **SPYROS ARSENI, PH.D.**, HEAD OF BUSINESS INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT - NBG BUSINESS SEEDS; EIE COMMITTEE MEMBER

This initiative's main KPI is the way it is able to bring together innovation and entrepreneurship throughout the country, not only its decisionmaking center, and connect all stakeholders—not just in theory but with active participation.

— **NONDAS SYRRAKOS**, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT ONE9SIX; EIE COMMITTEE MEMBER

HERAKLION, CRETE

Innovation in Crete and the Bodies that Support It 4.0

Held on February 17, 2023, in Kastellaki Hall, at the Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the event featured a total of 14 panels, nine workshops, and 101 speakers and brought together representatives of more than 40 key innovation-focused bodies and organizations that enjoyed the opportunity to network and hold meetings with local organizations. The conference was followed, on February 18-19, by the two-day "Match and Develop a Startup 4.0" bootcamp, which gave research teams and startups the opportunity to present their ideas, compete for prizes, network with and receive feedback from entrepreneurs, executives and fund managers, with one company shortlisted to participate directly in Phase II of NBG Business Seeds' 14th Innovation and Technology Competition. The conference was held in memory of Artemis Saitakis (1954-2021), who served for many years as Head of the Science and Technology Park of Crete (STEP-C), part of the Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH), and was a key figure in the support and promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship in Crete.

Innovation in Crete and the Bodies that Support It 4.0 was co-organized by NBG Business Seeds, with the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, the Archimedes Center at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUoA), the Athens Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ACEin) at the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUeB), Bayer Hellas, the Bizrupt innovation catalyst, Endeavor Greece, FORTH's PRAXI Network, FORTH's Science and Technology Park of Crete (STEP-C), the H2B HUB at the Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Hellenic Development Bank of Investments (HDBI), Metavallon, the Prefecture of Crete, Smart Attica European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), smartHealth EDIH, Uni.fund, and the 4Locals initiative, and was supported by the Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub.

PATRA, PELOPONNESE

Innovation in Western Greece and the Bodies that Support It 3.0

Joining the series for the third year running, the event was held on March 16 and 17, in the context of the Regional Growth Conference, at the University of Patras Cultural and Conference Center; it featured 18 panel discussions, 12 workshops, and 143 speakers, bringing together representatives from 48 key innovation-focused bodies and organizations.

The conference was preceded by a series of online warmup workshops by Orange Grove on March 9-11 and also included a networking cocktail reception. It was followed, on March 18 and 19, by the two-day "Match and Develop a Startup Patras 4.0" bootcamp, which gave research teams and startups the opportunity to discuss their ideas with local entrepreneurs, attend workshops, receive mentoring by fund managers, present their work before a panel of judges, and win prizes awarded by collaborating businesses and organizations; one company was shortlisted to participate directly in Phase II of NBG Business Seeds' 14th Innovation and Technology Competition.

The event was co-organized by NBG Business Seeds, with the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, the Achaia Chamber of Commerce, the Archimedes Center at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUoA), Bayer Hellas, the Hellenic Open University, Metavallon, Mindspace, Orange Grove, Patras IQ, Patras Science Park, PoS4Work, the Prefecture of Western Greece, Smart Attica European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), the University of Patras, the University of the Peloponnese, and Uni.fund, and was supported by the Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub.

The Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee plays a vital role in the Greek innovation ecosystem. It promotes the development of new ideas, encourages creativity, and facilitates innovative entrepreneurship. It serves as a coordination and support mechanism, promoting stakeholder cooperation, expertise sharing, contacts, and networking to create the necessary conditions for the successful development of innovative ideas.

— **PANAGIOTIS KETIKIDIS, PH.D.**, CHAIR OF THESSALONIKI INNOVATION ZONE; MEMBER OF THE BOARD AND CHAIR OF ADVOCACY, PUBLIC POLICY, RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP AT THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS ANGELS NETWORK (EBAN); CHAIR OF THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH CENTER (SEERC); CO-FOUNDER OF THE HELLENIC BUSINESS ANGELS NETWORK (HEBAN); EXPERT EVALUATOR FOR THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL (EIC); EIE COMMITTEE MEMBER

The high participation rates demonstrate the added value that these events bring to the Greek innovation ecosystem and to the creation of an excellent Panhellenic pool of innovative ideas and an extensive network of experienced executives from institutional bodies, renowned businesses, and Greek universities. After all, only the collaboration of all these entities can accelerate innovation in a rapidly changing environment.

— **SONIA MOUSAVERE**, HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, BAYER HELLAS

THESSALONIKI

Innovation in Northern Greece and The Bodies That Support It 4.0

Held on May 4 and 5, 2023, at OK!Thess in Thessaloniki, the conference featured a total of 22 panels, ten workshops, and 150 speakers, bringing together representatives of more than 55 key innovation-focused bodies and organizations, who took advantage of the opportunity to network and hold meetings with the local innovation and startup entrepreneurship ecosystem. The conference was followed, on May 6 and 7, by a two-day "Match and Develop a Startup Thess 5.0" bootcamp, which gave research teams and startups the opportunity to present and discuss their ideas, participate in workshops, and receive tips from leading fund managers, as well as to compete for prizes, with one company shortlisted to participate directly in Phase II of NBG Business Seeds' 14th Innovation and Technology Competition.

The event was co-organized by NBG Business Seeds, with the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, Alexander Innovation Zone, the Archimedes Center at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUoA), the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Athens Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ACEin) at the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB), Bayer Hellas, the Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH), the Hellenic Development Bank of Investments, Metavallon, the Municipality of Thessaloniki, OK!Thess, Smart Attica European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), TECS Capital, and Uni.fund, and was supported by the Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub.