Asia-Europe Meeting

ASEM Education

STOCKTAKING REPORT 2026

"From Valletta to Bohol"

Initiatives connecting Asia and Europe between 2024 and 2026 and beyond

drafted by the ASEM Education Secretariat (hosted at CIMEA in Rome, Italy)
with inputs from Asia-Europe Meeting countries and stakeholders

Asia-Europe Meeting the ASEM Education Secretariat

CIMEA

Version as of 21 November 2026

Table of Contents

Preface 2

1. Background 3

2. ASEM Education Secretariat and Expert Groups 5

2.1. The ASEM Education Secretariat – Italian mandate 5

2.2. Expert Group 1 on Sustainable Development Goals & Education 9

2.3. Expert Group 2 on Recognition & Balanced Mobility 12

2.4. Expert Group 3 on Lifelong Learning & TVET 14

2.5. Expert Group 4 on Digitalisation & Artificial Intelligence 16

3. ASEM Partners: Ongoing and Future ASEM Education Initiatives and Projects 19

3.1. ASEM Education Compendium of Country Profiles 19

3.2. Austria 20

3.3. Belgium Flemish Community 20

3.4. Belgium French Community 21

3.5. Cyprus 22

3.6. Estonia 24

3.7. European Commission 27

3.8. Finland 28

3.9. Hungary 32

3.10. Italy 33

3.11. Latvia 35

3.12. Lithuania 37

3.13. Philippines 38

3.14. Spain 43

3.15. Thailand 44

4. ASEM Stakeholders: Ongoing and Future ASEM Education Initiatives and Projects 48

4.1. Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) 48

4.2. ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme 77

4.3. ASEM Work Placement Programme (ASEM WPP) 79

4.4. ASEM AEI Summer School – Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) 80

4.5. ASEAN University Network (AUN) 87

4.6. Erasmus Student Network (ESN) 90

4.7. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) 92

4.8. European Training Foundation (ETF) 94

4.9. European University Association (EUA) 97

4.10. SEAMEO RIHED 98

4.11. UNESCO 100

4.12. UNESCO-UNEVOC 101

5. International Projects and Initiatives 103

5.1. Global Inventory of Regional and National QFs by Cedefop-ETF-UNESCO-UNESCO-UIL 103

5.2. EU–ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education (SCOPE-HE) 104

5.3. MicroCASA 107

5.4. Q-ENTRY Database 109

6. Conclusions and Outlook 110

6.1. Main Conclusions of the Stocktaking Report 110

6.2. Call for Involvement and Commitment 113

Preface

The ASEM Education Secretariat, currently hosted at CIMEA in Rome, Italy, is herewith presenting the **ASEM Education Stocktaking Report 2026 'From Valletta to Bohol'** which collects the activities, outcomes and progress of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) between the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9), held on 25-26 January 2024 in Floriana/Valletta, Malta, and the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10) which is held on 25-26 November 2026 in Panglao/Bohol, the Philippines.

The ASEM Education Process has the ambition to offer an effective and sustainable platform for dialogue and cooperation in (higher) education between Europe and Asia. This edition of the Stocktaking Report is results-oriented and shall support the ASEM Education Process in identifying synergies and promoting coherence between initiatives to make better use of resources and further build on existing outcomes. It should raise awareness on activities, initiatives and projects taking place within the ASEM Education Process, also to other networks.

Italy has taken over the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) in July 2022 and has since then coordinated the work of four Expert Groups, co-organised six (Intermediate) Senior Officials' Meetings and two Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9 and ASEMME10); and is since then ensuring coherence between the various projects and initiatives by being in regular communication with ASEM partners and stakeholders. In addition, the AES is representing the ASEM Education Process (AEP) during international events.

About the Structure of this Report

In this Stocktaking Report, after giving some background information, we will first report on the activities carried out by the ASEM Education Secretariat and the four ASEM Education Expert Groups and will then give space to initiatives and projects carried out by the ASEM partners and stakeholders. We will showcase some international projects connecting Asia and Europe to give information and inspiration to our readers. The report finishs with some conclusions and an outlook on the next two years.

This Stocktaking Report should be considered as a working instrument to further develop existing initiatives and plan future activities and projects. Hyperlinks are embedded throughout this report to allow the interested reader to get access to more comprehensive information and relevant documents or websites.

The Secretariat wishes you an interesting reading and hopes that it will inspire you to further develop and strengthen Asia-Europe collaboration in education in the upcoming years.

Prof. Luca Lantero, Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat Italy
and Vera Lucke, Executive Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat Italy

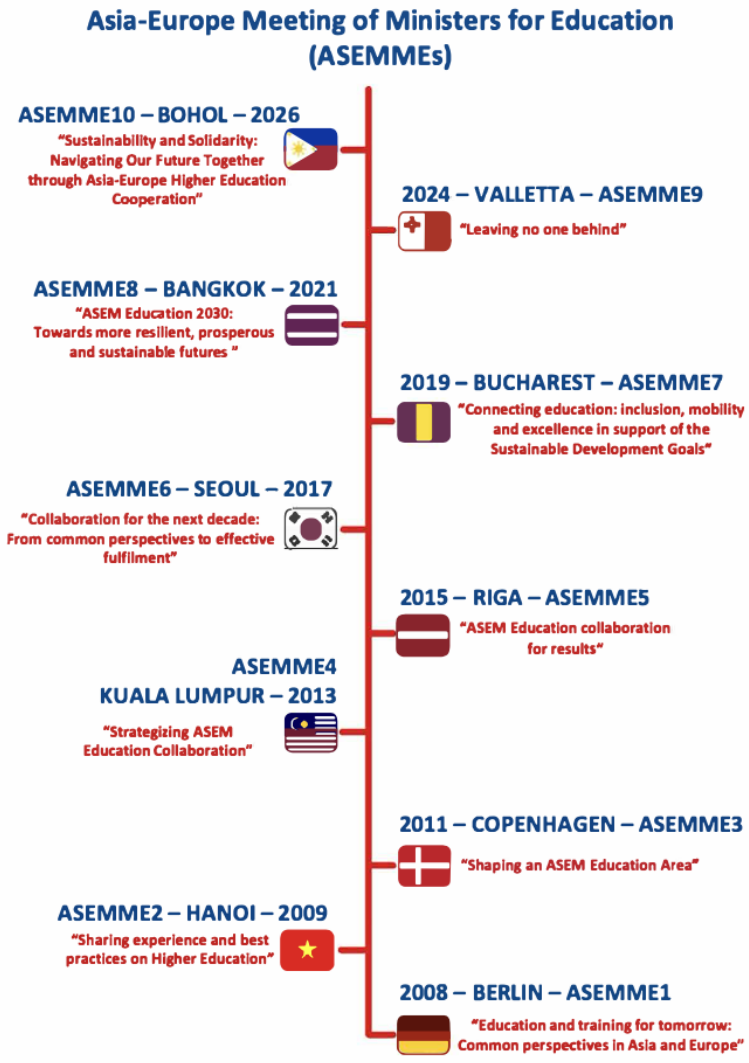
1. Background

The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** was established in Bangkok (Thailand) during 1996 as an intergovernmental forum for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe in the political, economic, and social, cultural and educational areas. ASEM's strength is the informality at the very highest level: **mutual exchange of views and understanding between the two regions.**

ASEM has 53 partners: **51 partner countries** (21 from Asia and 30 from Europe) and **two institutional partners** (the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat) and a number of stakeholders.

In 2006 during the ASEM Summit held in Helsinki, ASEM leaders stressed the value of dialogue and exchange of best practices on questions related to education and training, leading to the establishment of **regular Asia-Europe Meetings of Ministers for Education (ASEMMEs)** as a logical consequence. The first ASEMME took place in Berlin, Germany in 2008 and it established the beginning of the ASEM Education Process (AEP). Education Ministers of ASEM partner countries together with the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat gather during Ministerial Meetings (ASEMME) every two years to set the political and practical ASEM Education Process agenda. Before every Ministerial Meeting, Senior Officials and experts from ASEM stakeholders meet at one Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (**ISOM**) and at two Senior Officials' Meetings (**SOM1** and **SOM2**) to discuss activities and possibilities for cooperation.

The Asia-Europe Meetings of Ministers for Education (ASEMMEs) held to date took place in Berlin, Germany (ASEMME1, 2008), Hanoi, Vietnam (ASEMME2, 2009), Copenhagen, Denmark (ASEMME3, 2011), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (ASEMME4, 2013), Riga, Latvia (ASEMME5, 2015), Seoul, Republic of Korea (ASEMME6, 2017), Bucharest, Romania (ASEMME7, 2019), Bangkok, Thailand (ASEMME8, online 2021) and in Valletta, Malta (ASEMME9, 2024). **ASEM Ministers for (Higher) Education will be meeting for the 10th time (ASEMME10) on 25-26 November 2026 in Bohol, the Philippines.**



Since the first Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education in Berlin (2008), topics related to higher education have been the centre of interest and discussions in the ASEM Education Process. During ASEMME3 in Copenhagen (2011), Ministers agreed on **four thematic priorities** for the ASEM Education Process: **Quality Assurance and Recognition; Engaging Business and Industry in Education; Balanced Mobility; and Lifelong Learning including TVET**.

With ASEMME7 in 2019 the two transversal themes "Digitalisation", as it creates opportunities to support connectivity and collaboration between Asia and Europe; and "Sustainable Development" to enhance the implementation of the SDG4 to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, were introduced.



To make the ASEM Education Process more structured, Ministers endorsed at ASEMME8 in 2021 the ASEM Education Strategy for 2030 to provide a framework for collaboration with common objectives to encourage international exchanges, share good practices, help partners cope with similar issues and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

All Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education are organised by the ASEM Education Secretariat in collaboration with the host country. The Secretariat is at the heart of the ASEM Education community, it contributes to institutional memory and coherence between initiatives to avoid duplication and ensures communication. Asian and European countries take turns hosting the Secretariat on a voluntary basis to guarantee the continuity of the ASEM Education Process.

The ASEM Education Secretariat prepares a Stocktaking Report for every Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME) to collect current and future initiatives and projects connecting Asia and Europe in education and to show the variety of activities going on. All ASEM partners and stakeholders are called to contribute to the stocktaking by reporting on their activities.

2. ASEM Education Secretariat and Expert Groups

The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) is hosted at CIMEA in Rome, Italy, since July 2022 and in this period the ASEM community continued working on their projects to foster cooperation on specific topics. Germany was the first host of the AES (2008-2013), followed by Indonesia (2013-2017) and Belgium (2017-2021). Calls to find a new Asian host for the AES were sent out in the first half of 2026 and as no candidates have been found, the search will be intensified after ASEMME10.

During the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting held in November 2022 in Malta, three new Expert Groups (EGs) on **Sustainable Development Goals & Education** (Expert Group 1), on **Recognition & Balanced Mobility** (Expert Group 2), and on **Lifelong Learning & TVET** (Expert Group 3) were established. The Expert Group on Digitalisation, whose work started in 2019, continued its work with new members joining and was renamed to Expert Group 4 on **Digitalisation & Artificial Intelligence** during the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) held in Bangkok in November 2024. If possible, the EGs have one Co-chair from an Asian country and one from a European country to guarantee geographical balance and to enhance weighted discussion and leadership. At ASEMME9 held in Malta in January 2024 the Ministers confirmed that all four EGs should continue their work at least until ASEMME10. All EGs have held several online and some in-person meetings to enhance peer learning and discussions on relevant topics and cooperation between Asia and Europe. All groups were encouraged to hold public webinars to raise awareness for the ASEM Education Process and to disseminate their work.

2.1. The ASEM Education Secretariat – Italian mandate

Education is the only sector of ASEM that has a Secretariat. The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) has proved to be one of the cornerstones of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) since its establishment during ASEMME2 in 2009 when ASEM Ministers for Education agreed to establish a rotating secretariat in which countries in Asia and Europe take turns to host the AES on a voluntary basis. Germany was the first host of the AES (2008-2013), followed by Indonesia (2013-2017) and Belgium (2017-2021). In July 2022 Italy took over the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES), hosted by CIMEA (Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence) based in Rome.

Concerning the main achievements of the current ASEM Education Secretariat, the AES has co-organised the SOM2 and 9th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9) in Malta in January 2024 together with the Maltese Minister for Education and Sport, Hon. Dr. Clifton Grima, and the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. The Conference brought together around 100 participants from Asia and Europe and featured keynote speeches on Artificial Intelligence and Innovative Learning Methods as well as four Ministers' roundtables on SDGs & Education, Recognition & Balanced Mobility, Lifelong Learning & TVET and Digitalisation.





The following Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) took place on 18-19 November 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand, hosted by the Thai Ministries of Education (MOE) and of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) under the theme "Navigating the Digital Age: Lifelong Learning and Future Skills for a Hybrid World". This meeting started the thematic preparations for ASEMME10 and the participants followed a keynote speech on how digital transformation is redefining education and lifelong learning, gave updates on their initiatives and projects and participated in three workshops.



On 18-19 November 2025 the 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) was held in Bucharest, Romania, hosted by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research and the Erasmus+ National Agency. At SOM1 we had keynote speeches outlining regional and interregional cooperation processes, all Expert Groups reported, the participants discussed in breakout sessions on lifelong learning, micro-credentials and mobility and many ASEM partners and stakeholders gave updates on their initiatives and projects.

Between these high-level policy gatherings, the ASEM Education Secretariat supported all four Experts Groups in their communications, meetings and activities, providing online meeting spaces and technical assistance. It constantly updated the lists of Senior Officials, national contact points and stakeholder contacts, ensuring effective communication across the ASEM Education community. The Secretariat also maintained regular contact with individual countries and stakeholders to follow up on their activities, and represented ASEM Education at international conferences and meetings, enhancing the visibility of the Process.

The AES has also worked – together with the Expert Group on Recognition & Balanced Mobility – on the improvement and promotion of the previously initiated ASEM Education Compendium of Country Profiles (see also chapter 3.1). Some more countries have uploaded their full profiles, and some countries have updated their information. Further efforts are necessary to enhance and disseminate this useful instrument.



In June 2024 the Secretariat received at its premises in Rome a visit from Dr. Keuk-Je Sung, Director General of the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme Secretariat and strengthened cooperation and engagement with the programme and with ASEM-DUO as one of the most active stakeholders. Ms. Vera Lucke, Executive Director

the of ASEM Education Secretariat, visited the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in January 2025 to speak about further cooperation and especially the further development of the Expert Group in Digitalisation (& Artificial Intelligence). In February 2026, the AES visited the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in Singapore, deepening dialogue on projects, future initiatives, possible cooperations and further developments. ASEF is the only permanent institution of ASEM.

The ASEM Education Secretariat participated in the on-site events of ASEFInnoLab5 (ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory) in Shanghai in October 2024 and ASEFInnoLab6 in Košice, Slovakia, in December 2025 contributing to policy panels and the connected hybrid meetings of the Expert Group on Digitalisation (& Artificial Intelligence). Mr. Luca Lantero, the Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat, contributed as speaker to a webinar of the 10th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC10) on whether transnational education is bringing more opportunities or risks in ensuring balanced mobility of people and knowledge. The Executive Director participated in-person in a Policy Dialogue of ARC10 with the theme "Reimagining SDGs and Education Post-2030" in Romania in November 2025 and the connected meeting of the Expert Group on SDGs & Education. The ARC is the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEMME).

The Secretariat has participated with an opening speech in the Global Lifelong Learning Week and ASEM LLL Hub Conference on 27-29 May 2024 in Cork, Ireland. It was a good occasion to meet other actors involved in the ASEM Education Process and to engage more in one of the main priority areas, namely Lifelong Learning and TVET. The AES has always participated in the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub's Council of Research Network Coordinators Meetings and has held several online meetings with the ASEM LLL Hub's Research Networks Coordinators and Regional Centres in 2026. The ASEM Education Secretariat participated at and held an ASEM Education Roundtable at the 20th PASCAL Learning Cities Conference held in Pécs, Hungary on 24-26 September 2026, a forum bringing together researchers from Asia, Europe and beyond, where a number of researchers involved in the ASEM LLL Hub were also present.





In November 2024, the ASEM Education Secretariat held a panel on "Recognition of Qualifications, Digital Solutions and Artificial Intelligence" together with UNESCO at the SEAMEO RIHED 2024 Inter-Regional Research Symposium (IRRS) under the theme "Transforming Higher Education: Towards Sustainable Development".

The MicroCASA project involved the ASEM Education Secretariat in October 2024 (in Manila, the Philippines) and February 2026 (in Penang, Malaysia) in conferences on Micro-credentials in Higher and Vocational Education of Southeast Asia involving the Executive Director in panels, discussions and the drafting of a white paper.

The ASEM Education Secretariat participated as stakeholder in the ENIC-NARIC Annual Joint Meetings in June 2024 in Naples, Italy, in May 2025 in Tirana, Albania, and in May 2026 in Athens, Greece, to foster visibility of ASEM and strengthen cooperation and synergies with these important networks advancing recognition and enhanced transparency.

Ms. Vera Lucke, Executive Director the of ASEM Education Secretariat, held an opening speech at the AEI-ASEM Summer School 2026 held in August in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, under the theme "Smart Diplomacy and Sustainable Futures: Artificial Intelligence in Asia-Europe Relations" explaining the ASEM Education Process and its activities and welcoming the participating students from Asian and European countries.

On 17-18 November 2026, the ASEM Education Secretariat is going to participate in the Global Gateway initiative's "ASEAN–EU Workshop on Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Strengthening Recognition, Mobility and Trust through Regional Frameworks" taking place in Bangkok Thailand with a contribution to the discussion panel on "Stakeholder Participation, Higher Education Institutions and Public Transparency".

Following the recommendations listed in the Conclusions by the Chair from ASEMME9 and previous Chair's Conclusions as well as Stocktaking Reports, the ASEM Education Secretariat invested efforts in publishing ASEM events and activities on the ASEM Education website and on the social media profiles, especially on LinkedIn, to best promote and to enhance the visibility of the ASEM Education Process. More work on better communication needs to be and will be done, the website will be improved together with the communication on social media. Also announcements via e-mail will be enhanced in the months to come.

Preparatory meetings with CHED in Manila in October 2024 and authorities in Bohol in June 2026



Since October 2024, when the first physical meeting at the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines took place, the AES directed its efforts towards the organisation of the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting and the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10), to be held between 23 and 27 November 2026 in Bohol, the Philippines. These events, hosted by CHED, the Provincial Government of Bohol and the Bohol Island State University, mark the end of this 2 years-cycle of the ASEM Process and start the new cycle until 2028.

2.2.Expert Group 1 on Sustainable Development Goals & Education

Co-chairs	Mr. Adam Liwak, Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), **Malta**
	Ms. Duriya Amatavivat, Ministry of Education, **Thailand**
	Ms. Réka Tózsa, Asia-Europe Foundation (**ASEF**)
23 ASEM Partners	Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium Flemish Community, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, European Commission, Estonia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Slovakia, Thailand, Viet Nam.
8 Stakeholders	AEI, ASEF, ESN, ESU, EUA, IAU, SEAMEO RIHED, UNESCO

Background

Sustainable Development was introduced as one of the two transversal themes within the ASEM Education Process in 2019 to complement the four priority areas. The Expert Group (EG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education was established in 2022 with Thailand and Malta as Co-Chairs. ASEF joined as a third co-chair after ISOM of ASEMME10 in November 2024. The number of participating ASEM partners and stakeholders has grown in this period, which shows that this group addresses issues of great interest.

The mandate of this EG on SDGs & Education is to:

- Strengthen collaboration in SDGs by identifying, sharing, and promoting good practice concerning the implementation of SDGs in education at national, regional, interregional and local level, particularly the SDG4 Quality Education.
- Address the issue of diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) in (higher) education by exchanging good practice, strategies, targets and measuring approaches among members.
- Support values, skills and learning, as well as collaboration related to Global Citizenship Education in Asia and Europe.
- Foster dialogue on SDGs in education with specific regard to the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process - Quality Assurance and Recognition, Engaging Business and Industry in Education, Balanced Mobility, Lifelong Learning including TVET.
- Promote peer learning among the appointed experts of both regions.
- Complement the work of other ASEM expert groups by providing expertise in the field of SDGs.

Summary of activities since ASEMME9:

- **Meeting on 26 March 2025: Setting the Direction for ASEMME10**

This meeting hosted education stakeholders and representatives from ASEM member countries to develop a comprehensive Work Plan and Terms of Reference covering the EG's work up until the 10th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10). The virtual session brought together policymakers, academic leaders, and international organisation representatives to define priorities for enhancing cross-regional cooperation in education. The EG identified topics of strategic interest to be tackled in its upcoming meetings.



- Meeting on 22 May 2025: Rethinking Educational Equity

The second meeting of the EG in 2025 was centred on the theme "Rethinking Educational Equity: From Access to Real Inclusion." The session featured stage-setting presentations from selected partner and stakeholder organisations, showcasing how they addressed barriers to accessible and equitable education within their specific contexts. These inputs provided a foundation for deeper discussions on tackling disparities across macro-regional, national, and institutional levels. Discussions touched upon selected areas of interest for the group, such as strategies for mobilising and creating funding sources to promote equitable education for all and good practices for developing inclusive policies in higher education.





- Meeting on 10 September 2025: Learning Cities of the Future

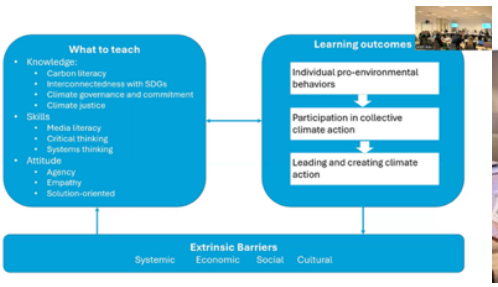
The third meeting was conducted jointly between the EG and the Expert Group on Lifelong Learning and TVET (EG3) under the theme "Learning Cities of the Future: Building Inclusive and Equitable Learning." The session explored how Learning Cities can foster green and digital transitions, support reskilling and upskilling across all age groups, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning. Discussions also examined how urban learning ecosystems can help identify and prioritise new skills for the post-2030 agenda, strengthen foundational learning, and expand access to alternative pathways such as micro-credentials. The meeting strengthened synergies between the two groups, providing cross-sectoral dialogue and collaborative discussions on approaches to shaping future education agendas.

- Meeting on 20 November 2025: Reimagining SDGs and Education Post-2030



For its last session of the year, the EG1 convened its first hybrid meeting focused on "Reimagining Education and Sustainable Development Post-2030," at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Romania. The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), as one of the co-chairs of the EG, was pleased to host this meeting as part of its 10th Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC10) Policy Dialogue, which was held as a side event to the ASEM Education 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1). Bringing together 30 experts to engage in thought-provoking discussions, the session explored the future of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) beyond 2030. Four expert presentations offered practical and forward-looking perspectives on universities' contributions to the SDGs, sustainability and greening in higher education, and transformative approaches to education.







- Meeting on 25 March 2026: GCED and Civic Engagement: From Learning to Action in a Connected World

The EG convened its first meeting of the year to focus on "GCED and Civic Engagement: From Learning to Action in a Connected World." Spearheaded by Ms Duriya Amatavivat, one of the EG co-chairs representing the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for Sustainability (SEPS), the session brought together educators and practitioners from Asia and Europe to explore how Global Citizenship Education (GCED) can translate learning into meaningful civic action. Through expert presentations, regional case studies, and interactive discussions, key themes surfaced which included connecting local community initiatives with global challenges, promoting inclusive and ethical civic participation, and identifying opportunities for stronger Asia-Europe cooperation in advancing GCED and civic engagement.

- Meeting on 9 June 2026: Opportunities and Challenges: Inclusion, Access, and Autonomy with AI in Higher Education

The EG convened an online joint session with the Expert Group on Digitalisation and AI (EG4) titled "Opportunities and Challenges: Inclusion, Access, and Autonomy with AI in Higher Education." Spearheaded by Dr Adam Liwak, one of the EG co-chairs representing the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), the meeting brought together experts and stakeholders from Asia and Europe to explore the responsible integration of AI in higher education. Through expert presentations and interactive discussions, participants examined AI literacy, equitable access, student autonomy, institutional readiness, and governance. Key takeaways emphasised strengthening institutional capacity, developing students' critical thinking and independent judgement, ensuring equitable access to AI tools and skills, and balancing technological innovation with ethical safeguards and human oversight.

The work carried out within this Expert Group proved highly productive, with members benefiting from valuable peer learning and the exchange of good practices. Building on this positive experience, the group expresses its wish to continue its activities into the next working period.

2.3.Expert Group 2 on Recognition & Balanced Mobility

Co-chairs	Dr. Pankaj Mittal, Association of Indian Universities (AIU), **India** Mr. Giannandrea Guglielmi, CIMEA, **Italy**
26 ASEM Partners	Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, New Zealand, Romania, Thailand, Vietnam
9 Stakeholders	ASEF, Asia-Europe Institute, ASEM-DUO Secretariat, ESN, ESU, EUA, IAU, SEAMEO RIHED, UNESCO Bangkok

The Expert Group on Recognition and Balanced Mobility was established at the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) in November 2022 and the group met five times online since ASEMME9.

Objectives

In response to the priorities of the ASEM Education Process, the overall goal of the activities undertaken by the Expert Group on Recognition and Balanced Mobility is to foster dialogue and promote mutual understanding, transparency and cooperation between Asian and European counterparts through systematic exchange of information and closer cooperation. The Expert Group agreed that this goal can be achieved through promoting peer learning among the Asian and European counterparts, including the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC) and the European Network of Information Centres – National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC-NARIC), while sharing the experience on the existing conventions on recognition, such as the Global Convention on Recognition, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Tokyo Convention, further improving information resources like the ASEM Education Compendium of Country Profiles (see also chapter 3.1), and sharing and promoting good practices through joint activities and presentations.

Activities, Meetings and Themes for Discussion

In the year 2024, 2025 and 2026, the expert group held the following online meetings:

- 7th Meeting on 3 April 2024, online: Updates and Setting the new work plan

This meeting brought together the members of this Expert Group to decide the work plan and further development of the group after the last Ministerial Conference (ASEMME9). All members updated on their activities, an update of the Compendium and the group decided to further discuss good practice on priorities, like balanced mobility, automatic recognition, and peer learning.

- 8th Meeting on 18 September 2025, online: ASEM Education Priority Balanced Mobility

During this meeting three important ASEM initiatives enhancing balanced mobility were presented: 1. The ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme (established in 2001) which is organising pairing-based exchanges of students, professors and researchers, and has supported close to 5,000 participants; 2. The Flemish ASEM Work Placement Programme (started 2019), offering traineeship scholarships in all Asian ASEM countries to students in Belgium Flemish community via two annual calls; and 3. The Asia-Europe Institute Summer School at the University of Malaya (running since 2015) bringing together students from Asia and Europe each summer in Malaysia.

The participants were very interested in these programmes, could ask questions and spoke about similar opportunities in their countries.

- 9th Meeting on 29 October 2025, online: Automatic Recognition

The Expert Group members listened to an introductory presentation on automatic recognition, covering its definition under the 2018 EU Council Recommendation, the distinction between "access" and "admission", the importance of verification of authenticity, the historical development since the 1990s (Lisbon Recognition Convention, Bologna Process), and four models of automatic recognition (legal bilateral/multilateral agreements, unilateral lists, non-legal collaborative agreements, and de facto recognition). Three country presentations followed: Lithuania presented the legal treaty-based approach, including the Benelux and Baltic treaties and the multilateral Baltic-Benelux Automatic Recognition Treaty (signed 2021, effective 2024), and introduced the "Argo Online" comparability tool launched in June 2025. Italy presented CIMEA's ARDI - Automatic Recognition Database, launched in 2023, covering over 450 qualifications from 55 Lisbon Recognition Convention signatory countries and the EU-level policy context (Tirana Communiqué, Bologna Process Implementation Report) and projects including the Q-ENTRY database, the EHEA's Thematic Peer Group on the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the EHEA Qualifications Table, and the ADREN/MAREN networks. Latvia described the Baltic projects the OCTRA2 project on online course catalogues, the "ARAQUA/ ARAQUA2 - Road to Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Access Qualifications" projects on secondary access. The participants discussed different approaches to Automatic Recognition and its terminology.

- 10th Meeting on 22 September 2026, online: Presentation of (Higher) Education Systems

During this meeting the (Higher) Education Systems of New Zealand, Estonia and Lao PDR were presented by the respective country's representatives. This meeting was a good occasion to speak about the utility of the Compendium, and the EG members had the possibility to ask questions and to discuss similarities and differences of the systems.

- 11th Meeting on 21 October 2026, online: Internationalisation of Indian Higher Education

This Expert Group meeting focused on the internationalisation of higher education in India. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, includes multidisciplinarity, flexible degree structures, and new internationalization pathways such as foreign university campuses and joint/dual degree arrangements. The speakers provided data on India's enrolment and mobility targets and traced the historical development of internationalization policy up to NEP 2020's four mobility types and supporting frameworks. The detailed regulatory frameworks governing twinning, joint, and dual degree programs were presented, together with eligibility criteria for Indian and foreign universities, regulations for technical institutions, and the International Branch Campus framework, clarifying that quality assurance requirements differ across arrangement types. The participants had the possibility to ask questions and appreciated the deep dive into the Indian system.

In all these years, considerable attention was paid to the importance of the ASEM Compendium, as a comprehensive collection of the information on all higher education systems represented within the ASEM Education Process. All countries were regularly reminded to update the information on their country pages and new country profiles could be added.

The work within this Expert Group was productive and peer learning and exchange of good practise was a positive experience for the members. The group would like to continue its works also in the next working period.

2.4.Expert Group 3 on Lifelong Learning & TVET

Chair	**ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub Secretariat** (University College Cork, Ireland) until November 2025
13 ASEM Partners	Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Romania, Spain, Thailand
5 Stakeholders	ESU, ETF, EUA, UNESCO-UNEVOC, UNESCO

Lifelong Learning including TVET is one of the four thematic priorities of the ASEM Education Process and this Expert Group committed to promoting peer learning among Asian and European partners and stakeholders to exchange best examples in the two regions. It is an active forum where intention can be shared, and people-to-people connectivity is strengthened.

Activities and Meetings:

- Meeting on 12 June 2025: Reimagining Workforce Development

This meeting brought together the members of this Expert Group to exchange updates and decide on the future work plan and further development. The main part of the meeting featured a presentation by three co-authors of a joint paper comparing workforce development approaches in Europe, Singapore, and the United States. Dr. Lyndsey El Amoud (University College Cork) outlined Europe's evolving lifelong learning policy landscape — from the 2010 EU vision through the 2020 Skills Agenda and 2021 Action Plan — highlighting stark disparities in adult learning participation across member states and advocating for a shift from a "Union of Skills" to a broader "Union of Lifelong Learning." Dr. Renee Tan (IAL, Singapore) presented Singapore's centralized SkillsFuture movement on its 10th anniversary, underscoring individual agency, skills frameworks, and multi-stakeholder engagement, while acknowledging challenges related to cultural attitudes, an ageing population, and systemic rigidity. Dr. Annalisa Raymer (Cornell University) described the fragmented US adult education system and shared a New York case study illustrating how overly restrictive eligibility criteria prompted educators to establish an independent, inclusive programme called "Open Doors English." Renee Tan concluded with a comparative analysis of the three governance models, identifying shared challenges around equity and access, and calling for more comprehensive, flexible, and locally responsive lifelong learning frameworks. Following the presentations, the participants reflected on themes of urgency, the importance of "learning to learn," and the balance between systemic rigidity and agility, after which questions were raised on the shift from employment-focused to holistic lifelong learning approaches, and on enablers and barriers to accelerating pace of change in lifelong learning systems, and on reconciling the "Union of Lifelong Learning" concept with the EU's ongoing Union of Skills work, emphasizing individual agency, equity-focused funding, and shifting from "learning for earning" to "learning for living".

- Meeting on 10 September 2025: Learning Cities of the Future

This meeting was conducted jointly between this EG and the Expert Group on SDGs & Education (EG1) under the theme “Learning Cities of the Future: Building Inclusive and Equitable Learning.” The session explored how Learning Cities can foster green and digital transitions, support reskilling and upskilling across all age groups, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning. Discussions also examined how urban learning ecosystems can help identify and prioritise new skills for the post-2030 agenda, strengthen foundational learning, and expand access to alternative pathways such as micro-credentials. The meeting strengthened synergies between the two groups, providing cross-sectoral dialogue and collaborative discussions on approaches to shaping future education agendas.

- Workshop at ISOM (Bangkok, Thailand) on 19 November 2024: Five Key Steps for Lifelong Learning in a Knowledge Based Economy: Learning Capital Accumulation in Context

Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama, the Chair of this Expert Group, held a workshop challenging the traditional, linear view of lifelong learning and skills acquisition — one that mirrors conventional formal education, where learners progressively ascend a ladder from basic literacy and numeracy all the way to advanced qualifications such as a PhD or a medical degree. He outlined that learning is a far more complex and dynamic process, characterised by numerous interdependencies: at any given point, individuals are simultaneously acquiring knowledge and skills that span a wide range of levels and categories. With this in mind, the group explored how people gain, accumulate, and build upon our learning through the lens of five interconnected capitals: seed capital, identity capital, cultural capital, social capital, and human capital. Each of these contributes to an individual's overall knowledge and skills portfolio, and together they are mutually reinforcing and essential for full participation in a knowledge-based economy. The concepts and frameworks examined during this workshop offer valuable insights for policymakers, administrators, educators, and learners alike, providing a more holistic and impactful foundation for the design and delivery of lifelong learning, TVET, and skills development programmes. Further information, the presentation and minutes are accessible here.

- Workshop at SOM1 (Bucharest, Romania) on 18 November 2025: Lifelong Learning with a focus on Micro-credentials

Moderated by Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama, the Chair of this Expert Group, the session provided participants with a framework to discuss and exchange experiences and practices in skills development and lifelong learning with a focus on short, flexible study formats such as Micro-credentials. The participants discussed how three different countries, namely Ireland, Malaysia and Viet Nam apply micro-credentials as one instrument of lifelong learning. Further information, presentations and minutes are accessible here.

As the activities of this Expert Group are overlapping with the initiatives of the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub and ASEM LLL Hub's International Advisory Council (IAC) composed by ASEM Ministries and stakeholders, it was hard to find new (co-)chairs for this group and it would be advisable to continue the discussions arising from this group between ASEM partners and stakeholders within these mentioned fora instead.

2.5.Expert Group 4 on Digitalisation & Artificial Intelligence

Chair	**Germany** (German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD))
20 ASEM Partners	Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Denmark, European Commission, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Thailand
12 Stakeholders	ASEAN Secretariat, ASEF, ENQA, EQAR, ESN, ESU, ETF, EUA, IAU, SEAMEO RIHED, UNESCO-UNEVOC, UNESCO

Digitalisation was introduced as one of the two transversal themes within the ASEM Education Process in 2019 to complement the four priority areas. The Expert Group (EG) Digitalisation was established in the same year and was renamed EG Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in 2024.

Objectives

The objective of the Expert Group is to foster dialogue on the potential of digitalisation in (higher) education with specific regard to the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process as well as the Sustainable Development Goals through peer learning activities among the appointed experts of both regions for example. Collaboration and connectivity are to be strengthened by identifying, sharing and promoting good practices of digitally enhanced education cooperation between Asia and Europe. The Expert Group complements the work of other ASEM expert groups by providing expertise in the field of digital transformation. Particular attention is given to the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence in higher education, including its responsible and inclusive use, implications for teaching and learning, and the development of relevant skills and competences.

Internal Activities

In April 2024, the Expert Group held a virtual peer-learning meeting on “Digital Transformation in Higher Education” and “Gender Imbalance in AI”. Experts from India, Switzerland, France and Indonesia shared institutional experiences, research findings and policy perspectives, followed by discussions among participants from both regions.



From 23 to 25 October 2024, the Group met in a hybrid format at Fudan University in Shanghai, China, in conjunction with the 5th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab5). The programme featured a peer-learning session on “The Contribution of AI to Recognition, Selection and Admission Processes in Higher Education”. Members also took an active role in discussions on “AI in Education” during ASEFInnoLab5.

The first meeting of 2025 took place virtually in May and focused on two key topics: “Digital Education and the Mental Wellbeing of Students and Teachers in Higher Education” and “AI Literacy in Higher Education: Good Practice Examples”. Participants discussed findings from a European University Association report on mental wellbeing, research results from Malaysia, as well as good practice examples on AI literacy presented by experts from Belgium and the ASEAN Foundation.



From 3 to 5 December 2025, the Expert Group met at Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia, in conjunction with the 6th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab6). The hybrid meeting featured a peer-learning activity on "Creativity in the Age of AI: Changing Education and Employer Paradigms" and facilitated exchanges on "Digital Transformation and the Use of AI in Higher Education: Policies, Practices, and Future Directions". Members also contributed to discussions on the role of higher education in preparing learners for an AI-enabled future during ASEFInnoLab6.



In June 2026, the Expert Group held its first joint meeting with the Expert Group on SDGs and Education. The virtual session focused on "Opportunities and Challenges: Inclusion, Access, and Autonomy with AI in Higher Education". Four speakers from Thailand, Malaysia, Malta and Germany shared insights into their respective fields of work.

From 27 to 29 August 2026, the Expert Group on Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence met at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, in conjunction with the 7th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab7). The agenda included an interactive peer-learning activity on "AI Regulations and Guidelines in Asia and Europe: Implications for the Higher Education Sector" providing the members with the opportunity to exchange views on regulatory developments and their impact on higher education. Participants also engaged in two ASEFInnoLab7 roundtable discussions on " Harnessing AI for Good: Effective Policies, Good Practices, and Successful Use Cases" and "Reimagining Industry-Academe Collaboration in the Age of AI".

Public Activities

As part of its outreach activities, the Expert Group on Digitalisation and AI, together with the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES), continued its online event series on Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education. In November 2024, the group organised a seminar on "Best Practices on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education". The event attracted 145 participants and provided a platform for sharing practical experiences with AI applications from both student and academic perspectives.





In September 2025, the Expert Group convened the third online seminar in the series, entitled "AI Skills: Are Universities Preparing Graduates for Labour Market Needs?". Experts from academia and industry from China, France, Germany, the Philippines and Singapore discussed AI-related competences, labour market expectations and cooperation between higher education institutions and employers. The seminar attracted 210 participants from 33 countries.



The Expert Group delivered its fourth online seminar, entitled "Beyond Degrees: Mapping Skills with AI across Asia and Europe", in October 2026. The seminar examined the opportunities and challenges of AI-driven approaches to skills recognition and development, including questions of transparency, fairness and responsible use in higher education and labour market contexts and brought together more than 170 participants.

Through peer-learning activities, expert exchanges and public outreach events, the Expert Group continues to contribute to dialogue, cooperation and networking on digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence across Asia and Europe.

3. ASEM Partners: Ongoing and Future ASEM Education Initiatives and Projects

This chapter lists on-going and future initiatives, projects and activities organised by ASEM partners and stakeholders that are fostering cooperation on (higher) education between Asia and Europe. It shall mainly inform the reader, give examples and inspiration for further collaboration and dialogue.

The Asia-Europe Meeting has 53 partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, and the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. All contribute to the ASEM Education Process. The national ASEM contact persons were asked to provide information on recent, ongoing and future initiatives and projects fostering cooperation of Asia and Europe in the field of (higher) education. The following is a non-exhaustive list of activities and shall give an shall provide an overview of the current situation in the ASEM countries.

3.1.ASEM Education Compendium of Country Profiles

The ASEM Education Compendium for Higher Education provides a comprehensive overview of the multiple academic systems of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) partner countries.

Objective

The ASEM Education Compendium is a tool for staff and educators from academic institutions that improves transparency on the diverse educational landscape of the ASEM Education Process, serving as a valid reference source to compare academic systems, facilitate mobility, recognition and cooperation, and find information needed for collaborations with higher education institutions from ASEM member states.

History

The initiative to set up the Compendium started in 2011, during ASEMME3 in Copenhagen. The first compendium was announced in 2013 at ASEMME4 in Kuala Lumpur and it is since then regularly updated and new country profiles are added. Enhancement of the Compendium was first carried out within the ASEM Expert Group on interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems and since 2022 through the Expert Group 2 on Recognition & Balanced Mobility.

The online compendium focuses on 3 chapters: the higher education system, quality assurance and credit systems and a guide for contributors and an updated template have been elaborated in the last years.

The Compendium shows in 2026 profiles of 36 countries and 14 countries are still missing and **all ASEM countries are called to update their country's information and set up new profiles, if still missing.**

3.2.Austria

Project Report: ASEFClassNet19 at the University College of Teacher Education Tyrol (PH Tirol)

The University College of Teacher Education Tyrol (PH Tirol) hosted the 19th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet19, see also chapter 4.1) in Innsbruck from 21 to 25 September 2026. Under the theme "Future-Ready Teaching: Human Agency in the Age of AI," more than 70 teachers and education professionals from over 30 countries across Asia and Europe exchanged ideas on the responsible shaping of education in the era of artificial intelligence. The event was organized by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in collaboration with PH Tirol and *Knowledge in Crisis* under the leadership of the Central European University.

A key success was the integration of academic insights with concrete classroom practice. Teaching projects—developed internationally and already field-tested—were presented, jointly reflected upon, and recognized with awards. Workshops and visits to PH Tirol's model and research schools facilitated an intensive exchange regarding innovative learning arrangements and the scope of action available to both teachers and learners.

The conference provided PH Tirol with an international platform to showcase its pedagogical expertise and opened up opportunities for further cooperation between Asia and Europe. Its particular value lay in collaborative learning across national borders and in practical insights for the reflective use of AI in education.

3.3.Belgium Flemish Community

Since ASEMME9 taking place in Valletta in 2024 mobility and exchange in higher education increased significantly between Asian countries and Flanders. Most mobility happens outside the Asia-Europe Meeting framework either in the context of inter-university cooperation (short term mobility) or via degree mobility (from Asia to Flanders) but in general less frequent than among European universities. Degree mobility is asymmetric; there is a significant number of Asian free movers to Master programmes or applicants for Ph.D. scholarships. Almost 60% of non-European degree students in Flanders are Asian: from China alone already 24 %, followed by India and Iran. ASEAN countries are well represented (Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia) and increasing and there is a new trend of a rising number of students coming from Central Asia. Mobility from Japan and the Republic of Korea is limited and slightly increasing.

Incoming international students from ASEM countries:

Number of students with nationality of Asian ASEM members enrolling for a full degree programme in 2024/2025: China (3886), India (1483), Pakistan (1127), Vietnam (786), Bangladesh (458), Indonesia (429), Philippines (305), Republic of Korea (198), Taiwan (167), Nepal (162), Japan (144), Kazakhstan (141), Thailand (73), Malaysia (59), Mongolia (55), Sri Lanka (55), Myanmar (38), Singapore (34), Hongkong (29), Cambodia (17), Laos (4), Macau (2), Brunei Darussalam (1).

Strongest increase between 2023/2024 to 2024/2025 was for Pakistan (+33.8 %), Vietnam (+23.4 %) and China (+ 5 %). Decreases in student numbers for certain countries reflect normal annual fluctuations and are not statistically relevant.

Outgoing Flemish students in short-term mobility:

The outgoing student mobility of Flemish students in short-term mobility towards Asian higher education institutions (all countries, including non-ASEM members) has significantly increased after a temporary decline due to the covid crisis. The number of realized mobility periods decreased from 825 in 2019/2020 to 273 in

2020/2021 but increased again year by year with 1169 mobilities in 2024/2025 and reaches a higher level than in the pre-covid era.

In 2024/2025 China (208 mobilities), Japan (205) and the Republic of Korea (127) had the largest share of mobile students from Flemish higher education institutions. Also, Vietnam (87) and Thailand (78) are popular destinations. Other destinations (in alphabetical order) are Cambodia, Hongkong, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Taiwan.

In the same academic year most mobility periods last from 4 to 6 months (607), followed by 1 to 3 months (290). Shorter mobilities for less than 1 month (179) and longer mobilities of 7 to 12 months (92) are less common.

Belgium (Flemish Community) is currently very active in the **ASEM Work Placement Programme (see chapter 4.3)**.

3.4. Belgium French Community

The **ASEM-DUO exchange programme** (see chapter 4.2 for more details) in the **Wallonia-Brussels Federation (BE-FR)** continues to play an important role in fostering balanced mobility and academic collaborations between higher education institutions in Wallonia-Brussels and in the Asia-Pacific region.

Applications must be submitted by two members of academic or scientific staff, one from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the other from Asia. ASEM-DUO FWB scholarships provide a total grant of €7,000 per pair to be shared between the two beneficiaries, supporting transport costs and per diem for participants. Respective missions must last a minimum of 18 days and a maximum of 60 days, with an average exchange duration of 25.5 days. This financial support has enabled a real evolution in relations between Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the Asian partners; it has enabled progress in interpersonal relations (which are difficult to achieve virtually) and has contributed to the flowering and development of concrete research projects. In addition, it has supported the establishment of new collaboration & mobility programmes as well as the learning of new working, analysis and teaching procedures and techniques.

The majority of projects enhance collaboration with institutions in Japan, India and Vietnam (even though the project is open to all ASEM partner countries). Additionally, the projects predominantly focus on scientific disciplines and STEAM areas such as engineering, chemistry, physics, and biology. In recent years, the participation of men and women in the program has approached gender balance.

Finally, following a decrease in project submissions, the program was reformed in 2024. Since then, it has experienced a substantial surge in applications, reaching nearly four times the number of available grants. Continuous efforts remain ongoing to refine the selection procedure, better highlight the degree of internationalisation of projects, promote the program and its opportunities, and support diversity and inclusion. For more information: https://www.ares-ac.be/fr/relations-internationales/bourse-asem-duo .

3.5.Cyprus

Higher education cooperation between Cyprus and Asia has continued to deepen over the 2024-2026 period, driven both at country level, through the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and at institutional level, through Cyprus's public and private universities. Cyprus continues to update its profile in the ASEM Education Compendium of Country Profiles (updated July 2025) and to participate in the annual DUO-Korea fellowship exchange (circulated April 2025). At government level, Cyprus maintains bilateral Agreements on the Mutual Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications with ASEM partner China, and Memoranda of Understanding on cooperation in higher education and science with three further ASEM partners: China (most recently renewed for the period 2022-2026), Japan and Kazakhstan. The complete, regularly updated lists of Cyprus's international agreements and memoranda of understanding are maintained by the Department of Higher Education.

University of Nicosia establishes Cyprus's first Chair of Indian Studies

On 15 June 2025, the High Commissioner of India to Cyprus, and the Rector of the University of Nicosia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the first Chair of Indian Studies to be hosted at a university in Cyprus. The Chair is co-funded by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, which will jointly select its first holder together with the University. The signing took place in Limassol ahead of the "Cyprus-India Roundtable: Advancing Strategic Economic Partnership", held during the official visit of India's Prime Minister, to Cyprus. The Chair is intended to offer the University community and the wider Cypriot public a window into Indian culture, language and society, further strengthening people-to-people ties between the two countries.



European University Cyprus holds its first graduation ceremony in China



In July 2025, European University Cyprus (EUC) held its first graduation ceremony in China, at the campus of Minjiang University in Fuzhou, Fujian Province. The ceremony celebrated 100 graduates of four EUC degree programmes – BSc in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, BSc in Computer Engineering, BBA in Digital Marketing and Communications, and BA in Graphic Design – delivered since 2021 through the International Digital Economy College (IDEC) at Minjiang University. More than 1,000 students are currently enrolled in EUC programmes in China, making this partnership one of the University's largest international academic ventures and a concrete example of Asia-Europe cooperation in transnational higher education delivery.

Confucius Institutes deepen Cyprus-China educational and cultural ties

Cyprus is home to two Confucius Institutes, at the University of Cyprus and at the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), which jointly promote Chinese language teaching, HSK examinations, cultural events and academic exchange with China. The Confucius Institute at CUT, established with Hangzhou Dianzi University (HDU) in June 2023, concluded its 2025 Summer School with a closing ceremony on 25 July 2025, having hosted 90 students from HDU for three weeks of academic and cultural exchange in Cyprus. Building on this cooperation, CUT and HDU continue to jointly deliver a master's programme in Electronic Engineering and to explore new areas for research and student mobility.

Growing network of university-level agreements with Asia

Cypriot universities maintain an expanding portfolio of bilateral agreements with Asian partners, including:

- University of Cyprus: 12 agreements with China, 5 with India, 3 with Korea and 1 with Japan; host of Cyprus's first Confucius Institute.
- Cyprus University of Technology: agreements with China, Thailand and Korea (2); host of Cyprus's second Confucius Institute.
- University of Nicosia: agreement with China, plus joint programmes and research cooperation with China, India, Taiwan, Pakistan and Indonesia.
- European University Cyprus: agreements with China (4) and Japan, alongside its degree-delivery partnership in China described above.



3.6. Estonia

UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

UNESCO adopted the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education on 25 November 2019. Estonia approved the Convention on 15 June 2021, as the third country to do so. The Convention entered into force internationally, including for Estonia, on 5 March 2023.

Estonia's early accession reflects its commitment to transparent, fair and internationally comparable recognition of higher education qualifications and periods of study. The Convention helps ensure that Estonian qualifications and periods of study are assessed beyond the European region according to common, transparent and fair principles.

In the context of ASEM education cooperation, the Convention is particularly relevant as it supports closer connectivity between Asian and European higher education systems. Its implementation can reduce barriers to cross-regional study and academic mobility, strengthen mutual trust in qualifications and recognition procedures, and facilitate cooperation between higher education institutions across the two regions.

International higher education cooperation

Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and Korea National University of Arts

Cooperation between the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) and the Korea National University of Arts (K-Arts) began in autumn 2025 and has focused on music performance, teaching and and academic exchange. Based in Seoul, K-Arts is Republic of Korea's only national higher education institution devoted entirely to the arts. The first visit took place in September 2025. On 26 September, musicians from K-Arts performed in the EAMT Great Hall at a concert organised by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to mark the opening of its resident mission in Estonia. The performers included the pianist Daejin Kim and the cellist Kangho Lee, together with K-Arts faculty members, alumni and students.

The cooperation continued in 2026, when K-Arts joined the fourth edition of Crossing Bows, EAMT's international cello festival, held from 17 to 21 February. K-Arts was the first Asian institution to participate, joining music academies from Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Brazil. Professor Kangho Lee taught open masterclasses and performed in the faculty concert on 18 February. During the five-day festival, students worked with teachers from the participating institutions and performed together in concerts at EAMT. International cello ensembles also gave free public performances in central Tallinn.



Music performance at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre

The cooperation has strengthened direct academic and artistic exchange between the two institutions. The visits in 2025 and 2026 have created a strong basis for further cooperation. The next step is to arrange reciprocal faculty visits and masterclasses in Tallinn and Seoul, with the aim of developing further opportunities for student and faculty mobility between Estonia and the Republic of Korea. EAMT also aims to introduce its degree programmes to talented Korean music students and renew contacts with pre-college music schools in Korea that EAMT representatives visited in 2022.

Tallinn University of Technology and Tohoku University

Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech) and Tohoku University have maintained long-term cooperation in student mobility since 2015, when a student exchange agreement was concluded at faculty level in business and economics. The partnership later expanded to other parts of the universities. In 2023, TalTech hosted 15 information technology students from Tohoku University in the Secure e-Governance Summer School for the first time.

The main aim of the summer school is to introduce e-Estonia and provide an overview of developments in Estonia's ICT sector, including the value that digital services can deliver to citizens, public authorities and private companies. The programme also covers the core components of identity management in a digital environment and the links between security, the legal framework and e-governance. Study visits include the Parliament of Estonia, the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence and the digital economy department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.



Secure e-Governance Summer School, August 2024

The partnership has continued to broaden in both scope and opportunities for student mobility. A further student exchange agreement was concluded in 2025, extending cooperation to information technology and engineering programmes. The summer school partnership continued, and in summer 2026 Tohoku University students participated in two TalTech programmes: Secure e-Governance and Applied AI, further strengthening academic exchange between Estonia and Japan in areas of shared interest.

Cooperation between the Estonian Academy of Arts and Japanese Higher Education Institutions (2024–2026)

The following examples highlight cooperation between the Estonian Academy of Arts (EKA) and Japanese higher education institutions during the 2024–2026 reporting period. The activities supported academic cooperation, student and staff mobility, research-based learning, and links between higher education, industry, and regional craft traditions.

Estonian Academy of Arts and Sanjo City University: Integrating Craft, Design and Technology

Cooperation period and background: Preparatory activities began in November 2024, when EKA faculty members Kärt Ojavee and Juss Heinsalu visited the Tsubame-Sanjo region and met representatives of Sanjo City University and local companies. In February 2025, the institutions signed a cooperation agreement covering academic development and student and staff exchanges. Japanese designer and lecturer Masayo Ave played a significant role in establishing the partnership.

Activities: From 24 to 26 March 2026, ten EKA Craft Studies master's students and two faculty members undertook a study and research visit to the Tsubame-Sanjo region. The programme included local craft techniques, metalworking workshops, the university's technological facilities, and practical learning activities. It enabled participants to compare European and Japanese material cultures and examine links between traditional craft skills and contemporary technologies.

Results and follow-up: The cooperation has developed in both directions. In 2026, a student from Sanjo City University participated in an iron-casting workshop in Estonia led by EKA lecturer Nils Hint. The partnership combines international mobility with master's-level education, materials research, and the expertise of local companies and craftspeople, while creating a basis for continued academic exchange.

Estonian Academy of Arts and the University of Tokyo DLX Design Lab: Connecting Design Education and Research

Cooperation period and background: In January 2026, twelve EKA product design students and faculty members Björn Koop and Carol Tikerperi participated in a workshop at the University of Tokyo's DLX Design Lab. Supported by the Erasmus+ programme, the study visit focused on cooperation between design and science and on research-based learning methodologies.

Activities: The workshop applied the DLX Design Lab's "Treasure Hunting" methodology, which uses ongoing scientific research projects as a starting point for exploring future applications. Students engaged with researchers, experimented with technological prototypes, and developed potential applications through speculative design and rapid prototyping.

Focus areas: Part of the programme took place at the Shinoda and Makino Laboratory, which studies haptic and multisensory technologies. Student concepts explored possible future applications related to environmental perception for visually impaired people, health and well-being, and enriched learning experiences.

Results and follow-up: Students gained first-hand experience in an international research environment and reflected on the role of designers as partners in scientific research. For EKA, the activity provides a foundation for further integrating research-based and experimental approaches into design education and for continuing cooperation with the Japanese partner institution.

Further information and photographs:

Cooperation agreement between EKA and Sanjo City University

Sanjo City University overview of the EKA master's students' study visit

3.7.European Commission

Erasmus+: connecting Asia and Europe through education cooperation

During 2024-2026, Erasmus+ continued to support Asia–Europe cooperation with the allocated budget of €250 million (2021-2027) through student and staff mobility, institutional partnerships and academic dialogue. Four complementary actions offer opportunities for Asian and European students, academics and higher education institutions, subject to the eligibility conditions of each action.

- **International Credit Mobility (ICM)** supports student exchanges for study or traineeships and staff mobility for teaching or training between European and Asian partner institutions. These exchanges develop academic, professional and intercultural competences while strengthening institutional cooperation. Inter-institutional and learning agreements provide a framework for quality and recognition of study periods abroad.
- **Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJM)** support jointly designed and delivered international master's programmes, offering students study opportunities across several institutions and very attractive scholarships for selected applicants worldwide. Asian universities can participate in international consortia, while Asian students benefit from advanced training and intercultural experience. For example, the Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MARIHE) joint master's programme connects European universities with partners in China and India, combining study periods in Europe and Asia to prepare graduates for leadership and management roles in higher education, research and innovation.
- **Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)** supports international partnerships to modernise higher education in eligible partner countries, including curriculum development, staff training, governance and links with the labour market. For example, THE-GLOW (2023–2025), coordinated by Thammasat University, brought together institutions in Thailand, Germany and the Netherlands to develop interdisciplinary, problem-based teaching addressing sustainability challenges. Activities included jointly developed courses, teacher training and new digital learning facilities. INTEGRAL (2023–2026) connected universities in Greece, Sweden and Lao PDR to strengthen education in geotechnologies for climate-resilient agriculture, including new courses, laboratory infrastructure and staff training.
- **Jean Monnet actions (JM)** support teaching, research and policy debate on the European Union through Modules, Chairs, Centres of Excellence and thematic Networks. They enable Asian institutions to develop expertise on European integration and EU policies, while encouraging exchanges between academics, policymakers and civil society. The "EU in the Indo-Pacific Jean Monnet Network", coordinated by the University of Canterbury, illustrates this cooperation through joint research and policy dialogue involving European and Indo-Pacific universities.

Regional Erasmus+ Weeks complement these actions by connecting higher education institutions, project beneficiaries, Erasmus+ National Focal Points, National Agencies and EU Delegations. Organised by the European Commission's DG EAC and EACEA, the regional cluster meetings and contact-making seminars focused on digital education in **Bangkok on 13–14 November 2024** and the green transition in **Colombo on 18–19 November 2025**. The forthcoming edition in **Kuala Lumpur, on 23–24 November 2026**, will address "Developing Skills for the Future", combining project showcases with on-site and online networking to encourage new partnerships.

Study in Europe fairs promote European study and scholarship opportunities, including Erasmus+, and facilitate institutional contacts. Activities during 2023–2026 included the fair in **Seoul in June 2023**, participation in the **APAIE Conference and Exhibition in Hong Kong in February 2026**, and study fairs, networking and online activities in **Delhi and Bangalore in April 2026**.

Complementing Erasmus+, **SCOPE-HE**, the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package-Higher Education Programme (see also chapter 0), supports academic mobility, recognition, research networks and vocational education–industry links. Funded by the European Commission with €9.3 million for 2024-2028 and implemented by Nuffic with DAAD, it focuses on the green transition, digitalisation and the blue economy.

3.8.Finland

Finland's current and future projects and activities connecting Asia and Europe in (higher) education:

Finland and China

Finland and China have multiple collaborative initiatives in higher education. Important focus areas in STI cooperation agreed upon on a governmental level include green technology, circular economy, climate change and health. In addition, extensive cooperation in education and research takes place in fields such as teacher education and mechanical engineering.

Numerous China-related projects have been granted through the *Team Finland Knowledge Programme* TFK over the years. In 2026, the programme funded four projects in China. In health and technology, the University of Eastern Finland is collaborating with Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and Fudan University on smart senior care services, combining advanced technologies with user-centered and culturally sensitive approaches. In business and industrial management, Karelia University of Applied Sciences and Shanghai Polytechnic University are developing joint learning modules and practical assignments to strengthen students' professional skills and employability. In the creative industries, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Communication University of Zhejiang and Finnish company Sumino Oy are advancing a double-degree collaboration in game development. Additionally, the University of Turku and the University of Jyväskylä are partnering with the Education University of Hong Kong to develop innovative approaches to international teacher education.

Previous TFK-funded projects have expanded cooperation to areas such as the social sciences, rehabilitation, health technology, environmental sciences, rehabilitation, health technology, environmental sciences, sustainable architecture, artificial intelligence and early childhood education. Examples include telerehabilitation for older people, technology solutions for ageing populations, and playful learning approaches.



Finnish and Chinese university representatives attending a networking event hosted by Minister of Science and Culture of Finland, Ms. Mari-Leena Talvitie during her visit to China in September 2026. On the left side Higher Education Director from the Finnish Ministry Ms. Jonna Korhonen. Photo: Embassy of Finland

Additionally, Business Finland and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) Joint Innovation Call 2026 promotes research and business collaboration by creating opportunities for Finnish companies to develop joint

innovation projects with Chinese partners. While this collaboration is focused on business, higher education institutes can also participate.

Finland and India

High-level visits in both directions have strengthened Finland–India relations in 2026. President Alexander Stubb's state visit to India and Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's participation in the AI Impact Summit, alongside Minister of Employment Matias Marttinen's visit focusing on deep-tech cooperation, have advanced bilateral collaboration. From India, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar visited Finland for discussions on strategic cooperation and future technologies, while visits by Punjab's Chief Minister and a delegation led by India's Minister of Commerce and Industry strengthened links in education, teacher training, agriculture, food systems and innovation. The *Finland–India Strategic Partnership in Digitalisation and Sustainability*, and the Nordic–India Strategic Partnership provide a framework for further cooperation.

Connecting education, skills and innovation

Cooperation involves universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational education. Skills development and collaboration with companies are increasingly important for connecting education with changing labour-market needs and technological development.

Finland's higher education and science counsellor at the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi promotes cooperation between the two countries, connects institutions and helps translate bilateral priorities into practical collaboration. Bilateral agreements provide an enabling framework. The Finnish Indian Consortia for Research and Education (FICORE) is an example of earlier efforts to establish structured links between Finnish technical universities and the Indian Institutes of Technology.

Recent TFK projects illustrate the breadth of cooperation, including hydrogen education between the University of Oulu and Amity University, sustainable digital manufacturing between the University of Turku and IIT Delhi, and design thinking education, or AI and sustainable futures. Other initiatives have supported doctoral-level cooperation as well as digital solutions for natural disaster response, and food and culinary sector development. In addition, in 2026 India's department of Science and Technology (DST) and Business Finland launched the Finland-India call to support joint R&D and innovation projects in sustainable energy, digital technologies, microelectronics and power electronics. The initiative strengthens links between companies and research organizations and complements the countries' new Strategic Partnership in digitalization and Sustainability.

Priority areas include artificial intelligence, semiconductors and photonics, space, and also green energy solutions and sustainable construction. During his 2026 visit to India, Minister of Employment Matias Marttinen highlighted the importance of higher education and university collaboration in advancing Finland–India deep-tech cooperation, innovation and start-ups. A dedicated stakeholder roundtable further explored opportunities to strengthen these links. This cooperation connects research and education with industrial expertise, skills development and the commercialisation of emerging technologies.

European and Asia–Europe opportunities

The EU–India agenda offers additional opportunities for collaboration. Erasmus+ Capacity Building is widely used between India and Finland and it supports institutional cooperation, while India's possible future association with Horizon Europe will broaden joint research opportunities. The EU–India relationship also places growing emphasis on clean technologies, digitalisation and innovation.

Through these partnerships, Finland and India can strengthen education, research and business links while contributing to the wider ASEM objective of closer Asia–Europe cooperation in skills, mobility, innovation and sustainable development.



Project "Flavours of India and Finland: Culinary Traditions and Culture, Sustainability and Innovation" started 2026 as a joint education initiative between Finnish Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and Indian Chitkara University. Photo: Liisa Toivonen



Higher Education and Science counsellor high-level deep-tech sector roundtable discussion in New Delhi during Minister Marttinen's visit to India in March 2026. Photo: Liisa Toivonen

Finland and Southeast Asia

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland has established (as of 2018) a higher education and science counsellor position in the region through the global counsellors' network, which aims to strengthen collaboration between Finnish higher education institutions and their counterparts in selected countries. This regional focus is also reflected in high-level ministerial engagement and policy dialogue. between Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture and Singapore's Ministry of Education.

Ministerial visits have also taken place over the past two years, with Finnish representatives visiting Singapore — on separate occasions, the Minister of Education and a Deputy Minister — and Thailand. Interest in cooperation has been mutual: the education ministers of Singapore and the Philippines visited Finland in 2026, while the Education Committee of Thailand's Senate visited Finland in 2025.

Several memoranda of understanding have been signed or are under negotiation between Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture or the Finnish National Agency for Education and their counterparts in South-East Asia. The most recent engagements have involved Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.



During his visits to Thailand and Singapore in 2025, Finnish Minister of Education Anders Adlercreutz visited two of Southeast Asia's leading universities: Chulalongkorn University in Thailand and the National University of Singapore (NUS). The photograph shows Minister Adlercreutz meeting with NUS President Tan Eng Chye. Photo: Mika Tirronen



Music education is widely recognised across Asia as a means of fostering creativity and innovative thinking among children. Interest in international cooperation in this field is growing. Novia University of Applied Sciences is collaborating with the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YST) in Singapore on a joint music education initiative. Photo: Mika Tirronen

Higher Education Cooperation Responds to Local Needs

Collaboration between higher education institutions has also grown significantly. Most Finnish higher education institutions have student and staff exchange programmes or other forms of cooperation with partners in South-East Asia.

This growing interest is also reflected in the number of funding applications submitted under the Team Finland Knowledge Programme, which supports joint educational projects between Finnish higher education institutions and institutions in selected countries outside the EU. Due to budget constraints, however, the number of funded projects has remained relatively stable, at four to five projects per year.

There are currently 14 jointly funded higher education projects involving South-East Asian partners: three with institutions in Singapore, one in Malaysia, three in Thailand, four in Vietnam and four in Indonesia. The projects primarily address relevant educational and societal needs, including multidisciplinary education and teacher education. Other areas of cooperation include sustainable entrepreneurship, the circular economy, biodiversity data and conservation, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), energy-efficient digital systems, diabetes care, conflict resolution and music.

Finnish Solutions to Strengthen Foundational Skills

Malaysia's Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF and two Finnish educational technology companies — GraphoGame and Eduten, both originally university spin-offs — has launched a digital learning pilot under UNICEF's Learning Pioneers Programme. The initiative aims to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills among young learners. The pilot combines Finnish educational technology with teacher training and Malaysia's national education priorities.

Finland and the Republic of Korea

Educational collaboration between Finland and the Republic of Korea is currently mainly based on bilateral exchange programmes between universities. Almost 200 Finnish students choose South Korea as their exchange destination each year. Conversely, approximately 100 Korean students participate in exchange programmes in Finland each year. The number of bilateral agreements between Finland and Korea is increasing, both in education and research collaboration. The University of Helsinki, Aalto University and the University of Oulu also maintain strategic partnerships with Korean universities.

The largest and longest-running educational collaboration between Finland and South Korea is the joint EMBA programme, established in 1995, between Aalto EE and aSSIST University. The programme is aimed at Korean business professionals and has already produced more than 5,000 alumni in Korea. University of Helsinki has run a pilot on PhD level postgraduate training with their strategic partner Yonsei University with plans to continue with similar programmes in the future.

The most prominent research collaborations include the bilateral research funding call in 6G and quantum technologies in 2026 funded jointly by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Research Council of Finland and the annual Korea-Finland Innovation Forum which is jointly organized by the Embassy of Finland in Seoul, Finnish universities and a rotating Korean partner organisation.



Meeting with representatives of the National Research Foundation (NRF) in Seoul. From left Heemin Lee (Intern), Riikka Pellinen (Counsellor for Science and Higher Education), Antti Niemelä (Deputy Head of Mission), Hoseok Jeon (Director), and Eunhye Cho (Team leader). Photo: NRF

Finland and South Korea have also participated in the bilateral ASEM-DUO student exchange programme since 2001 with 95 bilateral exchanges. The most active participants in Korea have been Ajou University and Kyunghee University, while University of Joensuu has had most ASEM-DUO exchanges in Finland (please see chapter 4.2).

3.9.Hungary

UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

A significant development during the 2024–2026 reporting period was the entry into force for Hungary of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. Hungary ratified the Convention on 14 December 2023, and it was promulgated by Act LXXXI of 2023. The Convention entered into force for Hungary on 14 March 2024, and its provisions are directly applicable within the national recognition framework.

The Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre, operating within the Educational Authority, performs the functions of the national information centre under the Convention. It provides information on Hungary's education and qualifications system to international partners and supports access to the information needed for the recognition of foreign qualifications and periods of study.

Hungary's accession extended its international framework for recognition cooperation to countries not previously covered by bilateral recognition agreements or the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Among the Asian ASEM partner countries, these include Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea.

The Convention facilitates the recognition of qualifications and periods of study through common principles of fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition. Its requirement for States Parties to establish and maintain national information centres also strengthens information exchange and mutual understanding between higher education systems.

During the reporting period, the Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre established contact with the national information centres in Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea. These contacts facilitate access to reliable information on education systems and qualifications, supporting recognition procedures and creating more favourable conditions for academic mobility between Hungary and its Asian ASEM partners.

International Higher Education Cooperation

Hungarian–Chinese Scholarship Cooperation

Hungary and China maintain long-standing higher education cooperation through bilateral scholarship arrangements supporting student mobility and academic exchange. During the 2024–2026 reporting period, these arrangements continued to provide opportunities for Hungarian students to pursue studies in China and for Chinese students to study at Hungarian higher education institutions.

In the autumn semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, 2,769 Chinese students were enrolled in Hungarian higher education institutions, according to Hungary's Higher Education Information System. This figure represents total Chinese student enrolment across funding arrangements and is not limited to participants in bilateral scholarship programmes.

Scholarship cooperation supports academic and cultural ties between the two countries and provides a foundation for further institutional partnerships and student exchanges.

Hungarian Higher Education at China Education Expo 2026

In autumn 2026, the Tempus Public Foundation organised a Study in Hungary delegation to China, bringing together representatives of the Foundation and three Hungarian higher education institutions: Corvinus University of Budapest, the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the University of Pannonia. The visit aimed to increase the visibility of Hungarian higher education, strengthen institutional contacts and present study opportunities to prospective Chinese students (https://en.tka.hu/tempus_public_foundation_news/study-in-hungary-visits-china-hungarian-higher-education-delegation-at-cee-2026).

The programme offered opportunities to present degree programmes, scholarship options and student life in Hungary to prospective students and their families.

Alongside student recruitment, the visit included institutional networking and discussions on strengthening academic cooperation between Hungarian and Chinese higher education institutions. These activities supported the development of partnerships and closer connections between the two countries' higher education communities.

3.10. Italy

ARDI – Automatic Recognition Database Italy

In order to align Italy with the European policies of "automatic recognition" of academic qualifications, in line with the "Council Recommendation, 26/11/2018, on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning period abroad" and with what is required by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), **CIMEA-NARIC Italia developed ARDI - Automatic Recognition Database Italia.**

ARDI - Automatic Recognition Database Italy is an open access tool that **describes the main types of academic qualifications and final secondary school qualifications of the** Countries that are signatories to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It provides a **comparative opinion on their correspondence** with Italian qualifications, as well as specific evaluative notes for each type of qualification in line with the typical elements of the foreign reference system. In addition to this, a **Statement of Correspondence** is automatically generated by the system for each qualification, immediately **available for download**. ARDI contains 442 academic and upper secondary

school leaving qualifications from 55 countries and is a tool for institutions and individuals dealing with the recognition of foreign qualifications in Italy, offering a systemic approach to evaluate and compare qualifications from a wide range of countries.

EHEA Coordination Group on Global Policy dialogue

Italy is co-chairing the European Higher Education Area's Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue (EHEA CG GPD) together with the Republic of Moldova and UNESCO. In accordance with the mandate received at the Ministerial Conference held in Tirana, Albania in May 2024 and in line with its Terms of Reference for the period 2024-2027, the CG GPD focusses on strengthening policy dialogue between the EHEA and other world regions and identifying common areas for cooperation on matters of common concern and relevance for higher education. The Group is also mandated to organise the 2027 Global Policy Forum, to be held in conjunction with the next EHEA Ministerial Conference in Iași–Chișinău in May 2027, and to draft the Global Policy Forum Statement, which will be adopted on that occasion.

The CG GPD works intensively with stakeholders and countries in Asia, especially on the thematic areas identified in the Terms of Reference. The first is Lifelong Learning, as a core principle of higher education systems, promoting flexible entry, re-entry, and progression pathways for all types of learners. This principle is seen as key to driving innovation and inclusiveness while preserving higher education's fundamental mission of human development. The key topics identified for the 2024-2027 CG GD mandate also include (i) the Bologna Key commitments, namely the qualifications framework and credit transfer systems, recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, (ii) the right to education and (iii) digital transformation & AI as a cross-cutting topic. These topics has been the focus of three CG GPD meetings held in presence and in a hybrid format, organised in conjunction with peer learning activities. Several participants from East-Asia and South-Asia took part in these meetings.

The group's work is captured in two policy documents outlining short-, medium-, and long-term trajectories, which will be presented for adoption or validation during the Global Policy Forum:

- the Global Policy Forum Statement, which identifies the priorities to be addressed by 2030 and will be adopted by the Ministries participating in the 2027 Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum.
- The EHEA Roadmap for international cooperation to 2030 and beyond, which identifies policy areas and future trajectories in a medium-long-term perspective.

Both documents have been developed through a consultation process involving representatives from all macro-regions. These representatives took part in two online briefing sessions, during which the documents were presented and jointly reviewed, with the aim of gathering input and suggestions for additions to both texts.

CIMEA Regional Office in Central Asia-Kazakhstan

CIMEA Central Asia operates as a regional hub of CIMEA, extending its expertise and services to Central Asian countries while strengthening cooperation with the Europe. The Centre supports academic mobility and internationalisation of higher education systems by providing expert, scientific, methodological, and organizational services to public institutions, universities, employers, and individuals. Building on CIMEA's experience, CIMEA Central Asia serves as a bridge between European and Central Asian education and research ecosystems.

Among the initiatives promoted by CIMEA – Central Asia the event "Sustainable Central Asia: Silk Roads of Education, Arts, and AI" conference could be mentioned, which took place at Almaty Museum of Arts, Almaty, in Kazakhstan on 26 and 27 October 2026. The event was the opportunity to discuss how learning, creativity

and innovation can shape a sustainable future for Central Asia. The conference also gathered representatives from universities from Central Asia and beyond.

Study on Ratification and Implementation of the UNESCO Conventions on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications among ASEAN countries

Within the EU–ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education Programme (SCOPE-HE) (see section 5.2), CIMEA-NARIC Italy and Indonesia Cyber Education Institute (ICEI) are conducting the "Study on Ratification and Implementation of the UNESCO Conventions on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications: ASEAN Context and EU experience". The study aims to assess the current state of ratification and implementation of the Tokyo and the Global Conventions across ASEAN Member States, identifying key barriers and challenges in the perspective of formulating recommendations to support ASEAN Member States, drawing on relevant experiences and lesson learned from Europe.

White paper on implementation of AI in recognition

Within an EU-funded project called "*Verif-AI* – Supporting verification of authenticity through AI technologies" the project consortium consisting of ENIC-NARICs from Croatia, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand and Ireland have recently published a White Paper that provides guidelines targeted to recognition centres on implementing AI in recognition workflows. Developed through three consultations with key stakeholders, it examines AI opportunities, challenges, good practices and risks. Its recommendations are based on a four-level risk-opportunity assessment aligned with the EU AI Act and the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

3.11. Latvia

During 2024–2026, Latvia continued to strengthen and expand its cooperation with Asian partners, particularly emphasizing fostering international academic partnerships, promoting students and academic personnel mobility, and facilitating research collaboration and scientific exchange. These activities aimed to enhance knowledge sharing, encourage the exchange of expertise and best practices, support joint research initiatives, and create new opportunities for academic institutions and researchers to engage in collaborative activities. Particular attention was also given to strengthening institutional ties, broadening international cooperation networks, and promoting intercultural understanding through educational and scientific collaboration.

Latvian state scholarships, administered by the State Education Development Agency, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science, provide opportunities for international students to study and participate in summer schools at Latvian higher education institutions. During 2024–2026, the programme continued to support educational exchanges with partner countries. Students from the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, China and Vietnam were among the recipients of Latvian state scholarships during the reporting period.

Latvian state scholarships programme is an important element of Latvia's higher education strategic development, maintaining educational partnerships and encouraging greater academic engagement between the Baltic region and Asia.

Asian countries are valuable partners in advancing international cooperation within the frameworks of the **Erasmus+** and **Horizon Europe** programmes. Within the Erasmus+ programme, cooperation focused on enhancing international academic mobility, facilitating exchanges of students and academic personnel, developing institutional partnerships and sharing good practices in higher education. Engagement with Asian partners contributed to broadening the international dimension of Latvian higher education, encouraging intercultural dialogue and creating new opportunities for joint educational initiatives and projects.

Horizon Europe offered a framework for strengthening research and innovation cooperation, enabling Latvian researchers and research institutions to establish international partnerships, participate in collaborative research projects and exchange scientific expertise. Cooperation with European and Asian partners also supported the development of international research networks and encouraged the exchange of knowledge and innovative approaches across different scientific disciplines.

Many Latvian higher education and research institutions continued to actively promote and strengthen **bilateral cooperation** with universities and research institutions across Asia, which included signing of bilateral cooperation agreements, providing a framework for developing long-term institutional partnerships and expanding academic and scientific collaboration.

Latvian universities and state institutions continued to engage in various **collaborative projects** with Asian partner institutions, covering a broad range of academic and research fields, for example:

Riga Technical University - Singapore Institute of Technology project "Swap the Problem – Pharma Innovation & Prototyping" (August 2026)

This project combined higher education, applied research, innovation and industry. Within this project, students worked on challenges proposed by the industry - improving efficiency and environmental sustainability in pharmaceutical manufacturing, introducing digital technologies and automated processes into pharmaceutical production, developing adaptable pharmaceutical production systems, improving solvent management and reducing pharmaceutical production waste.

As a result, the following innovations were proposed: 1. A personalised vitamin and nutrient drink vending machine, that uses professionally interpreted health test results, an app and a QR code to provide individually tailored drinks; 2. An under-eye patch concept using mRNA-based medication for conjunctivitis, addressing the challenge of developing an antibiotic-free treatment; 3. Automation of laboratory data entry; Smart RFID-based cabinet for inventory tracking and storage-condition monitoring; automated pharmaceutical waste sorting and a solution encouraging responsible disposal of unused medicines.

Next Leaders for Statistics and DX Exchange Program (2024-2026)

International exchange initiative that connects young professionals and specialists in statistics, data science, and information technology from the Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) with Japanese institutions. It aims at strengthening cooperation between Japan and the Baltic States in official statistics and digital transformation, exchange best practices, and explore advanced solutions in data analysis and technology. Key activities included visits and lectures at Statistics Bureau of Japan, engagements with the Digital Agency of Japan, universities (such as Rissho University and Osaka University), and various technology companies, collaborative discussions and data science presentations, alongside meetings with diplomatic personnel like the Ambassador of Latvia to Japan. From the Latvian side, students from University of Latvia, Riga Technical University and Daugavpils University were involved in this exchange.

Development of strategic industrial and defence infrastructure projects in Latvia

On June 27, 2024, the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, together with representatives from the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia and other partners, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Korean company EUGENE Investment & Securities. The company intends to invest in the development of a biomedical ecosystem in Latvia and expand cooperation with Latvia in the fields of biotechnology and clinical research. Signatories from the Latvian side also included the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health and several scientific institutions, including Riga Stradiņš University, Riga Technical University,

the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis, and others. The signing of this Memorandum will allow to expand Latvian-Korean partnership in large-scale investments, serving as a bridge to other Korean companies seeking investment opportunities in Europe.

3.12. Lithuania

During 2024–2026, Lithuanian higher education institutions continued to strengthen cooperation with Asian partners through academic mobility, internationalisation of studies and the development of long-term institutional partnerships, joint research as well. These initiatives reflect a growing emphasis on translating academic cooperation into tangible opportunities for knowledge exchange, research collaboration and institutional capacity-building.

In 2024, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VILNIUS TECH) launched 12 joint research projects with three Taiwanese universities: National Sun Yat-sen University, Taipei Tech and Taiwan Tech. Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) continued to develop Taiwan-related studies through its Spotlight Taiwan projects and, in 2024, reached an agreement with National Chengchi University on establishing a Lithuanian centre in Taiwan, strengthening the institutional foundations for academic and cultural exchange. In 2026, Vilnius University (VU) announced a joint research funding call with National Taipei University of Technology (Taipei Tech), covering areas including physics, chemistry, environmental sustainability, information technology, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. These initiatives demonstrate the growing importance of structured research cooperation and seed funding in fostering sustainable academic partnerships between Lithuania and Taiwan.

Cooperation with Japan has also advanced through educational and research initiatives. The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU), in collaboration with researchers from Tokai University and Keio University, pursued a bilateral research project in 2025–2026 focused on applying artificial intelligence to improve the early detection of gastric cancer through endoscopy. Kauno kolegija (Higher Education Institution) strengthened its partnership with Kanagawa University in robotics and aviation, pursuing joint project development and, in 2026, exploring further opportunities for collaborative research, publications and student mobility. Meanwhile, Klaipėda University expanded academic links with Taiwan's National Chung Hsing University through Erasmus+ KA171 mobility, guest lectures and academic exchanges focusing on ecotourism, forest recreation and cultural landscapes. Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) continued to develop its cooperation with Japanese universities and promote Asian studies and student mobility.

Taken together, these developments indicate that cooperation between Lithuanian and Asian higher education institutions is extending beyond traditional student and staff exchanges towards more structured research collaboration, joint funding opportunities and stronger institutional links. For Lithuania, partnerships with Asian universities provide access to international research networks, complementary expertise and advanced technologies, while supporting the development of research capacity, the international visibility of Lithuanian institutions and opportunities for students and researchers to engage in global academic communities. For Asian partners, cooperation with Lithuanian institutions offers additional connections to the European Higher Education and Research Areas, opportunities to participate in collaborative research and mobility initiatives, and pathways to establish wider academic networks within the European Union.

The benefits of this cooperation extend to the quality and relevance of higher education. Student and staff mobility, joint research, visiting lectureships, academic conferences and the development of collaborative curricula strengthen intercultural understanding, language and professional skills, and prepare graduates to operate in increasingly interconnected labour markets. At institutional and regional levels, sustained

partnerships facilitate knowledge transfer, support innovation and talent development, and create opportunities to address shared challenges in areas such as digital transformation, healthcare, engineering and environmental sustainability. Over time, these links contribute to closer academic, scientific and economic relations between Lithuania, other European countries and Asian partners.

Within this broader context, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process provides an important platform for policy dialogue, the exchange of good practices and the advancement of shared priorities in education.

3.13. Philippines

Philippines' ASEAN Chairship 2026 | "Navigating Our Future, Together"

I. OVERVIEW

Aligned with national development priorities and the broader vision of an integrated, inclusive, and future-ready ASEAN Community, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines has played an active leadership role in advancing regional and international higher education cooperation during the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship in 2026.

Guided by the overarching theme, **"Navigating Our Future, Together,"** the Philippines has pursued a forward-looking higher education agenda anchored on three strategic pillars: **Sustainability, Digital Transformation, and Regional Harmonisation.** Through ministerial engagements, regional policy dialogues, international partnerships, and programme development, CHED has worked to strengthen higher education systems, expand academic and research mobility, promote innovation, and enhance the competitiveness of ASEAN higher education institutions.

The following highlights the Philippines' major accomplishments, ongoing initiatives, and future commitments throughout 2026.

II. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INITIATIVES

1. February 2026: EU-ASEAN Peer Learning Workshop

12–14 February 2026 | EU-ASEAN Peer Learning Workshop: Aligning Frameworks in a Changing World | Manila

The Philippines commenced its higher education engagements under its ASEAN Chairship with the **EU-ASEAN Peer Learning Workshop**, organized by the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package for Higher Education (SCOPE-HE), in cooperation with the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Secretariat and CHED.

The workshop brought together representatives from the European Union, ASEAN qualifications authorities, national ministries, and technical experts to strengthen cooperation between the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Discussions covered qualifications recognition, digital and green skills, micro-credentials, quality assurance, and lifelong learning. A related technical dialogue on 14 February provided targeted support to Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam in advancing their AQRF referencing processes.

The engagement reinforced the Philippines' commitment to regional qualifications recognition as a foundation for academic mobility, workforce development, and a more integrated ASEAN Higher Education Common Space.

2. June 2026: ASEAN High-Level Policy Dialogue and Ministers' Roundtable

25–26 June 2026 | Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Manila

One of the most significant milestones of the Philippines' Chairship was the hosting of the **ASEAN High-Level Policy Dialogue and Ministers' Roundtable on Higher Education**, under the theme *"Advancing Equitable Access to Quality Higher Education through Digital Transformation, Sustainability, and Regional Harmonisation."*

The High-Level Policy Dialogue provided a technical platform for senior officials, experts, international organizations, and higher education stakeholders to discuss emerging priorities, particularly artificial intelligence in teaching and learning, digital transformation, educator development, and equitable access to quality higher education.

Building on these discussions, the Ministers' Roundtable provided a high-level platform for strategic exchange, consensus-building, and the adoption of concrete regional initiatives. The meetings resulted in three important outcome documents:

1. **ASEAN Ministerial Statement on Access to Quality Higher Education through Digital Transformation and Sustainability** – articulating the shared commitment of ASEAN Member States to promote equitable access, AI-enabled teaching and learning, digital transformation, and sustainable higher education development.
2. **Terms of Reference for the ASEAN Centre of Excellence for Teacher Education and Development (ACTED)**– providing the framework for regional cooperation in teacher education, professional development, policy research, and capacity-building.
3. **ASEAN Global Exchange for Mobility and Scholarship Plus (ASEAN GEMS Plus) Proposal** – expanding regional cooperation beyond traditional student mobility and scholarships to include research grants, researcher mobility, innovation partnerships, and collaborative projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

These outcomes represent the Philippines' significant contribution to the ASEAN higher education agenda, translating regional discussions into concrete policy directions and cooperation mechanisms.

3. September 2026: Advancing International Education and Qualifications Recognition

7 September 2026 | Philippines' Accession to the Tokyo Convention

The Philippine Senate concurred in the country's accession to the **Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, or Tokyo Convention**, following the signing of the Instrument of Accession by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on 10 October 2025.

The Convention establishes a regional framework for fair, transparent, and efficient recognition of higher education qualifications, facilitating academic mobility and opportunities for Filipino students, graduates, researchers, and professionals across the Asia-Pacific. Senate concurrence represents a major milestone toward the Philippines' formal participation in the regional qualifications recognition framework, subject

to completion of the remaining accession requirements, including the deposit of the Instrument of Accession with UNESCO.

8 September 2026 | Establishment of the Education Philippines (EduPhil) Program

Through **Executive Order No. 124, s. 2026**, the government established the Education Philippines (EduPhil) Program, designating CHED as its lead implementing agency.

The initiative adopts a whole-of-government approach to promoting the Philippines as a preferred destination for international students seeking higher education, research, and training. A major component is the development of the EduPhil Portal, envisioned as a secure and interoperable digital platform for international student information, documentation, institutional endorsements, and inter-agency referrals.

Through EduPhil, the Philippines aims to strengthen its international education brand, attract foreign students and academic partners, and improve coordination among government agencies responsible for international education services.

30 September–1 October 2026 | UNESCO–Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust (KFIT) Annual Meeting | Manila

The Philippines further strengthened its international engagement by hosting the **UNESCO–Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust Initiative Annual Meeting**, entitled *"Towards a Shared Higher Education Space: Facilitating Cross-border Mobility and the Recognition of Qualifications for Students and Professionals in the Asia-Pacific."*

The meeting brought together regional stakeholders to discuss qualifications recognition, student and professional mobility, and cooperation among national information centres. It complemented the Philippines' efforts toward accession to the Tokyo Convention and reinforced its commitment to strengthening international cooperation in higher education.

4. October 2026: Strengthening Regional Cooperation through ASEAN and SEAMEO

13–16 October 2026 | CHED–SEAMEO RIHED Higher Education Week | Iloilo City

In partnership with SEAMEO RIHED, CHED hosted the **CHED–SEAMEO RIHED Higher Education Week 2026**, comprising three major regional gatherings: the

34th SEAMEO RIHED Governing Board Meeting, the Regional Policy Conference on Future-Ready Higher Education: Leadership, Innovation and Sustainability, and the 20th Annual Review Meeting of the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme.

The engagements brought together regional policymakers and higher education leaders to discuss future-ready higher education, institutional cooperation, student mobility, innovation, and sustainability. They also strengthened the Philippines' partnership with SEAMEO RIHED and its commitment to advancing regional academic collaboration.

27–28 October 2026 | 4th ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Higher Education | Manila

CHED, in collaboration with the **Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education (SCOPE-HE)**, hosted the **4th ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Higher Education**, under the theme *"Advancing Innovation and Skills for a Sustainable Blue Economy."*

The dialogue brought together policymakers, higher education institutions, TVET representatives, industry partners, and development organizations to explore the role of higher education in developing the skills, research, and innovation needed for a sustainable blue economy.

Discussions highlighted marine resource management, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and university-industry partnerships. The event also featured the Sustainable Futures Showcase, highlighting 21 education and research partnerships involving 117 collaborating institutions across ASEAN and Europe.

The Philippines likewise underscored its contribution, alongside Indonesia, to the development of the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework in 2023, reaffirming the importance of higher education in advancing sustainable regional development.

5. November 2026: Deepening ASEAN-UK Partnerships and Internationalization

3–5 November 2026 | ASEAN-UK Higher Education Week | Manila

In collaboration with the **British Council**, CHED hosted the **ASEAN-UK Higher Education Week 2026**, providing a strategic platform for strengthening cooperation between ASEAN and the United Kingdom.

The event brought together policymakers, university leaders, researchers, and international education stakeholders to explore opportunities in transnational education, academic mobility, research collaboration, quality assurance, digital transformation, and lifelong learning. It also facilitated institutional networking and partnership development among universities from ASEAN and the United Kingdom.

4 November 2026 | Launch of the Philippines Transnational Higher Education Strategy

A major milestone of the ASEAN-UK Higher Education Week was the launch of the **Philippines Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) Strategy**, led by CHED.

Anchored on Republic Act No. 11448, or the Transnational Higher Education Act, the Strategy provides a national direction for strengthening partnerships between Philippine and foreign higher education institutions through collaborative academic programmes, joint research, student and faculty mobility, and other forms of cross-border education.

Through the Strategy, the Philippines seeks to attract international academic partners and talent, strengthen institutional capabilities, expand access to internationally competitive programmes, and position the country as a trusted partner and destination for quality transnational higher education.

III. ONGOING AND FUTURE INITIATIVES

1. ASEAN GEMS Plus Prototype: From Policy Commitment to Implementation

Following the adoption of the ASEAN GEMS Plus Proposal during the June Ministers' Roundtable, the Philippines is advancing the development of the initiative's prototype as a regional platform for student and researcher mobility, research grants, innovation partnerships, and collaborative projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The next major milestone is the **High-Level Soft Launch and Demonstration of the ASEAN GEMS Plus Prototype**, scheduled for 24 November 2026 in Bohol, alongside the 25th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers of Education (ASEMME). The activity is expected to introduce the prototype's features and demonstrate its potential to connect ASEAN institutions, researchers, and other stakeholders through an integrated cooperation platform.

The Philippines envisions ASEAN GEMS Plus as a sustainable regional mechanism that will expand opportunities for academic exchange, collaborative research, and institutional partnerships beyond its Chairship year.

2. ASEAN Centre of Excellence for Teacher Education and Development

Building on the adoption of the ACTED Terms of Reference during the June Ministerial Meeting, CHED will continue supporting consultations and institutional arrangements toward its establishment and operationalization. The Centre is envisioned to strengthen teacher education, professional development, policy research, and regional capacity-building.

3. Implementation of EduPhil and the TNHE Strategy

CHED will continue advancing the EduPhil Program, including the development of its digital portal, international education promotion strategy, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. In parallel, the implementation of the Philippines TNHE Strategy will focus on developing quality-assured partnerships, collaborative postgraduate programmes, joint research, and international academic opportunities.

4. AWPE 2026–2030 Commitments

The Philippines is committed to sustaining its contributions through the **ASEAN Work Plan on Education (AWPE) 2026–2030**, aligning its national higher education initiatives with relevant regional priorities, particularly digital transformation, teacher excellence, inclusive and lifelong learning, research and innovation, and regional harmonisation. CHED will work with Philippine government agencies, ASEAN Member States, higher education institutions, and development partners to translate the country's commitments into concrete programmes, institutional partnerships, and measurable outputs, including relevant initiatives under Programmes 4A and 4B and Programme 4A.2. Engagement with ASEAN ambassadors and diplomatic representatives has also helped build support for the Philippines' commitments and encourage broader regional cooperation.

5. Completion of the Tokyo Convention Accession Process

Following Senate concurrence, the Philippines will continue working toward the formal deposit of its Instrument of Accession with UNESCO and strengthen national mechanisms for qualifications recognition, academic mobility, and international cooperation.

6. Strengthening ASEAN and International Partnerships

CHED will continue deepening cooperation with ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat, the European Union, the United Kingdom, UNESCO, SEAMEO, and other strategic partners through bilateral agreements, policy dialogues, joint programmes, and institutional linkages.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CONTINUITY

10 November 2026 | CHED International Affairs Service National Strategic Planning Workshop

To consolidate the gains of the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship and establish a coherent direction for future regional and international engagements, CHED's International Affairs Service (IAS) successfully concluded its National Strategic Planning Workshop on 10 November 2026.

The workshop brought together IAS officials and personnel to assess accomplishments, review ongoing commitments, identify emerging priorities, and establish strategic directions for the succeeding years.

Discussions focused on strengthening the Service's three strategic pillars—Sustainability, Digital Transformation, and Regional Harmonisation—and ensuring that international engagements are aligned with CHED's institutional priorities and national higher education development objectives.

The workshop also examined the continuity of key initiatives, including ASEAN GEMS Plus, ACTED, EduPhil, the Philippines TNHE Strategy, and the country's commitments under the AWPE 2026–2030.

This planning exercise marks an important transition from the intensive preparations and implementation of the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship toward a more coordinated, results-oriented, and sustainable programme of regional leadership and international cooperation.

V. CONCLUSION: SUSTAINING THE GAINS AND NAVIGATING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

The Philippines' 2026 ASEAN Chairship has provided an important opportunity to strengthen the country's leadership and contribution to regional higher education cooperation. Through CHED, the Philippines has not only convened major regional and international engagements but has also helped establish policy directions, strengthen institutional partnerships, and advance programmes that will benefit ASEAN beyond its year of Chairship.

The adoption of three regional outcome documents during the June Ministerial Meeting, the strengthening of ASEAN-EU and ASEAN-UK partnerships, the advancement of qualifications recognition through the Tokyo Convention, and the establishment of national initiatives such as EduPhil and the Philippines TNHE Strategy demonstrate the country's commitment to connecting policy development with practical implementation.

Moving forward, CHED will focus on sustaining these achievements through the implementation of the AWPE 2026–2030, operationalization of ASEAN GEMS Plus and ACTED, expansion of transnational higher education, and strengthening of international academic partnerships.

The recently concluded IAS National Strategic Planning Workshop further reinforces this commitment by providing a roadmap for institutional continuity, improved coordination, and results-oriented international engagement.

Ultimately, the Philippines envisions an ASEAN higher education landscape that is more connected, inclusive, innovative, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of its people.

The Philippines' contribution extends beyond its Chairship year: it is about building the policies, partnerships, and platforms that will enable ASEAN higher education to navigate its future, together.

3.14. Spain

Choose Spain: Attracting International Research Talent and Strengthening Asia-Europe Academic Mobility

Spain's *Choose Spain* strategy, developed by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities in alignment with the European *Choose Europe* initiative, aims to attract and retain international research talent by strengthening Spain's universities and research institutions as destinations for scientific careers.

Asia is an increasingly important partner. Initial applications for researcher residence and work authorisations from Asia rose from 274 in 2018 to 1,087 in 2025, almost quadrupling. Asia accounted for 34.9% of all initial applications in 2025, with notable increases from China (59 to 306) and India (77 to 280).

Academic qualification recognition also illustrates these links: in 2024–2026, Spain received 2,089 applications concerning qualifications obtained in Asian countries, including 534 for homologation and 1,555 for academic equivalence. Applications rose by 21.5% between 2024 and 2025; the 2026 figures are provisional. China, India and the Philippines were leading countries of study. Another example of institutional cooperation is the Beihang Valencia Polytechnic Institute (BVPI), a centre established by the Universitat Politècnica de València in China, whose creation has been authorised by the competent Spanish regional authority.

Against this backdrop, *Choose Spain* seeks to consolidate these growing scientific mobility flows by reducing administrative barriers and improving conditions for international researchers. Key measures include simplifying visa and residence procedures, providing practical guidance and digital tools for researchers and host institutions, and facilitating the recognition of foreign doctoral qualifications.

The strategy also reinforces research funding through programmes such as *ATRAE*, with nearly €100 million allocated between 2023 and 2025, and *Ramón y Cajal*, where international researchers represent approximately 30% of beneficiaries in recent calls.

Looking ahead, *Choose Spain* aims to strengthen Spain's international scientific attractiveness, creating further opportunities for Asia–Europe cooperation in higher education, research mobility and knowledge exchange.

3.15. Thailand

Thailand contributes to Asia-Europe education cooperation through student mobility, bilateral academic and research partnerships, and collaboration in quality assurance and recognition. The following selected initiatives describe recent activities, ongoing programmes and planned cooperation relevant to the ASEM Education Process.

Thailand Scholarships and Student Mobility

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), in collaboration with Thai higher education institutions, implements the Thailand Scholarships programme to offer international students with opportunities to undertake exchange and degree programmes in Thailand. The programme supports the internationalisation of participating institutions and provides opportunities for academic learning, intercultural exchange and the development of international networks.

MHESI programme data compiled for this contribution record 76 institutional participations and 712 scholarship-supported programmes across Academic Years 2022–2026, comprising 77 exchange programmes and 635-degree programmes. These cumulative figures provide background information for the reporting period; institutional participations may include repeat participation across years, and programme totals do not represent the number of scholarship recipients.

For Academic Year 2026, scholarship opportunities are advertised through programme calls and participating institutions. A specific Asia–Europe example is the Thailand Scholarships for Austrian Students (ASEA-UNINET)

2026 programme, implemented by MHESI's International Affairs Division in collaboration with Thai institutions participating in the ASEAN-European Academic University Network (ASEA-UNINET). This call offers scholarships to Austrian nationals pursuing Master's degree at participating Thai institutions, providing a practical route for educational cooperation between Thailand and Austria.

Complementing these degree scholarships, the Thailand–Austria Research Mobility Program supports Austrian PhD students and postdoctoral researchers engaged in teaching or research at ASEA-UNINET member universities in Austria to undertake short-term research stays at member universities in Thailand. Open to all fields of study, the programme requires applicants to identify a Thai research advisor and develop a joint research plan with the host institution. MHESI provides THB 50,000 per approved project through the Thai host university, with additional support subject to each institution's arrangements, to strengthen research collaboration and academic networks between Thailand and Austria.

The Academic Year 2027 Thailand Scholarships call is expected to be announced and promoted in early February 2027, according to MHESI's current planning. The timing remains subject to the official announcement.

Cooperation with France in Higher Education and Research

In May 2026, Thailand advanced cooperation with France through the Franco-Thai Joint Committee Meeting on Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation and the Franco-Thai Symposium. The symposium, organised by MHESI in collaboration with the French Embassy in Thailand, took place in Bangkok on 14 May 2026. It brought together more than 300 participants and included the signing of approximately 20 cooperation agreements among participating institutions. These agreements provide a basis for further institutional cooperation.

One concrete example is the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and France's Institute of Research for Development (IRD). The agreement provides a framework for joint research projects, exchange of researchers and students, and capacity development, with cooperation addressing environmental and development challenges. This illustrates how bilateral dialogue can connect institutional partnerships with research and the development of scientific personnel.

Policy Dialogue and Research Partnerships with Germany

Thailand and Germany engage in ministerial-level policy dialogue to identify shared priorities and strengthen links between higher education cooperation, research, innovation and skills development. The first MHESI–Germany Policy Dialogue was held virtually on 7 November 2024 with Germany's then Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), following the signing of a Joint Declaration of Intent on 23 April 2024. Participants exchanged information on science, technology and innovation policies, funding mechanisms, major initiatives and possible joint activities, and agreed to hold the dialogue quarterly.

MHESI's overview records five rounds of dialogue from November 2024 to February 2026, with cooperation covering higher education, research, technical and vocational education and training, emerging technologies and future skills. The overview identifies Germany's Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) as the subsequent counterpart.

EU-ASEAN Cooperation on Quality Assurance

An ASEAN–EU Workshop on Quality Assurance in Higher Education is scheduled to take place in Bangkok on 17–18 November 2026 under the EU-funded Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education (SCOPE-HE). The workshop is expected to bring together quality assurance and accreditation bodies, along with other higher education stakeholders from ASEAN and Europe, to explore how regional frameworks can facilitate recognition, academic mobility and mutual trust.

The planned discussions will draw on the comparability study of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Peer learning, panel discussions and group work will address implementation, stakeholder ownership and practical use of the AQAF. As of 9 October 2026, this remains a forthcoming activity.

Thailand, through the Ministry of Education, maintains active educational cooperation with various European nations. The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and bilateral agreements currently in effect—at both the ministerial and institutional levels—are as follows:

1) Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the Field of Vocational Education and Training between the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of the Federal Republic of Germany (signed in Berlin on 14 September 2026)

Areas of cooperation focus on advancing vocational education and training. Key initiatives include benchmarking national systems, exchanging procedural insights, and promoting vocational pathways through career guidance and counseling. Additionally, the partnership emphasizes curriculum development aligned with labor market demands, upskilling and reskilling for lifelong learning, teacher professional development, and knowledge sharing in digitisation, AI, and sustainable transformation.

2) Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports of the Kingdom of Spain on Educational Cooperation (signed in Madrid on 23 April 2025)

The cooperation focuses on the promotion and development of the teaching and learning of the Spanish language and culture in Thailand and the teaching and learning of the Thai culture in Spain while fostering people-to-people ties. It aims to enrich students through cultural diversity and international education, while facilitating professional development and exchange programs for students, educators, and experts alike.

Key Projects and Outcome between 2024 – 2026

1) Professional Development for English Language Teachers

In Fiscal Year 2025-2026, The Ministry of Education of Thailand through the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), in partnership with the British Council Thailand, is implementing a professional development initiative for English language teachers in the southern border provinces. Designed to enhance English instructional capabilities, the program utilizes the "English Reboot" digital platform to ensure equitable professional development opportunities for teachers in remote areas. In addition, the initiative includes establishing a comprehensive English language learning ecosystem within a pilot framework to foster an immersive environment that supports English communication in daily life and practical, real-world situations.

2) The Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Programme

The programme aims to enhance language education within Thai educational institutions by providing students and teachers with direct opportunities to develop communication skills with native speakers. Executed under educational agreements with network partners, the initiative deploys volunteer teachers, qualified individuals, and university students from partner nations to serve as language teaching assistants in schools across Bangkok and various provinces for mutually designated terms. To ensure effective implementation, comprehensive orientation sessions are conducted for both the participating teaching assistants and local school teachers.

Currently, the initiative features teaching assistants specializing in three languages from three partner nations. The Number of Teaching Assistants from 2024 to 2026 is detailed below:

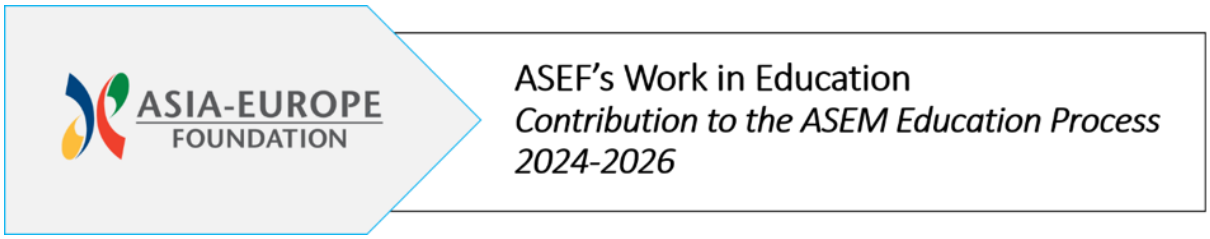
Project	Start Year	Duration of participation	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
German Teaching Assistants Project (GTA)	2013	3 months	7	6	8
French Teaching Assistants Project (FTA)	2013	3 months	17	16	17
Spanish Teaching Assistants Project (STA)	2022	3 or 8 months	2	2	3

4. ASEM Stakeholders: Ongoing and Future ASEM Education Initiatives and Projects

The Asia-Europe Meeting has many stakeholders, which are institutions, organizations, interest groups, etc. who are involved in the ASEM Education Process or have an interest in its success but are not official partners of ASEM. The most active stakeholder in the AEP is the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the only permanent institution of ASEM. Other stakeholders currently involved in the ASEM Education Process are: ASEM LLL Hub, ASEM-DUO Secretariat, ASEM Work Placement Programme (ASEM WPP), Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), European University Association (EUA), ASEAN University Network (AUN), European Students' Union (ESU), Erasmus Student Network (ESN), European Public Law Organization (EPLO), European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), European Training Foundation (ETF), International Association of Universities (IAU), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre specialising in higher education and development (SEAMEO RIHED), UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and others.

The ASEM contact persons were asked to provide information on recent, ongoing and future initiatives and projects fostering cooperation of Asia and Europe in the field of (higher) education. The following is a non-exhaustive list of activities and shall give an idea of what is happening in the ASEM Education context.

4.1.Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)



About ASEF

Established in 1997 as an intergovernmental, not for profit organisation, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) remains ASEM's only permanent institution with the mission to connect institutions and individuals of Asia and Europe to address and collaborate on common global challenges. Learn more at www.asef.org

ASEF's Work in Education

ASEF connects the youth, teachers, higher education leaders with policy makers across both regions. Through policy dialogues, capacity building and the creation of bi-regional networks, ASEF contributes to deeper mutual understanding and sustainable collaboration.

Connection to the ASEM Education Process

Aligned with the ASEM Education Process (AEP), ASEF's education projects connect civil society and government stakeholders to address shared challenges. Project outcomes inform AEP expert groups and ministerial meetings while advancing **Strategic Objective #1** on inclusive Asia–Europe mobility and **Strategic Objective #3** on skills and competences under the ASEM Education 2023 Strategy.

Impact on Connectivity

Key Findings from the 2026 Alumni Survey Based:

- 97% confirmed that ASEF's projects helped them build personal connections and networks
- 79% of participants reported still being in contact with their project peers
- 38% of ASEFEdu alumni of education projects established new collaborations

10th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education
[Un]debated Ways of Rethinking Higher Education

[Un]Debated Ways of Rethinking Higher Education

ARC10 2024-2026

The ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC) is the **"Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEMME)"** and the only bi-regional multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for university and student leaders, policy makers and ministers to discuss higher education issues and shape the education landscape in Asia and Europe.

The 10th edition of ARC under the theme **"[Un]debated Ways of Rethinking Higher Education"** focused on key areas such as Digital Transformation, Access and Equity, and Recognition and Balanced Mobility.

Key highlights of the project 2024-2026:

- Support to the ASEM Education Process as the ASEMME Official Dialogue Partner
- **500+ Participants** for both online and onsite sessions
- **41 Thought Leaders** provided their insights on current trends
- **100% Inspired towards Action** on relevant topics after participating
- **212,000+ Reached** on social media with different messages
- **100% Benefited from Participation** for their own professional or organisational work

1 | DEBATE WEBINAR SERIES: [Un]Debated Ways of Rethinking Higher Education

October to November 2024, Online

ASEF hosted the ARC10 Debate Webinar Series from October to December 2024. With each session focusing on key themes such as Digital Transformation, Access and Equity, and Recognition and Balanced Mobility, we gathered experts from all over Asia and Europe to join us in incisive discussions on the future of higher education in these areas. Each webinar had a Moderator who set the stage by providing the status quo contextualising the debate prompt of the session.



2 | POLICY DIALOGUE SESSION: From Campus to Career: Redefining Equity, Access and Success in Higher Education in a Digital Age
19-22 November 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

We organised the ARC10 Policy Dialogue session as part of the ISOM hosted by Thailand's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) on 19 November 2024. Our expert speakers from various organisational backgrounds and contexts highlighted persistent inequalities in higher education access, equity, and success, including gender, socioeconomic, and disability-related barriers, and emphasised the need for stronger policies, funding, and regulations to address these gaps and prevent digital transformation from deepening existing inequalities. Participants from South Korea, Malaysia, Cambodia, Romania, and Thailand shared national challenges, existing initiatives, and opportunities for further exploration and cooperation. Read more about our session here!

3 | POLICY DIALOGUE SESSION: Digital Transformation: Will Teaching and Learning Benefit from Artificial Intelligence in the Next Decade?
20-22 November 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

Between 20-22 November 2024, more than 200 university leaders, researchers, policymakers and NGO stakeholders attended the 2024 Inter-Regional Research Symposium hosted by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization – Regional Centre for Higher Education Development (SEAMEO RIHED). On the opening day, ASEF presented a plenary session themed "Digital Transformation: Will Teaching and Learning Benefit from Artificial Intelligence in the Next Decade?" The session, moderated by Ms Reka TOZSA, Director for Education at ASEF, featured experts representing opposing perspectives on the topic, which resulted in lively debates. Read more about our session here!

4 | POLICY DIALOGUE WORKSHOP: Reimagining SDGs and Education Post-2030
18-19 November 2025, Bucharest, Romania

In collaboration with the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) and Romania's Ministry of Education and Research (MOER), ASEF held the ARC10 Policy Dialogue on 20–21 November 2025 at the National University of Political Science and Public Administration, alongside the first ASEM Education Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1). **29 participants,** representing government, academia and youth organisations, **from 10 ASEM countries** shared sustainability challenges and practices, then developed policy proposals and a common vision for the post-2030 education agenda. The meeting incorporated the **in-person meeting of the ASEM Education Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals**. Read the policy dialogue recap here.





5 | THE ARC10 POLICY DIALOGUE COMMUNIQUÉ

The output of the dialogue outlines three key messages to inform discussions ahead of the ASEMME10 and contribute to shaping a more inclusive, locally responsive, and human-centred global education agenda beyond 2030:



- **Addressing the Unfinished Foundations of 2030.** The post-2030 agenda should address these unfinished priorities through more inclusive policies and monitoring frameworks that balance universal indicators with regional and national realities.
- **Navigating the Global Vision and Local Realities.** the post-2030 agenda should embrace locally grounded approaches, indigenous knowledge, and systems thinking. Achieving meaningful transformation also requires collective responsibility and stronger collaboration among governments, educational institutions, industry, civil society, and local communities.
- **Looking Ahead While Staying Grounded.** The post-2030 agenda should prioritise ethical governance, resilience, and human agency, ensuring that technological advancement supports social cohesion and human development.

The communiqué calls for bold, sustained leadership and also identifies strategic shifts to guide the next global education framework. Collectively, these shifts advocate for a post-2030 education agenda that is human-centred, culturally responsive, ethically grounded, and focused on lasting systemic change, supported by continued multilateral cooperation between Asia and Europe. Read the Communique here.



The 5th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab5) was a ten-week programme focused on Universities' Role in AI Innovation Ecosystems. It was a comprehensive peer-to-peer learning experience implemented virtually from May to June and in-person in October of 2024.

The **online phase** began on 2 May and ended on 27 June, spanning nine virtual sessions. Our **87 participants from 31 Asian and European countries** spent the first four weeks of the programme in a Self-Learning Phase, where they heard from experts on ASEFInnoLab5's three subthemes. In the succeeding Team Learning Phase, they teamed up to create forward-looking Position Papers.

For the **onsite phase**, we welcomed **50 academics from 22 countries** across Asia and Europe at Fudan University in Shanghai, China from 21-25 October. This week-long collaborative experience gathered outstanding participants from the online cohort, invited experts from academe and industry sectors, and the **ASEM Education Expert Group on Digitalisation and AI**.



Get to know this edition's key outputs:



- **A selection of 16 Position Papers**. This 156-page publication is a collection of position papers produced by the ASEFInnoLab5 online cohort. We launched this incredible output online on 28 November 2024 to an audience of 140 participants.

- **A selection of White Papers.** Participants of the onsite phase worked together to develop 3 whitepapers: AI Governance, AI in Education, and AI for Sustainable Development, these offer high-level strategic guidance, outlining key principles and bold, actionable recommendations to help university leaders navigate the rapidly evolving AI landscape.



The 6th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab6) placed the spotlight on the critical role that universities play in developing skills for an AI-powered future.

Lasting 11 weeks in total, the **Online Learning and Collaboration Phase** ran from May to July 2025 with **200+ participants from 39 countries**. Our participants gained insights and knowledge on the theme during the four-week Self-Learning Phase, and the seven-week Team Learning Phase where they grouped up to work on either micro-credential programmes or academic papers.

Outstanding teams working on promising outputs were invited to join one in-person event:

- **ASEFInnoLab6 Conference in Shanghai, China** in partnership with Fudan University on 14-17 October 2025
- **ASEFInnoLab6 Conference in Manila, Philippines** in partnership with De La Salle University on 3-7 November 2025
- **ASEFInnoLab6 Conference in Košice, Slovakia** in partnership with Pavol Jozef Šafárik University on 2-5 December 2025 in conjunction with the in-person meeting of the **ASEM Education Expert Group on Digitalisation and AI**



Get to know this edition's key outputs:

- **16 academic papers** will be published in a book of conference proceedings as part of **Springer Nature's Lecture Notes in Educational Technology (LNET)** at the end of 2026. Find our upcoming book on Springer LNET's website here.
- **7 micro-credential programmes** were also developed on the theme in this programme, covering various areas such as digital ethics, skills for Industry 5.0, and fraud risk management.
- **2 Manifestos** were born from rich exchanges during our onsite events:



- Shanghai Manifesto. This document calls on universities to put people before algorithms, ensuring that technology enhances, rather than diminishes, human agency, creativity, and critical thinking. Read the final version here.
- Košice Manifesto. This document focuses on principles and priorities for making HEIs as enablers of smart AI dissemination for an inclusive, ethical, and future-ready society. Read the final version here.

The Role of Universities in Advancing AI for Good

ASEFInnoLab7 in 2026

The 7th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab7) focused on **"The Role of Universities in Advancing AI for Good"**, explores how universities can shape artificial intelligence (AI) innovation to serve the common good through ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible approaches.

Following its biggest Open Call run to date, this edition implemented two components:

- White Paper Lab. This component gathered **62 higher education experts, academics, and researchers from 28 countries** in Asia and Europe to co-create strategic white papers offering actionable recommendations for university leaders and education policymakers through a holistic hybrid programme. Our teams joined virtual onboarding sessions, followed by a drafting phase, and afterwards presented their draft at an in-person event.

- Trailblazers Webinar Series. We held four webinars in June 2026 aimed at showcasing good practices, institutional approaches, and concrete use cases demonstrating how universities are harnessing AI for societal benefit. We are proud to have welcomed **282 participants from 48 countries** in this series. Read more about the sessions here.



The White Paper Lab, the edition's main component, also featured two major in-person activities:

- ASEFInnoLab7 Coordinators' Meeting **in Shanghai, China**, hosted in partnership with **Fudan University** on 21-25 April 2026, where white paper leads laid the groundwork for the collaborative drafting process and contributed to the 2026 Shanghai Forum.

- ASEFInnoLab7 Conference **in Nottingham, United Kingdom**, co-organised with the **University of Nottingham** on 24-28 August 2026. The conference brought together **75 participants from 28 countries** for expert discussions, peer learning, and collaborative refinement of the draft white papers. The event incorporated the in-person meeting of the **ASEM Education Expert Group on Digitalisation and AI**

Nine strategic white papers are being developed across three thematic areas: **AI for Global Good, AI for Public Interest, and AI for Institutional Excellence**. They are scheduled for launch in November 2026 at the International Association of Universities' 17th General Conference **in Perth, Australia**, where we will hold a workshop session with university leaders. With this compendium, the project will provide policy-relevant guidance to strengthen universities' contribution to AI for common good.

ASEFYLS LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN SOCIETY BUILDINGS 5.0

Leadership in Society 5.0
ASEFYLS Capacity Trainings *2024*

In 2024, representatives of youth and student organisations were invited to develop their cross-cultural competences and were empowered to create change in their communities. From among 4,200+ applicants, **107 Participants & Resource Persons** were invited to participate in the programme, and 1,700+ Youth were reached through multiplier activities organised by participants. ASEFYLS2024 was organised online, in Beijing & Hangzhou, China and in Budapest, Hungary between 2 July – 3 December 2024, with 3 phases:

Knowledge Building Phase: July 2024 | Online

- **78 Participants** joined live trainings, workshops, and peer-to-peer exploration to deepen their understanding of Leadership and Society 5.0. As part of the programme, they completed individual tasks and received extra resources for self-paced learning. Read more about the Knowledge Building Phase here.

In-Person Trainings: Aug-Oct 2024 | China and Hungary

- In-Person Training: **10 - 18 August 2024 | Beijing & Hangzhou, China:** The training was organised in partnership with the All-China Youth Federation and held alongside the World Youth Development Forum. **40 Participants** attended this training, titled the Asia-Europe Young Leaders Campus. Read more about the event here.

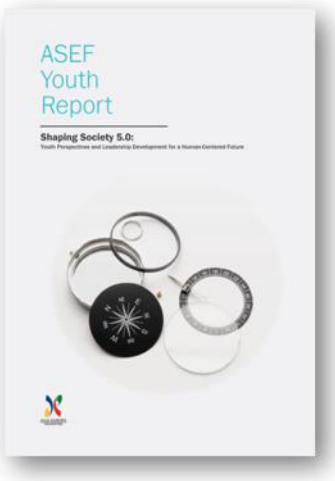


- In-Person Training: **6 – 12 October 2024 | Budapest, Hungary:** The training was organised in partnership with the Council of Europe Youth Department and hosted in the Council of Europe Youth Centre Budapest. **38 participants** attended this training titled the Asia-Europe Training Seminar on Youth, Digitalisation and Intercultural Dialogue. Read more about the event here.

Multiplier Activities: Sep-Dec 2024 | Online & in Local Communities

- Participants moved from theory to action, demonstrating their leadership through organising multiplier activities in their local communities and **reached over 1,700 youth** through these multiplier activities. Read more about the activities here.

TRENDS REPORT 2024



Shaping Society 5.0: Youth Perspectives and Leadership Development for a Human-Centred Future

Summarising almost 4,000 young leaders' perspectives from 51 Asian and European countries on the future that young people envision for Society 5.0, and how we can prepare and train them to succeed in this rapidly evolving, tech-driven world. See the report here.



The 6th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS6) brought together young leaders under the theme **"Leadership in Society 5.0,"** focusing on self, team, and societal leadership. Its hybrid programme combined Navigators Training, online knowledge building, team-based case study development, and an in-person summit in Osaka. It engaged **89 participants and Navigators, 204 webinar attendees, and 40 resource persons**. Key outcomes included stronger leadership skills, cross-cultural collaboration, practical technology-based solutions to societal challenges, and expanded Asia–Europe networks.

Navigators Training: 13-18 July 2025 | Warsaw, Poland

- for the 6th ASEF Young Leaders Summit, ASEF organised the ASEFYLS6 Navigators Training in Warsaw, Poland between 13-18 July 2025, hosted by the **College of Europe Natolin**. **19 selected young professionals and students from 19 countries** in Asia and Europe (Alumni of ASEFEdu and Partner organisations) joined the training to prepare them for taking on the role of 'Navigators' in the subsequent phases, where they would co-lead groups of participants through their team collaboration phases and learning journey. Read more about the event here.

Knowledge Building Phase: 29 July – 26 August 2025 | Online

- From among the 10,300+ applicants for this programme, **89 participants from 50 countries** were carefully selected to join. The programme started with the online Knowledge Building Phase, where participants joined live **webinars, workshops, and peer-to-peer exchange exercises** to **deepen their understanding of Leadership and Society 5.0**. As part of the programme, they completed individual tasks online and received extra resources for self-paced learning through our e-learning platform. This phase also welcomed 204 webinar attendees, making the learning opportunities more accessible to a wider audience. Read more about the Webinars here.

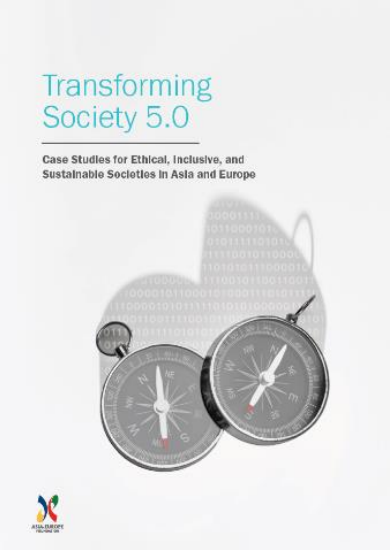
Leadership in Action: 27 August – 28 September | Online

- As part of the programme, ASEFYLS6 participants were encouraged to demonstrate their leadership through action. This year, together with **UNDP's Youth Empowerment Portfolio in Asia and the Pacific team**, we challenged them to find best practice solutions for real-life global challenges. During this phase participants worked in intercultural teams to collect **case studies from across Asia & Europe** on how technology is used to solve societal challenges. The challenge questions shaping the case studies were curated and selected in collaboration with the **Movers Programme, an initiative by UNDP's Youth Empowerment Portfolio in Asia and the Pacific (YEP-AP)**. Over the course of nearly two months, the teams collaborated across borders, engaging in online discussions and joint research. The case studies were then presented in-person at the Youth Summit in Osaka, Japan, and at the Japan World Expo 2025



In-Person Youth Summit: 29 September – 5 October 2025 | Osaka, Japan

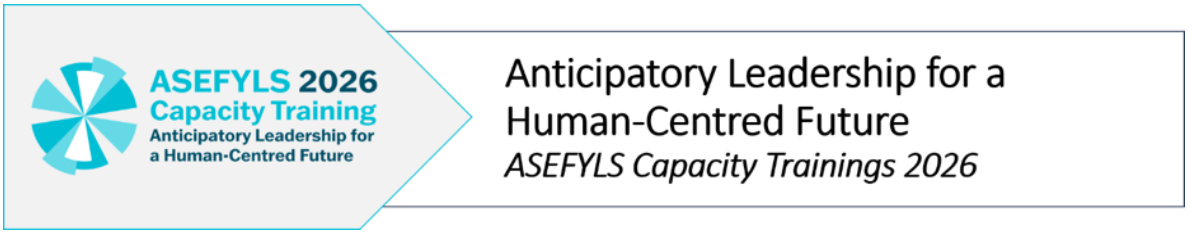
- **89 participants from 50 countries** attended the 6th ASEF Young Leaders Summit in Osaka, Japan. It physically brought the participants together to **Osaka, Japan** to build on their learnings from the online Knowledge Building Phase in a local setting, engaging in dialogue and exchanges with peers and experts in the field to build networks for future collaborations between the regions. The training was organised **in partnership with the Japan Hub for Innovative Global Education (JIGE)** and **hosted by Kansai University**. Read more about the event here.



Transforming Society 5.0. Case Studies for Ethical, Inclusive and Sustainable Societies in Asia and Europe

The report is a collection of **40 case studies from across Asia and Europe** illustrating **how technology is being leveraged to address some of today's most pressing societal challenges**. This compilation offers real-world examples of innovation and collaboration, showcasing how ideas are being translated into tangible impact within communities across the two regions.

Through the lens of these case studies, the publication aims to inspire changemakers, especially youth, to reimagine how technology can be applied for social good, placing young leaders at the heart of a more human-centered digital transformation.



The ASEFYLS Capacity Trainings 2026 is a youth leadership programme focusing on '**Anticipatory Leadership for a Human-Centered Future',** running from June to November 2026. Bringing together representatives of youth and student organisations across Asia and Europe, the programme combines online capacity building, an additional in-person learning opportunity for selected participants, and community-based multiplier activities. Its approach connects self-leadership, team leadership and societal leadership, enabling participants to translate learning into local engagement and cross-regional cooperation.

Online Training: 9 June – 30 July 2026

- The **eight-week virtual programme** brought together more than 100 participants from Asia and Europe. Webinars, interactive exercises and leadership dialogues combined theory, practical learning and policy perspectives to develop anticipatory leadership capacities. In addition, webinars were opened up to a further 176 attendees to learn from experts. Read more about the webinars here.

Asia-Europe Youth Leadership Training: 23 – 29 August 2026 | Tromsø, Norway

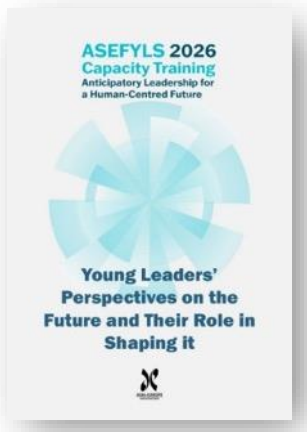
- **39 participants** selected from the Online Training were invited to the "Asia-Europe Youth Leadership Training: Anticipatory Leadership in the Arctic" in Tromsø, Norway. Beyond the online Training, it was an opportunity for further exploration of the topic, and a deep dive into the Arctic as a case study for Anticipatory Leadership. Read more about the event here.

Multiplier Activities: Aug - Nov 2026 | Online & in Local Communities

- Participants are tasked with organising local events that apply and disseminate their learning on anticipatory leadership. This component is designed to extend the programme's reach beyond the training cohort and connect leadership development with community-level action.



TRENDS REPORT 2026



Young Leaders' Perspectives on the Future and Their Role in Shaping it.

Summarising over 3,000 young leaders' perspectives from 51 Asian and European countries on how young people see the future and their role in shaping it, examining how they imagine tomorrow; how they navigate risk and uncertainty; and what capabilities and support they need to act as anticipatory leaders. The Report will be published in early 2027.

ASIA-EUROPE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG LEADERS

Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Initiative for Young Leaders *2024*

The Asia-Europe Science & Technology Initiative for Young Leaders is a new project of ASEF's Education Department as of 2024, which conducted research and connected young academics, diplomats, professionals and students engaged in international collaborations related to science, technology, and innovation in Asia and Europe.

Through these pillars, we engaged young people to conduct research on Science & Technology Diplomacy strategies and activities in Asia and Europe, later bringing the preliminary findings from this research to international forums such as the Science & Technology For Society Forum in Kyoto, Japan and the World Science Forum 2024 in Budapest, Hungary, to share it with the wider scientific and diplomatic communities.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES FOR YOUNG LEADERS | 18-19 November 2024, Budapest, Hungary

ASEF partnered with the Central European Scientific Society of Innovation and Technology (CESSIT), the Tempus Public Foundation (TPF), the Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Candidates (DOSZ), the Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB), Ludovika University of Public Service and Edutus University to organise **two regional conferences** titled

- Early Career Researchers' Seminar on **'Academic Competitiveness: The Future of European Higher Education, Research and Development'** on 18 November 2024 hosted by Ludovika University
- Regional Conference on **'Collaboration & Competitiveness: The Future of Science, Technology, and Innovation'** on 19 November 2024 hosted by Corvinus University of Budapest

We brought a selected group of participants to the events, to engage in discussions and, for the first time, showcase the preliminary findings from *The Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Report* from Cambodia, India, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.



ASEF Side-Event at the World Science Forum | 20 November 2024, Budapest, Hungary

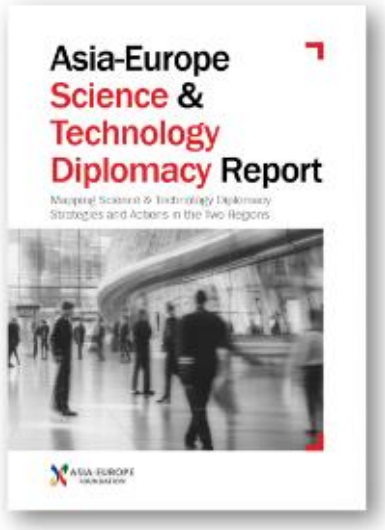
ASEF organised an **official Side Event to the World Science Forum** taking place in Budapest, Hungary between 20-23 November 2024 hosted by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which brought together **1,100+ scientists and policy makers** from all over the world to discuss the topic of 'The Science and Policy Interface at a Time of Global Transformations'.

ASEF's side-event on **'Bridging Continents & Advancing Science: The Future of Asia-Europe Science Diplomacy'** presented key findings from *The Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Report*, namely the preliminary results from the research conducted in Belgium, France, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Norway, Thailand, and Viet Nam – contributing with the Asia-Europe perspectives at the World Science Forum.

To read more about our engagement in these events here.



COMPARATIVE RESEARCH
Mapping the science and technology landscape in ASEF countries



The *'Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Report'* maps out the different country strategies, priorities, policy tools and their performance across 40+ ASEF member countries, the European Union and ASEAN Secretariat, and provide insights and recommendations to the relevant institutions on areas for enhanced collaboration within and across the two regions.

The report addresses two main questions:

- *What strategies do countries in Asia and Europe have for Science Diplomacy?*
- *What initiatives and tools are being used to implement these strategies?*

Read the Full comparative report and the 40+ country reports here.

Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Initiative for Young Professionals *2025*

In 2025, using the insights from the Asia-Europe Science and Technology Diplomacy Report, we looked for areas where ASEF could provide added value to this space. Through our work we have seen the value in **connecting young professionals engaged in international collaborations related to science, technology, and innovation** in Asia and Europe. We decided to organise workshops to highlight initiatives across different countries in Asia, as well as the Asia-Europe Training and Youth Summit on Science & Technology Diplomacy -.

COUNTRY FOCUSED WORKSHOP SERIES | 23 APRIL – 22 JULY 2025 | ONLINE

The **Country-Focused Workshop Series on Science and Technology Diplomacy** explored the S&T diplomacy ecosystems of four Asian countries – Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Indonesia and Thailand - introduced key stakeholders, and identified opportunities for Asia–Europe collaboration. Each country was featured in three webinars examining the roles of **government, academia and research institutions, and businesses**.

Recordings of all 12 webinars are available on our website here, where **summary reports** highlighting the main discussion points are also available for reading.

SCIENCE DIPLOMACY WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS AND POLICYMAKERS IN THE ASEAN REGION |1-2 DECEMBER 2025 | MANILA, PHILIPPINES

ASEF co-organised the **'Science Diplomacy Workshop for Young Researchers and Policymakers in the Asean Region'** together with the **Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Philippines** between 1-2 December in Manila, Philippines. The Workshop convened **12 early- to mid-career researchers and policymakers** from across ASEAN Member States to examine how science diplomacy can help tackle regional and global challenges. The programme was designed to deepen participants' understanding of science diplomacy and its three core dimensions – diplomacy for science; science for diplomacy; and science in diplomacy – all within the context of ASEAN priorities. Learn more about the full Workshop and ASEF's contributions on our website here.



ASIA-EUROPE TRAINING ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY 2025 | 23 OCT – 4 DEC 2025 | ONLINE

The Asia-Europe Training on Science and Technology Diplomacy was a **7-week-long online training**, organised between 23 October to 4 December online. It invited early-career **Research or Science Managers and Diplomats and Government Officials.** In total, **107 participants** from 41 countries, selected from 2,200+ applicants, joined webinars and hands-on interactive workshops led by experts in the field, designed to build practical skills and foster cross-regional connections. They were below 35 years old representing one of the following groups:

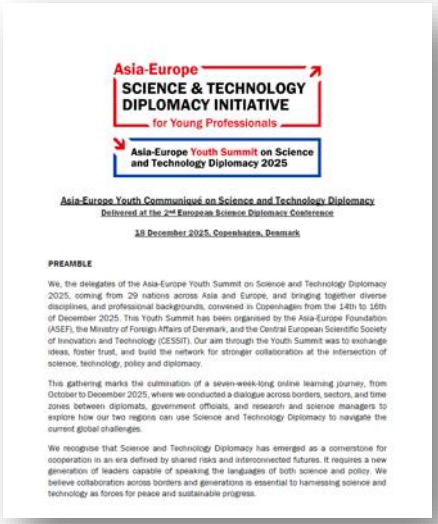
- **Civil Society: Research or Science Managers**, having a supervisory or coordination role (e.g. managing research projects or teams, overseeing research areas, or supporting institutional research strategy), and are involved in international science, technology and innovation cooperation.
- **Government: Diplomats and Government Officials** working in the intersection of science, technology, innovation and international relations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or relevant government institutions.

ASIA-EUROPE YOUTH SUMMIT ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY | 14-18 DECEMBER 2025 | COPENHAGEN DENMARK

40 selected participants from **29 countries** from the online Training were invited to join the Asia-Europe Youth Summit on Science and Technology Diplomacy, organised in partnership with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark** and the **Central European Scientific Society for Innovation and Technology (CESSIT)**. The summit was organised alongside the 2nd European Science Diplomacy Conference, where the participants **presented the 'Asia-Europe Youth Communiqué on Science and Technology Diplomacy'**, sharing the youth perspectives on Science Diplomacy to the wider diplomatic and scientific community.



ASIA-EUROPE YOUTH COMMUNIQUÉ ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY


Asia-Europe
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE
for Young Professionals

Asia-Europe Youth Summit on Science and Technology Diplomacy 2025

Asia-Europe Youth Communiqué on Science and Technology Diplomacy
Delivered at the 2nd European Science Diplomacy Conference

18 December 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark

PREAMBLE

We, the delegates of the Asia-Europe Youth Summit on Science and Technology Diplomacy 2025, coming from 29 nations across Asia and Europe, and bringing together diverse disciplines, and professional backgrounds, convened in Copenhagen from the 14th to 16th of December 2025. This Youth Summit has been organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and the Central European Scientific Society of Innovation and Technology (CESSIT). Our aim through the Youth Summit was to exchange ideas, foster trust, and build the network for stronger collaboration at the intersection of science, technology, policy and diplomacy.

This gathering marks the culmination of a seven-week-long online learning journey, from October to December 2025, where we conducted a dialogue across borders, sectors, and time zones between diplomats, government officials, and research and science managers to explore how our two regions can use Science and Technology Diplomacy to navigate the current global challenges.

We recognise that Science and Technology Diplomacy has emerged as a cornerstone for cooperation in an era defined by shared risks and interconnected futures. It requires a new generation of leaders capable of speaking the languages of both science and policy. We believe collaboration across borders and generations is essential to harnessing science and technology as forces for peace and sustainable progress.

The Youth Communique is a **joint statement** by young professionals from **29 ASEM countries** that sets out a shared vision for how science and technology can serve as a bridge between Asia and Europe in an era of global uncertainty. It highlights youth leaders' **commitment to use science and tech diplomacy to foster trust, address shared risks**, and promote inclusive, sustainable progress across both regions. Developed during the Youth Summit and then delivered to ministers, diplomats, and experts at the 2nd European Science Diplomacy Conference in Copenhagen, the Communique is structured around five pillars - **Cooperation and Dialogue, Capacity Building, Equity and Inclusion, Ethics and Governance, and Sustainability and Social Impact.** It calls for stronger cross-border collaboration, clearer career pathways and training in science diplomacy, more equitable access to science and technology, responsible standards for emerging technologies, and investments that maximise social and environmental impact. Together, these recommendations position young leaders **as constructive partners** for policymakers, urging that science and technology remain a trusted foundation for peace, resilience, and shared prosperity in Asia and Europe. You can read the full document here.

Asia-Europe
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE
for Young Professionals

Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Initiative for Young Professionals
2026

WEBINAR SERIES: YOUNG MINDS, GLOBAL BRIDGES: DISCOVERING THE POWER OF SCIENCE DIPLOMACY | 15 APRIL – 6 MAY 2026 | ONLINE

The webinar series Young Minds, Global Bridges: Discovering the Power of Science Diplomacy, was organised between 15 April to 6 May 2026 in partnership with the **Central European Scientific Society of Innovation and Technology (CESSIT).** Through a four-part webinar series, it introduced **278 university students** to the dynamic intersection of science, policy, technology, and international relations that is science and technology diplomacy. Through keynote presentations and interactive panel discussions, experts introduced the foundations of science diplomacy, presented real-life examples of science diplomacy in different fields, and highlighted how young people can learn more and start engaging in science diplomacy themselves, including available career paths.

SCIENCE DIPLOMACY EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM | 20 MAY 2026 | ONLINE

On 20 May 2026, ASEF organised the Science Diplomacy Education Symposium in partnership with the **Central European Scientific Society of Innovation and Technology (CESSIT).** It brought together **121 educators, university lecturers, academic leaders, and researchers and practitioners** across disciplines to explore how to actively engage educators and institutions in the shaping of science diplomacy – focusing on how to shape the education of the new generation of science diplomats and position universities as a key stakeholder in the field.



ASIA-EUROPE TRAINING ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY 2026 | 22 JULY – 8 OCTOBER 2026 | ONLINE

The Asia-Europe Training on Science and Technology Diplomacy 2026 was an **online training**, organised between 22 July to 8 October online. For the second time, it invited early-career **Research or Science Managers and Diplomats and Government Officials.** In total, **115 participants** from 41 countries, selected from 1,200+ applicants, joined webinars and hands-on interactive workshops, where topics ranged from the foundations of science diplomacy, tech diplomacy, and science communication to the intercultural and professional dimensions of science diplomacy. The participants represented two main groups; civil society and government, and invited diplomats, government officials, research and science managers from the two regions.



ASIA-EUROPE YOUTH SUMMIT ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY 2026 | 19-24 OCTOBER 2026 | JAKARTA, INDONESIA

Ca 60 selected participants from the online Training will join the upcoming Asia-Europe Youth Summit on Science and Technology Diplomacy 2026 between 19-24 October in Jakarta, Indonesia – organised in partnership with the **National Research and Innovation Agency Indonesia (BRIN)** and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Indonesia**. At the Youth Summit, participants will meet with experts and each other in person, share their perspectives, and work together to draft and deliver a Youth Communiqué on their ideas and recommendations for the future of Asia-Europe cooperation in Science and Technology Diplomacy. In addition, participants will join the **UNESCO-ASEF Intergenerational Dialogue on Science Diplomacy 2026**, organised in partnership with **UNESCO Jakarta**, where the Youth Communiqué will be presented and its content will be discussed with senior officials and experts to see how the recommendations can lead to concrete action.



How can educators harness AI to transform teaching and learning? Under the theme *"Learning about AI and Learning with AI"*, **ASEFClassNet17** connected educators and researchers across Asia and Europe through cross-cultural collaboration, innovative teaching practices and research-driven learning. Culminating in a conference in Manila, the project also amplified **458 educators' perspectives from 42 countries**, championing **educators as key voices in shaping an inclusive, ethical and human-centred future of education**. The following activities brought this vision to life:

- **School Collaboration:** For teachers and school leaders
- **Faculty Collaboration:** For teacher trainers, academic experts, and researchers.

The 17th edition of the ASEFClassNet project, ASEFClassNet17, focused on **"Learning about AI and Learning with AI"** and took place in a hybrid format from April to November 2024. The programme consisted of various capacity building activities in 3 different phases that included self-learning, peer-to-peer learning and action learning opportunities with collaborative elements and an on-site conference in Manila, Philippines.

1 | **Virtual Knowledge & Capacity Building,** April-July 2024, Online

- Self-Learning: Participants learned from and interacted with experts on the thematic/technical areas to build relevant knowledge on AI&ED to improve their knowledge.

- Team/Peer-to-Peer Learning: Based on the knowledge School Collaboration participants acquired in the self-learning phase, they exchanged ideas and critically reflect on the topic in teams. To take participants' pedagogical skills to the next level they also collaboratively work and learned from each other by actively designing Innovative Teaching Practices on AI&ED. The Faculty Collaboration participants emerged in a cross-faculty dialogues by sharing the AI&ED status of their institution to learn from each other as well as understand the current gap AI&ED in the context of their institution and country.

- Action Learning: Participants further strengthened their knowledge and pedagogical skills by putting their knowledge into action. While School Collaboration participants implemented their designed Innovative Teaching Practices (ITP) in their schools, the Faculty Collaboration participants designed research proposals on AI&ED.



2 | ASEFClassNet17 Conference, 11-15 November 2024, Manila, The Philippines

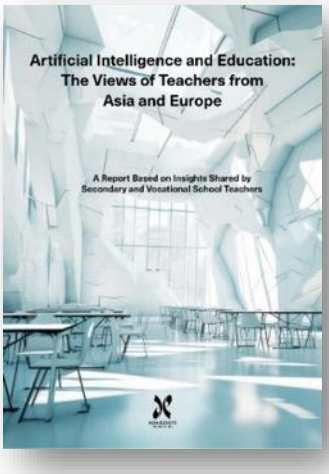
The on-site conference brought the outstanding participants of both tracks together in Manila, Philippines. The conference was organised in partnership with Philippine Normal University (PNU), The Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network (AsTEN), UNESCO associated International Research Center for AI (IRCAI), Open Education for Better World (OE4BW) and EdTech Market Place Asia.

3 | Innovative Teaching Practice & Action Project Implementation, 2024, Online

After the conference, School Collaboration participants implemented their Innovative Teaching Practices (ITPs) and showcase dtheir progress at the end of the year.



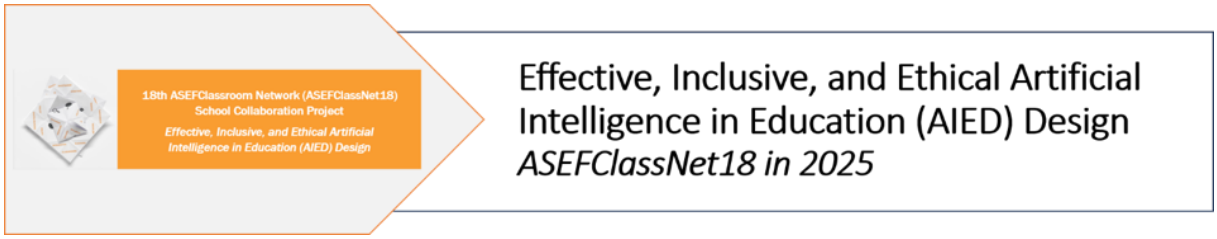
PUBLICATION ON AI&ED



The survey report ***"Asian and European Teachers' Perspectives on AI and Education"*** is based on the outcomes of the ASEFClassNet17 Open Call survey on AI and Education (AI&ED) conducted between March – May 2024 where 458 educators from 42 Countries (20 Asian and 22 European countries) shared their perspectives on various aspects of AI&ED.

This report aims to serve as a tool to inform relevant secondary education stakeholders about how teachers view the role of AI in education and what they think about AI literacy, and their fears and hopes.

You can read the full report here.



How can teachers lead the transformation of education in the age of AI? Guided by this question, the **ASEFClassNet18 School Collaboration Project** engaged over **300 educators from 35 ASEM countries**, fostering cross-cultural collaboration, innovative teaching practices and teacher agency. Culminating in a conference in Maribor, Slovenia, the project extended its impact through **seven alumni-led EmpowerEd courses** and a forthcoming **Teachers' Handbook**, championing **teachers as innovators and changemakers shaping an inclusive, ethical and human-centred future of education**. The following activities brought this vision to reality:

1 | Self-Learning (Knowledge Building & Learning from Experts), May - June 2025, Online

Twelve mentors (selected from the alumni pool) and **55 participants** (chosen from 360 applicants) representing **35 ASEM countries** began their journey with this first step. Through online sessions, they learned from and interacted with experts in key thematic and technical areas, building relevant knowledge on AI and education (AI&ED).

2 | Team Learning (Peer-to-Peer Exchange & ITP Design), June - August 2025, Online

Based on the knowledge acquired in the self-learning phase, they exchanged ideas and critically reflect on the topic in teams. To take participants' pedagogical skills to the next level they also collaboratively worked and learned from each other by actively designing Innovative Teaching Practices on AI&ED.

3 | Innovative Teaching Practice Implementation, September 2025, Online

Participants further strengthened their knowledge and pedagogical skills by putting their knowledge into action. Before the conference, participants start implements their Innovative Teaching Practices (ITPs) and showcase the results, impact and progress from their action during the conference.



4 | Conference, 06 -10 October 2025, Maribor, Slovenia

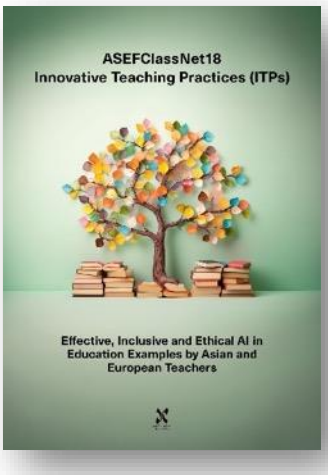
The on-site conference brought together over 60 international educators and experts from 31 countries and over 40 local Slovenian educators together in Maribor, Slovenia. ASEF was delighted to partner with IRCAI – International Research Center on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO, Open Education for a Better World (OE4BW), Jozef Stefan Institute, Zavod Antona Martina Slomška to organise this conference that opened an inspiring dialogue on how educators can become leaders of effective, ethical, and inclusive AI in education.



5 | Spin-Offs as EmpowerEd Projects, Upcoming throughout 2026

Initiated in 2025, the ASEFClassNet EmpowerEd Projects celebrate the leadership, creativity, and courage of educators across Asia and Europe who are reimagining education in response to today's most pressing challenges. Designed and **led by ASEFClassNet alumni**, this year we offered **seven teacher-driven short courses** for the broader community. The courses addressed real-world issues such as ethical AI integration, climate action, uncertainty, equity, and wellbeing. Rooted in collaboration, inclusion, and action-based learning, the EmpowerEd Projects **engaged 213 participants from Asia and Europe**. They demonstrated the power of educators as designers, innovators, and changemakers, creating locally relevant solutions with global resonance.

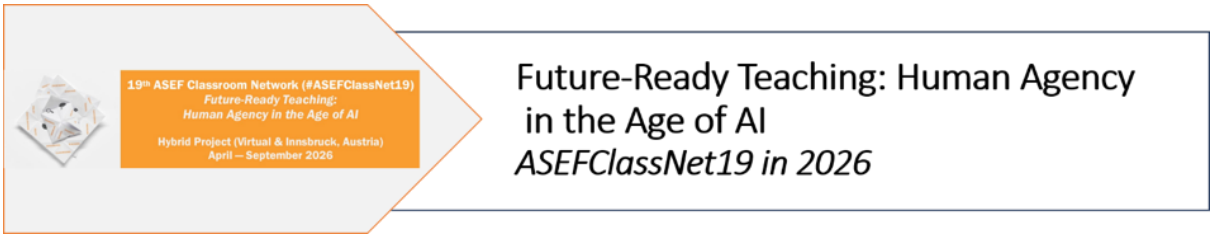
TEACHERS HANDBOOK ON INNOVATIVE AIED USE



The forthcoming handbook, **"ASEFClassNet18 Innovative Teaching Practices (ITPs): Effective, Inclusive and Ethical AI in Education – Examples by Asian and European Teachers"**, brings together innovative teaching practices developed by educators across Asia and Europe through the 18th ASEF Classroom Network (ASEFClassNet18).

The handbook showcases practical, teacher-led approaches to integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into teaching and learning in effective, inclusive and ethical ways. Featuring real classroom experiences and innovative solutions, it aims to inspire and equip educators beyond the ASEFClassNet community with practical ideas to adapt and apply in their own educational contexts.

Currently in development, the handbook will serve as a valuable resource for sharing teachers' innovations, fostering cross-regional learning and amplifying teacher agency in shaping the future of education in the age of AI.



Who should shape the future of teaching in the age of AI? Guided by this question, the 19th ASEF Classroom Network (ASEFClassNet19) brought together **over 150 educators from 42 countries** across Asia and Europe under the theme *"Future-Ready Teaching: Human Agency in the Age of AI"*. Through cross-cultural collaboration and classroom experimentation, educators co-created and piloted **32 Innovative Teaching Practices (ITPs)**, championing **teachers and learners as active decisionmakers in shaping a human-centred future of education**. Culminating in an international conference in Innsbruck, Austria, the programme brought this commitment to life through four interconnected learning phases:

1 | Self-Learning: 14 April- 14 May 2026 | Online

At the start of the programme, participants learned from and interact with experts on key thematic and pedagogical areas related to **future-ready teaching and human agency in the age of AI**. Through expert inputs, guided discussions, and self-reflective exercises, participants deepened their understanding of how AI influences teaching, learning, and professional decision-making in secondary and vocational education contexts. This stage included **webinars, interactive workshops, and live demonstrations of AI-enabled education tools.**

2 | Team Learning | 19 May – 18 June 2026

Participants worked in teams of three, supported by an experienced ASEFClassNet alumni Mentor, to collaboratively design an ASEFClassNet Innovative Teaching Practice (ITP) using an AI tool of their choice. Through team building, ideation and iterative lesson planning, they developed practical, innovative and student-centred teaching approaches that integrate AI while addressing effectiveness, inclusivity, ethics and specific learning outcomes.



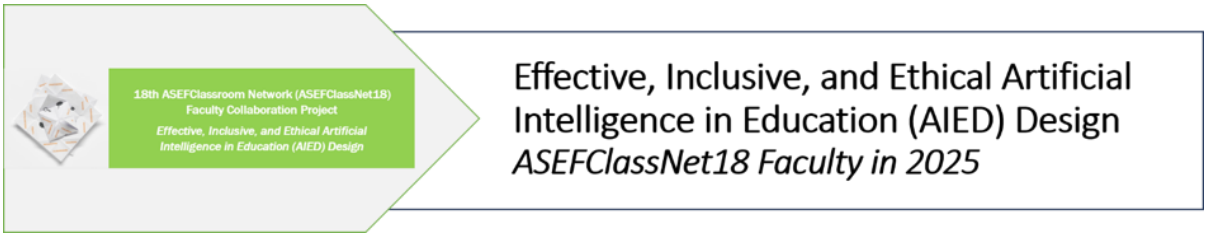
3 | Virtual Action Learning | July- September 2026

Building on the self-learning and team-learning stages, participants will consolidate their knowledge and pedagogical competencies by translating ideas into practice. During this phase, **participants will implement their designed Innovative Teaching Practice (ITP) in their own classrooms or schools**, with structured support and guidance from assigned Mentors.

4 | On-site Conference | 21-25 September 2026, Innsbruck, Austria

The 19th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet19) was hosted by the **University College of Teacher Education Tyrol** in partnership with **Knowledge in Crisis (led by Central European University)**, **Open Education for a Better World** (OE4BW) and the **International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI)** under the auspices of the Jožef Stefan Institute (JSI), with support from Austrian ministries and co-funding from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Japan. The conference brought together the best-performing Innovative Teaching Practice (ITP) teams to showcase and exchange their work, reflect on implementation experiences, engage with experts on future education trends, and develop their practices into reusable learning resources.





How can AI make education more effective, inclusive and ethical? To explore this question, the **ASEFClassNet18 Faculty Collaboration Project** brought together **over 70 Fellows and Practitioners** from Asia and Europe, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, cross-cultural collaboration and knowledge co-creation. Culminating in an international conference in Zhuhai, China, the project developed **12 scholarly book chapters**, bridging research, policy and practice while championing **educators as thought leaders shaping an inclusive, ethical and human-centred future of AI in education**. This collaborative journey unfolded across three key phases:

1 | **Cross-Faculty Dialogues,** May - June 2025, Online

The project invited **53 academics, teacher trainers and educators from 27 countries** to begin their journey with this first step. This phase was conducted online and included a welcome session and 5 cross-faculty dialogue sessions that took place every Thursday **from 15 May 2025 to 19 June 2025, online.** The phase enabled peer learning via dialogues and knowledge exchanges in key AI&ED themes and supported the formation of interdisciplinary book chapter teams contributing to the project's flagship publication on AI&ED titled, "Effective, Inclusive, and Ethical AI in Education (AIED) Design: Innovations and Challenges for Sustainable Learning" to be published in the United Nation University's *AI and Sustainable Development* book series.

2 | **Peer-to-Peer Exchange,** July – October 2025, Online

This phase focused on the development of interdisciplinary book chapters in cross-cultural teamwork. **From July to October 2025**, Fellows worked collaboratively online to develop their book chapters, which were prepared for presentation at the ASEFClassNet18 Conference in Zhuhai, China (November 2025) and for publication in the UNU *AI and Sustainable Development* series (May 2026, tbc). A cross-faculty peer-to-peer feedback session in September supported collective reflection, knowledge exchange, and refinement of drafts prior to final submission.



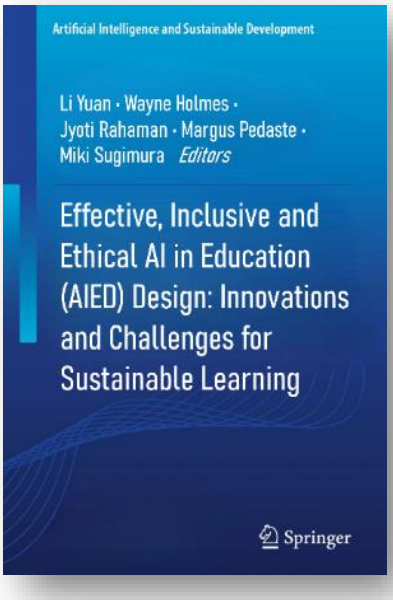
3 | ASEFClassNet18 Faculty Collaboration Conference, 11–16 November 2025 in Zhuhai, China

The on-site conference brought together over **50 international academics**, researchers and teacher trainers as well as **19 innovative teacher practitioners from 25 countries**. ASEF was delighted to partner with Beijing Normal University (BNU) Zhuhai Campus, IRCAI – International Research Center on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO and The Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network (AsTEN) to organise this conference that opened an inspiring dialogue on how academics, researchers, teacher trainers and educators can become leaders of effective, ethical, and inclusive AI in education. The key conference elements included:



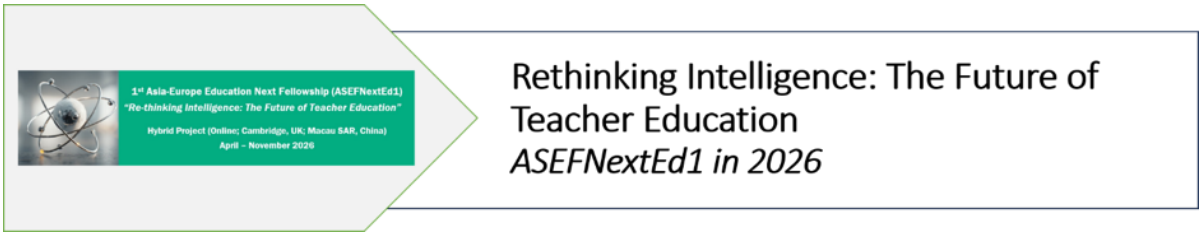


ACADEMIC PUBLICATION ON AI&ED



Provisionally titled, the project's flagship publication on AI&ED titled, "Effective, Inclusive, and Ethical AI in Education (AIED) Design: Innovations and Challenges for Sustainable Learning" will be published in the United Nation University's AI and Sustainable Development book series in 2026. 45 academics, researchers and teacher trainers from 27 Asian and European Countries are collaboratively working on 12 book chapters for this publication.

The book is designed to serve as a strategic resource for policymakers, teacher educators, researchers, and institutional leaders engaged in transforming teacher education in the context of Artificial Intelligence in Education (AI&ED). It aims to bridge theory, policy, and practice by highlighting critical challenges, emerging innovations, and sustainable approaches to effective, inclusive, and ethical AIED design.



How can we reimagine teacher education for a world where intelligence is being redefined? Inspired by this question, the 1st Asia-Europe Education Next Fellowship (ASEFNextEd1) brings together **over 40 education leaders, researchers and teacher educators** from Asia and Europe under the theme *"Re-thinking Intelligence: The Future of Teacher Education"*. Through critical inquiry, cross-cultural dialogue and knowledge co-creation, Fellows are developing **eight forward-looking whitepapers** that bridge research, policy and practice, championing **human agency and the transformative role of educators in shaping the future of teacher education**. From Cambridge to Macau, the Fellowship advances this ambition through the following key milestones:

1 | Fellowship Leaders' Meeting | 27 – 30 April 2026 | Cambridge, United Kingdom

Organised in partnership with the **Digital Education Futures Initiative (DEFI) at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge**, the Fellowship Leaders' Meeting officially launched ASEFNextEd1, bringing together eight distinguished education leaders from Asia and Europe. Through thought-provoking keynotes, critical inquiry, future scenarios lab, and cross-cultural dialogue, participants challenged conventional understandings of intelligence, explored the implications of AI for teacher education and established a shared vision for the Fellowship. The meeting laid the intellectual and collaborative foundations for eight interdisciplinary teams to co-create forward-looking whitepapers, positioning teacher educators as thought leaders and active agents in shaping the future of education.



2 | Peer-to-Peer Learning & Dialogue Phase I 13 May – 24 June 2026 | Online

Building on the Cambridge meeting, over 40 Fellows embarked on a six-week journey of collective inquiry under the guidance of 8 Fellowship Leaders, bringing together diverse disciplinary, cultural and institutional perspectives from Asia and Europe. Through facilitated discussions, participants critically examined the meaning of intelligence beyond technological capabilities, explored emerging challenges in teacher education and developed a shared understanding of the Fellowship's overarching theme. During this phase, Fellows engaged in structured conversations to:

- Develop a **shared conceptual understanding of "intelligence"** in the context of education, moving beyond purely technical interpretations.
- Exchange **regional, cultural, and institutional perspectives** on the trends reshaping teacher education.
- Identify common challenges and priorities, and **form interdisciplinary, cross-regional whitepaper teams** around emerging themes.

All in all, this phase strengthened mutual trust, intellectual exchange and cross-regional collaboration, providing the foundation for interdisciplinary whitepaper teams to transform diverse perspectives into shared research priorities.

3 | White-Paper Co-Creation Phase |01 July – 17 November 2026 | Online

At the heart of the Fellowship, eight interdisciplinary, cross-regional teams are **collaboratively developing eight evidence-informed whitepapers** under the theme *"Re-thinking Intelligence: The Future of Teacher Education"*. Guided by Fellowship Leaders, participants combine academic research, institutional experience and diverse regional perspectives to examine emerging challenges and opportunities in teacher education. Through iterative drafting, critical reflection and peer feedback, the teams are developing practical insights for institutional leaders and strategic recommendations for policymakers, **bridging research, practice and policy to advance human-centred, inclusive and future-ready teacher education**.

4 | ASEFNextEd1 On-site Conference | 23–27 November 2026 | Macau, China

Organised in partnership with the **United Nations University Macau (UNU Macau)**, the upcoming ASEFNextEd1 Conference will mark a significant milestone in the Fellowship's journey from collective inquiry to knowledge creation and policy engagement. Bringing Fellows together with international education leaders, researchers and innovators, the conference will provide a platform to present, critically examine and further refine the eight collaborative whitepapers through expert dialogue, peer exchange and interdisciplinary discussions. Held in conjunction with the UNU Macau AI Conference, the gathering will connect the Fellowship's emerging insights with wider international conversations, strengthening the relevance of its outputs for teacher education institutions and policymakers across Asia and Europe.





ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION
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www.ASEF.org/themes/education/
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4.2.ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme

ASEM-DUO Structure based exchange through pairing

ASEM-DUO contributes to the overarching ASEM objective of people-to-people connectivity which was confirmed at the highest political level by all ASEM members. The objective of balanced mobility is achieved through reciprocity ("pairing"). Since 2001, the ASEM-DUO Secretariat has supported close to 5,000 students, teachers, and professors and facilitated balanced mobility between 313 Asian and 675 European institutions, located across 18 of the 21 Asian partner countries and 26 of the 30 European partner countries through the financial contributions of Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), CIMEA/Italy, Denmark, France, Germany, India, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sweden, and Thailand.

As of November 2026, there are six ASEM-DUO Programmes in operation, supported by six ASEM member countries which are Belgium (French Community), CIMEA/Italy, Singapore, Sweden, Republic of Korea and Thailand. The ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme was extended for its 6th phase (2026-2030), during ASEMME9 with Ministers recognizing the importance of continuation.

In January 2024, the ASEM-DUO Secretariat hosted the 12th ASEM-DUO Expert Meeting alongside ASEMME9, with delegates from 10 ASEM partner countries in attendance. During the meeting, each contributing country shared their respective programme status and discussed about the program through the presentations and an interactive Q&A. As several ASEM partner countries expressed their interest in participating, the Director General, Dr. Sung, undertook a business trip to these countries in June 2024 to provide comprehensive information and encourage their active participation. Following subsequent discussions since then, 'DUO-CIMEA/Italy' was officially launched in March 2025 to support the exchange of professors, researchers, and PhD students between Italy and 20 Asian countries on a balanced and permanent basis.

In May 2025, the Director General of the Secretariat visited several European ASEM partner countries to encourage greater participation from the European region. Looking ahead, alongside ASEMME10, the Secretariat will host the 13th ASEM-DUO Expert Meeting and share best practices among contributing partners and those interested in the program.

The Secretariat also fosters a strong sense of community and collects best practices through regular alumni meetings and essay contests. In October 2024 and October 2026, the Secretariat successfully hosted the 6th and 7th ASEM-DUO Alumni Meetings, welcoming approximately 70-80 participants, including awardees, and respective institutions and embassies. During the event, the Secretariat shared its current status, and featured inspiring sharing sessions where past awardees—including an Excellence award winner from the 1st and 2nd ASEM-DUO Essay Contest—presented their personal experiences and the profound positive impact of their post-exchange interactions, thereby providing a valuable networking opportunity to strengthen ties among participants.








Photos from 6th and 7th ASEM-DUO Fellows Alumni Meetings

In February 2026, the Secretariat hosted the 2nd ASEM-DUO Essay Contest. A total of 37 distinguished essays were submitted, demonstrating the profound impact of their exchange experience, and 8 selected essays were published on the ASEM-DUO website (www.asemduo.org) in September 2026. Below are excerpts from the awarded essays.



The ASEM-DUO Fellowship bridged that gap in a way nothing else could have. It did not merely fund a semester abroad; it funded the beginning of a new version of myself. It gave me the opportunity to encounter a wider-world to see how different cultures inhabit space differently, and to discover that my deepest professional calling lay at the intersection of engineering, design, and human experience.

Ms. Yeyoung Jung (Grand Prize, Korea, 2019)

Without ASEM-DUO, I would still have finished my business degree. I might have ended up in consulting or a corporate strategy role, following the path most of my Viadrina peers followed. Seoul redirected that. Not dramatically, not overnight, but durably. Every significant career step I have taken since traces back, in some way, to the thinking I started doing in that city in 2010.

Mr. Lukas Hansch (Excellence Award, Germany, 2010)





DUO-Sweden was far more than an exchange scholarship. It was the opportunity that helped me see a wider world, discover how I wanted to contribute to society, and take the first step toward the career I have today. Twelve years ago in Stockholm, I was a student who admired a strong welfare state. Today, I am working to turn that admiration into policies suited to Korea's own reality. I am deeply grateful to DUO-Sweden for giving me the courage to choose a new path.

Ms. Soomin Baeg (Excellence Award, DUO-Sweden 2014)

To ensure stable academic mobility, each programme has maintained steady support: a total of 152 awardees received grants for the 2024/25 academic year, 146 for 2025/26, and 110 grants are currently being supported for the 2026/27 academic year, continuing to foster balanced and reciprocal academic exchanges between Asia and Europe. Additionally, the Secretariat has conducted a satisfaction survey among awardees in selected programs since 2025 at the request of the Korean government, and it showed a consistently high level of satisfaction, scoring over 4.4 out of 5.

The initiative carried out by ASEM-DUO is vital to enhance balanced mobility between both regions. There is unanimous support for the continuations of the Programme as ASEM-DUO is considered as one of the uncontested success stories of ASEM. (ASEM Looking back and looking ahead, 2019). To ensure the continuous growth of ASEM-DUO, expanding active participation and financial contributions from all ASEM members will be essential. Therefore, we cordially invite ASEM partners to support our program, thereby fostering balanced academic mobility between both regions.

4.3.ASEM Work Placement Programme (ASEM WPP)

The ASEM Work Placement (ASEM WPP) was proposed and agreed by the Ministers during the 3rd Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME3) in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2011. The ASEM Education Ministers felt that a work placement programme would provide students with the opportunity to discover the world of work in a different regional and cultural setting and gain some experience. Belgium (Flemish Community) is currently very active in the programme.

Why encourage students to choose Asia as destination for an internship?

Inter-university study mobility is still successful but the mobility towards Asia follows the trend of higher demands for internships (as part of the studies), e.g. within an Erasmus+ programme. Gaining work experience in Asia has positive impact on personal development as the contact with the global labour market stimulates intercultural understanding, independence and fosters direct contact with the local population, which is usually not given in a larger class-group of foreign students. The internships are often linked with inter-university cooperation. Students can choose their studies or internship, which is organised/mediated by the partner university.

Number of Flemish interns according to destination in 2024/2025:

Each year about 60 students from Belgium Flemish Community are participating in work placement in Asia with an ASEM WPP scholarship: Vietnam: 9, Philippines: 8, Indonesia: 8, Thailand: 7, Cambodia: 6, Japan: 4, Korea: 4, India: 3, China: 3, Singapore: 3, Malaysia: 2.

Way forward on work placements with Asia

The organisers of the ASEM WPP Programme in the future would like to increase the number of countries of destination and involve HEIs of all profiles in Flanders (research universities and universities of applied sciences) as well as extend to other levels of education (e.g. VET at secondary level) and after graduation. ASEM WPP should align with other European and Asian scholarship schemes and with the internship offer in Flanders (link with recruitment policies) and corporate funding schemes. We should all remain mindful of blurring boundaries between study mobility and work placement (as part of the same study trajectory).

This description was drafted by Belgium Flemish Community.

4.4.ASEM AEI Summer School – Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)

The Asia–Europe Institute (AEI), Universiti Malaya has, since its establishment in 1997 by the Government of Malaysia, positioned itself as a hub for interregional dialogue and academic exchange between Asia and Europe. As part of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) educational initiatives, the AEI–ASEM Summer School seeks to enhance the balanced mobility of students, researchers, and academics across the two continents. These programs are designed to provide young scholars with opportunities to exchange ideas, cultivate networks, and develop interdisciplinary approaches to global challenges.

Future initiatives:

In 2027, the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), Universiti Malaya, plans to strengthen Asia-Europe engagement through a range of academic and diplomatic initiatives. These will include the annual AEI-ASEM Summer School, a conference and seminars commemorating the 50th anniversary of ASEAN–EU dialogue relations, and an Ambassadors' Lecture Series featuring diplomatic representatives and experts. AEI will also pursue other activities and engagements that bring together academics, students, policymakers, diplomats and other stakeholders to foster dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation between Asia and Europe.

Since the 4th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME4, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2013), the Asia-Europe Institute organised every year the AEI-ASEM Summer School. Reports from the summer schools of 2024, 2025 and 2026 are listed hereafter:

AEI–ASEM Summer School and Student Symposium 2026, 5–16 August



The AEI–ASEM Summer School and Student Symposium 2026, organised by the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), Universiti Malaya, was held from 5 to 16 August 2026 under the theme **"Smart Diplomacy and Sustainable Futures: Artificial Intelligence in Asia-Europe Relations."** The interdisciplinary programme explored the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI), diplomacy and sustainable development, with particular attention to AI governance, digital diplomacy, international cooperation and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Summer School directly supported the aims of Asia-Europe education and ASEM inter-regional cooperation by providing a platform for students from different Asian and European contexts to engage in academic exchange, intercultural learning and dialogue on issues of shared global concern. A total of 24 participants took part, comprising students from Rikkyo University, Japan (8), Pakistan (11), Russia (2), Lithuania (1), Estonia (1) and the Philippines (1). The diverse composition of the cohort facilitated interaction across national, cultural and disciplinary boundaries, contributing to greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe.





The programme featured an opening ceremony and keynote address by YBhg. Datin Noorazah Omar, Division Secretary, International Relations Division, Ministry of Higher Education, as well as a presentation by Ms. Vera Lucke from the ASEM Education Secretariat. These were followed by expert module sessions delivered by AEI and invited scholars, providing participants with perspectives on AI, international relations, smart diplomacy and sustainable development. The programme thus connected academic learning with broader ASEM priorities relating to education, mobility, international cooperation and sustainable development.

A key component was the two-day Student Symposium, where participants presented research papers examining AI and international relations from diverse disciplinary perspectives, including tourism, media, technology and economics. The symposium provided an important space for students to exchange ideas, develop research skills and engage in peer-to-peer learning across regions. Educational and cultural activities, including visits to the Ministry of Higher Education, Putrajaya and major Malaysian cultural and heritage sites, further complemented the academic programme by promoting intercultural understanding and experiential learning.



Overall, participant feedback was highly positive, particularly regarding the academic modules, innovative student symposium, cultural excursions and opportunities for intercultural interaction. The Summer School successfully strengthened Asia-Europe educational exchange and inter-regional dialogue, while providing participants with opportunities to explore common challenges and develop perspectives beyond their immediate national contexts. It also reinforced AEI's role as a platform for ASEM-related education, people-to-people connectivity and Asia-Europe cooperation.

AEI-ASEM Summer School and Student Symposium 2025, 11-17 August

"Environmental and Social Governance (ESG): Toward Sustainable Development in Asia and Europe" was chosen as theme in response to pressing global challenges, including intensifying climate crises, widening socioeconomic inequalities, and evolving governance dilemmas. ESG has gained prominence as both a corporate and policy framework with significant global traction. For Asia and Europe—two regions with distinct developmental pathways yet shared vulnerabilities—ESG offers a conceptual bridge, merging environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and governance integrity into one framework for action.

In Asia, ESG discussions are shaped by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and the pressing need for inclusive social systems. In Europe, ESG is often situated within long-standing regulatory structures, green transition

policies, and traditions of corporate social responsibility. The dialogue between these two regions is therefore not only valuable but essential to the realization of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

Participants

The 2025 Summer School brought together **22 participants from six countries** (Japan, Indonesia, Pakistan, France, Algeria and Italy), reflecting AEI's mission of fostering Asia–Europe academic exchange. This diverse representation encouraged cross-cultural dialogue and enriched discussions on ESG, drawing from different regional perspectives and lived experiences.

Program Overview

The **seven-day program** balanced structured academic modules with interactive and cultural activities. The official opening ceremony was held on 12 August 2025, presided over by AEI leadership, and included welcome remarks emphasizing the importance of ESG as a unifying theme for Asia–Europe collaboration.

The schedule was designed around four pillars:

1. **Expert Lectures and Keynotes** – Delivered by distinguished academics, these modules provided theoretical and practical knowledge on ESG from diverse disciplinary perspectives.
2. **Research Writing Workshop** – Aimed at equipping students with academic writing and presentation skills, particularly relevant for their participation in the symposium.
3. **Student Symposium** – A multi-day event where participants presented research papers, engaged in Q&A discussions, and received feedback from peers and faculty.
4. Cultural Immersion and Field Visits – Activities designed to enhance intercultural understanding and expose students to Malaysia's developmental and cultural landscape.

The daily schedule combined morning academic sessions with afternoon cultural or social activities. Group meals and networking events reinforced camaraderie among participants. The design reflected AEI's holistic approach: learning was not confined to the classroom but extended to cultural exploration, informal interactions, and collaborative projects.



Cultural Immersion and Field Activities

Cultural exchange was woven into the program through **field trips, social activities, and celebratory gatherings**. These experiences complemented the academic modules by deepening intercultural awareness and fostering friendships among participants.

- **Putrajaya Tour**: Visits to the Putra Mosque, Perdana Putra, and a Putrajaya Lake Cruise offered insights into Malaysia's administrative capital, blending Islamic architecture with modern urban planning.
- **Petronas Twin Towers**: An iconic symbol of Malaysia's modernization, the visit sparked discussions on the intersection of architecture, national identity, and sustainability.
- **Kuala Lumpur City Tour**: Stops at the National Monument, King's Palace, Merdeka Square, and Central Market provided students with historical and cultural perspectives on Malaysia's development journey.

The highlight of the cultural immersion component, however, was the **Farewell Dinner sponsored by Tourism Malaysia**, held at Rebung 2, Putrajaya on the final evening of the program. The dinner served as both a festive

closing ceremony and a space for reflection. Participants were treated to an array of Malaysian cuisine, showcasing the nation's culinary diversity.



The evening featured a **cultural performance** organized by Tourism Malaysia, highlighting Malaysia's multicultural heritage through traditional dance and music. This was followed by **group performances** from the summer school participants and their student buddies. These included collaborative skits, musical numbers, and cultural showcases that represented the different nationalities present at the program. The atmosphere was celebratory, as participants expressed gratitude to the organizers and celebrated the friendships forged during the week.

The farewell dinner underscored the **social and cultural dimension of ESG**: just as sustainability requires inclusive governance and community participation, so too does international academic exchange rely on cultural appreciation and interpersonal bonding. Many participants remarked that the evening crystallized the sense of unity and purpose that had been cultivated throughout the program.

Outcomes and Impact

The Summer School achieved the following outcomes:

- Enhanced participants' knowledge of ESG frameworks and their application across different contexts.
- Strengthened academic and professional networks between Asia and Europe.
- Encouraged interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability, bridging environmental, social, and governance dimensions.
- Provided participants with skills in research presentation, intercultural communication, and collaborative problem-solving.

Conclusion



By choosing ESG as its central theme, the 2025 AEI–ASEM Summer School provided a timely platform for young scholars to engage with pressing global debates on sustainability. Through a blend of academic rigor and experiential learning, the program contributed to building future leaders equipped to foster sustainable development in both Asia and Europe.

The AEI–ASEM Summer School continues to stand as a model for interregional academic exchange, bridging continents and perspectives for a shared global future.

AEI-ASEM Summer School and Student Symposium 2024, 29 July - 7 August

The AEI-ASEM Summer School 2024, themed **"Global Citizenship: Embracing Diversity, Fostering Sustainability"** kicked off on 29th July and ran through 7th August. This year's ten-day program, held at the Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya, offered participants a dynamic mix of academic lectures and engaging field trips throughout the Klang Valley. The event brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds to explore critical global issues through discussions, collaborative activities, and real-world experiences, all focused on the dual pillars of diversity and sustainability.



This year's summer school brought together 14 participants from various countries such as Indonesia, Algeria, Germany, China, Japan, and Pakistan, contributing to a truly global exchange of ideas. Over the course of the 10 days, the program featured a series of lectures, group discussions, and field trips designed to encourage critical thinking about global challenges and inspire creative solutions. The curriculum focused on topics related to sustainability, diversity, and global citizenship, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing pressing global issues.

It provided a comprehensive and immersive learning experience through a series of modules that explored Malaysia's cultural diversity, global crises, human security, ethics, leadership, and the role of media. Participants gained insights into the complex societal structure of Malaysia, global challenges such as climate change and security, and the ethical balance between individual rights and collective responsibilities. The program also delved into the impact of misinformation and the importance of transformational leadership in driving social innovation. Additionally, a lively discussion on Malaysian music showcased the nation's cultural richness. Overall, the blend of lectures, interactive discussions, and field trips offered a deep understanding of global citizenship and sustainability, making it an enriching and memorable experience for all.

Field trips included visits to Putrajaya, the heart of Malaysia's government administration, and Malacca, a historic city with a rich cultural heritage. These excursions helped international participants better understand ASEAN's history, culture, and development models. By experiencing these diverse environments firsthand, participants were able to draw connections between sustainability, cultural diversity, and global citizenship.







One of the highlights of the programme was the farewell dinner, sponsored by Tourism Malaysia and co-organised with Datum Corp International Sdn Bhd. During the event, participants showcased their cultural heritage through group performances, including traditional dances, poetry recitations, and more. The evening also featured a vibrant display of traditional Malaysian dances from the Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities, enriching the cultural experience.

The AEI-ASEM Summer School 2024 was a successful event that provided valuable learning experiences for participants. While there were some challenges, particularly in terms of participant recruitment and logistics, the lessons learned from this edition will help in planning future programmes. With a stronger focus on early preparation, promotion, and improved logistics, the AEI-ASEM Summer School can continue to offer meaningful educational experiences for participants from across the globe.



Events, webinars and lectures organised by the Asia-Europe Institute:

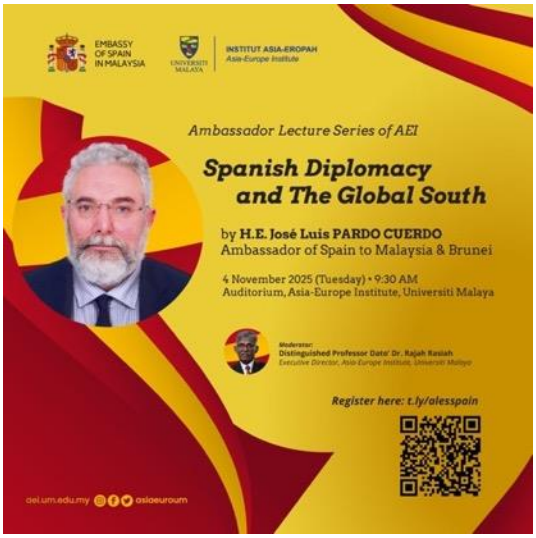
Lectures held in 2026 (links are embedded on the pictures):







Lecture held in 2024 and 2025 (link is embedded on the pictures):








CHINA RISING:
CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES FROM EUROPE AND ASIA
A CONVERSATION WITH
MARTIN JACQUES, BUNN NAGARA AND ROY ANTHONY ROGERS
Martin Jacques
Visiting Professor Tsinghua University & Fudan University
Bunn Nagara
Director/Senior Fellow BRICAP
Roy Anthony Rogers
Associate Professor Asia-Europe Institute
Dato' Dr. Rajah Rasiah
Distinguished Professor Asia-Europe Institute
MODERATOR
Global tensions are rising in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait as US allies in Manila and Taipei risk growing friction with Beijing. Meanwhile, US trade and technology wars against China are spreading as Europe considers more trade restrictions against hypercompetitive Chinese exports entering EU markets. As China's navy grows and thousands of Chinese electric vehicles arrive at European ports for sale, Europe's markets are narrowing while European warships are despatched to the Western Pacific rim.
Yet at the same time, most Asian countries are more calm and less frenzied, remaining confident that better times have yet to come. Where will all this lead and what are the chances of continued peace and prosperity for our region? Will Europe still follow the US lead, whether or not Donald Trump is re-elected in November? Responses from Europe and Asia to US-China rivalry may differ or converge, but will nonetheless impact on the future of our planet.
17th MAY 2024
AUDITORIUM, ASIA-EUROPE INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITI MALAYA
3:00 PM TO 4:30 PM
REGISTRATION
https://bit.ly/aeicr
asiaeuroum


Malaysia's 2025 ASEAN Chair:
Bridging Southeast Asia and South Korea
3rd Sept 2024 (Tuesday) • 9 am - 1 pm • By Invitation Only
Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya
As Malaysia prepares to chair ASEAN in 2025, it must navigate a complex global landscape characterized by shifting international relations, including significant elections in Western countries, the Sino-US strategic competition, and the rise of BRICS nations challenging the Western-led order. Regional dynamics add to the challenges, with Myanmar's insurgency, Bangladesh's political turmoil, rising right-wing populism, and escalating human security issues, all of which test ASEAN's commitment to its non-aligned stance and the principles of the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). In this context, comprehensive analyses are needed to explore the implications for ASEAN, ASEAN+1, and ASEAN+3, using contemporary theoretical frameworks to address the evolving geopolitical landscape under Malaysia's leadership.
Panellists
9:30 am - Session 1: Malaysia-Korea Relations: Issues and Challenges
11:15 am - Session 2: Expectations and Reality: Malaysia as the Chair of ASEAN 2025
asiaeuroum


FORUM ON EMPOWERING VOICES: ASEAN CENTRALITY AND WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY
23rd October 2024 (Wednesday) • 2:30 PM • Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya
PANELLISTS
Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso
H.E. Dato' Azizah Abdul Aziz
Professor Dr. Shanthi Thambiah
MODERATOR
Distinguished Professor Dato' Dr. Rajah Rasiah
Register at
bit.ly/aeimypshforum


Public Lecture
The EU's New Assertive Advocacy of Norms and Values in its Relations with Asia
by Prof. Dr. Jörn Dosch
28 Nov 2024 (Thursday) · 9:30 AM
ASEM Room, Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya
Prof. Dr. Jörn Dosch
(Speaker)
Distinguished Professor Dato' Dr. Rajah Rasiah
(Moderator)
About the speaker
Registration:
https://bit.ly/aeidosch24
Seats are limited!

4.5.ASEAN University Network (AUN)

The ASEAN University Network (AUN) is a stakeholder in the ASEM Education Process and provides a regional platform through which universities in Southeast Asia engage with partners across Asia and Europe. During 2024–2026, AUN contributed to policy dialogue and practical cooperation in sustainable development, qualifications recognition, quality assurance, digital transformation and university association engagement. The following initiatives illustrate how AUN connects regional priorities with wider Asia–Europe cooperation.

ASEAN EU Higher Education Networking Platforms

AUN Engagement in SCOPE-HE Policy Dialogues

Between November 2024 and October 2026, AUN participated in three of ASEAN–EU Higher Education Policy Dialogues convened under SCOPE-HE. Through these dialogues, AUN represented the perspectives of ASEAN universities and contributed practical experience in academic mobility, qualifications and credit recognition, internationalisation, research and innovation, and university–industry collaboration.

AUN's involvement went beyond institutional representation. The AUN Executive Director, Special Advisor, Secretariat representatives and AUN-UIE co-leads contributed as speakers, moderators and discussion facilitators. AUN also shared lessons from CALOHEA, the development of AUN Qualifications Excellence, and the work of AUN-UIE, helping to connect regional policy discussions with the practical experience of universities.

These engagements provided an important platform for AUN to exchange perspectives with ASEAN and European policymakers, higher education institutions, TVET representatives and industry partners. They also enabled AUN to bring relevant outcomes and emerging priorities back to its regional network. The table below summarises AUN's participation and specific contribution to each of the three policy dialogues.

Dialogue	AUN contribution
Vientiane, 11–12 November 2024	The AUN Executive Director joined the ASEAN Policy Forum. CALOHEA's three recognition mechanisms were presented in the session on mobility and recognition.
Kuala Lumpur, 14–15 October 2025	Prof. Richard R. Jugar represented the AUN Executive Director as a panel speaker on collaborative strategies for the internationalisation of ASEAN higher education.
Manila, 27–28 October 2026	AUN joined the dialogue on innovation and skills for a sustainable Blue Economy through panel moderation, AUN-UIE contributions and facilitation of research and talent discussions.



University Association Dialogue and Joint Action through GUAF

AUN has maintained active engagement in the Global University Associations Forum (GUAF) since its inaugural meeting in Barcelona in May 2022. As one of GUAF's founding university-association members, AUN has participated in all four annual meetings of the Global University Associations Forum (GUAF) since its establishment in 2022. In September 2023, AUN hosted and chaired the 2nd GUAF Meeting in Bangkok, bringing together university associations from Asia, Europe, Africa, the Arab region and the Americas.

During the reporting period, AUN contributed ASEAN perspectives at the 3rd GUAF Meeting in Beijing in October 2024 and the 4th Meeting in New Delhi in November 2025. Joint outputs included a position supporting implementation of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, a webinar on qualifications recognition, and the 2025 comparative report on the digital transformation of higher education,

to which AUN provided a regional contribution. AUN will continue this cooperation at the 5th GUAF Meeting in Accra, Ghana, in November 2026, advancing dialogue on knowledge partnerships, academic mobility, digital connectivity, quality assurance and qualifications recognition.



More information AUN at the 3rd GUAF | Recognition webinar | GUAF digital transformation report

Qualifications and Credit Recognition

Co-funded by the European Commission through Erasmus+, CALOHEA was coordinated by the University of Groningen with AUN as co-coordinator. The project connected 25 Southeast Asian and five European universities and engaged more than 3,000 stakeholders. It developed practical approaches to qualifications and assessment frameworks, student workload measurement and authentic assessment, supporting qualifications recognition, mobility and internationalisation. CALOHEA concluded with the highest score category in its final evaluation by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency.

AUN has carried this work forward through AUN Qualifications Excellence (AUN-QEx). Following a scoping mission to Belgium, France and Germany in January 2026, AUN adapted lessons on learning outcomes, student workload, credit transfer, recognition and quality assurance to ASEAN higher education contexts. In association with SEAMEO RIHED, AUN delivered two AUN-QEx Mastery Training Workshops for 63 participants across two cohorts. The workshops combined capacity development with practical exercises, institutional case discussions and the testing of tools for qualifications and credit recognition.

The training also supported the development of AUN-QEx Implementation Guidelines. Participants provided feedback on how the proposed approaches could be applied across different institutional and national systems. These inputs are being used to develop practical guidance for aligning learning outcomes, student workload, credit, assessment and quality assurance, enabling institutions to translate the AUN-QEx principles into their own policies and practices.

More information CALOHEA completion | AUN Europe scoping visit



Interregional Information and Knowledge Sharing

AUN and OBREAL launched their first formal collaborative initiative on 25 June 2026 through a joint webinar on the Digitalisation of Quality Management. The webinar examined how digital transformation is affecting internal and external quality assurance, accreditation, institutional data management and evidence-informed decision-making. Four presentations brought together institutional and regional perspectives from ASEAN, East Africa and Latin America, including examples from Viet Nam, the Philippines and Uruguay.

The webinar attracted 116 participants from nine countries in ASEAN and Asia, 21 African countries, seven European countries and four countries in the Americas. It provided a practical platform for universities, quality assurance bodies and regional networks to compare approaches while recognising differences in institutional capacity, policy environments and stages of digital development.



To extend the accessibility and value of the dialogue, AUN and OBREAL produced proceedings documenting the key presentations, discussions and practical lessons. The proceedings were published in English, French and Spanish, enabling the knowledge generated through the webinar to reach wider audiences across Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas.



Building on this collaboration, AUN will participate in the Fourth Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development, to be hosted by the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in December 2026. This engagement will allow AUN to contribute ASEAN perspectives to broader interregional discussions and explore further cooperation with OBREAL and partners from other regions. Together, the webinar, multilingual proceedings and continued policy dialogue demonstrate AUN's role in connecting regional experience with wider international knowledge exchange.

More information AUN–OBREAL joint webinar

Together, these activities demonstrate AUN's continuing contribution as an ASEM Education Stakeholder: connecting universities and regional networks, bringing Southeast Asian experience into wider policy dialogue, and translating international cooperation into practical approaches for higher education institutions.

4.6. Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) remains deeply committed to the ASEM Education Process, advocating for balanced mobility, transparent recognition of qualifications, and the strengthening of student-led support structures between Europe and Asia. Through education diplomacy and engagement, ESN acts as a primary bridge for student and youth voices in the interregional dialogue.

In this cycle, ESN is focusing its Asian portfolio on the following key initiatives:

Data-Driven Policy and ASEM Expert Group Engagement

To ensure that policy recommendations within the ASEM framework reflect the realities of mobile students, ESN is currently extracting and analysing Asia-specific data from its flagship research project, the ESN survey. This data will inform upcoming policy briefs on mobility trends, administrative bottlenecks, and the role of international exchange in overcoming cultural challenges. Furthermore, ESN continues to actively participate in the ASEM Expert Groups, ensuring that the student perspective remains central to discussions.

Fostering People-to-People Connectivity: Study Visits and Local Multipliers

To actively promote balanced mobility and demystify the Asian Higher Education Area for European students, ESN co-organized an official 10-person student delegation study visit to Beijing and Chengdu (China) on 21-28th June 2026, supported by the Mission of China to the EU. Building on the success of this local engagement, ESN is currently implementing a series of local multiplier events across Europe. These events combine practical opportunity sharing, focusing on scholarships and visa procedures, with cultural exchange, actively involving local Asian student communities to break down barriers and foster intercultural dialogue.



The ESN student delegation during their study visit to Beijing and Chengdu, June 2026.

Capacity Building and Cross-Regional Networking

On 25-28th of October 2026, ESN formally participated in the ESAA “Central Asia - European Union Scientific and Practical Conference" in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. This engagement aimed to strengthen ties with regional stakeholders (such as the National Youth Agency and the Erasmus+ Office of Uzbekistan) and global alumni networks (such as ESAA, EMA, garagErasmus and OCEANS), exploring avenues to increase access to EU funding opportunities (like Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe) for Euro-Asian academic mobility.



ESN advocating for balanced mobility opportunities and student-led peer support in the EU - Central Asia Conference. Tashkent, Uzbekistan, October 2026.

Furthermore, ESN actively participated in the latest 2026 ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS, see chapter 4.1). Following the on-site summit in Tromsø, our delegates are currently implementing regional multiplier activities to share foresight insights and leverage the Euro-Asian bonds created to enrich society through international student engagement. Building on this long-standing partnership, ESN is already preparing to co-design and support the next edition of the ASEFYLS in the upcoming cycle.

Future Outlook: Exporting the Peer-Support Model

Looking ahead, ESN is expanding its strategic partnerships with Asian and European stakeholders, including the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and youth-led NGOs like European Guanxi. A core priority for the upcoming period is exploring the revival of the ARISE (Asia-Europe Student Forum) Conference. Through joint webinars, capacity-building events, and potential future forums, ESN aims to export its successful European peer-support model to Asian Higher Education Institutions, ensuring that mobile students in both regions receive high-quality social, academic, and administrative support.

4.7.European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Highlights of ENQA's activities relevant for Asia-Europe Cooperation

ENQA (the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) is the designated stakeholder organisation for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). ENQA promotes the development of quality assurance in higher education by representing its members in policy-making, supporting them in implementing the EHEA commitments on quality assurance, and by providing a forum for evidence-informed exchange, development and enhancement in external quality assurance. ENQA is the stakeholder organisation for quality assurance within the Bologna Process, a co-author of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG), and contributes to policy making at the EU level and internationally. ENQA's full membership currently stands at 62 agencies in 33 countries in the EHEA, as well as 43 affiliates in 26 countries worldwide.

Quality assurance of transnational education

In October 2025, ENQA launched a new initiative on the quality assurance of transnational education. TNE is huge business globally, and is growing in line with trends of internationalisation in higher education and globalisation in society more generally. While this form of higher education has many benefits, for students, institutions and society, it also raises questions of quality and legitimacy of the education provision and student experience due to the general lack of clear and consistent regulation.

The gaps in legislation and implementation have been recognised by the Ministers in charge of higher education of the EHEA. In the 2024 Tirana Communiqué, the ministers committed to promoting a "more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students".

ENQA's current work on this topic aims to respond to this commitment and focuses on the external quality assurance of higher education delivered worldwide by higher education institutions based in the EHEA. A mapping report presenting the state of play and perspectives of national authorities and quality assurance agencies from the EHEA will be published in November 2026. In the second phase of the project, a working group of quality assurance agencies will review and update a previously produced toolkit for the quality assurance of cross-border higher education and develop a self-assessment tool for quality assurance agencies to reflect on their own policies and procedures. Finally, a set of policy principles will be published, aimed at national authorities to ensure transparent and effective quality assurance of TNE in line with the ESG and international good practice.

Input from stakeholders and national authorities and quality assurance agencies from other world regions (including Asia) is ensured through the project's International Advisory Board and international roundtable discussions.

The work is being conducted under the project 'Robust Quality Assurance of Transnational Education' (ROQA-TNE) from 2025 to 2027. The project is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, is led by ENQA and includes three quality assurance agencies in the implementing consortium (QAA, UK; ACQUIN, Germany; and ANVUR, Italy).

Cross-border quality assurance

In 2026/27 ENQA is leading a working group of national authorities and quality assurance agencies on the topic of cross-border quality assurance (CBQA). Although the work primarily focuses on CBQA within the EHEA, the discussions and outputs are also highly relevant for CBQA conducted globally.

The working group is reviewing and updating the 2017 'Key Considerations for Cross-border Quality Assurance', and is complementing this with a Code of Conduct for agencies conducting CBQA. The two outputs will be published in early 2027.

The work takes place under the SIQA project, which supports the Bologna Process Thematic Peer Group on Quality Assurance. The project is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Comparative report on regional quality assurance frameworks

In the last decades, several world regions, mainly in the ASEAN, Africa and Ibero-America, have developed their own quality assurance frameworks to facilitate cooperation and understanding between quality assurance and higher education systems at national or sub-national level in each respective region. These were built from each region's needs and objectives, which also shaped how they look like and the topics that they cover, while some of them also used the ESG, created in 2005 and updated in 2015, among other sources of inspiration. ENQA is currently preparing a report to compare the ESG with other regional quality assurance frameworks, to analyse the commonalities and divergences, and to explore their application to ongoing higher education themes such as internationalisation and digitalisation. It will also include reflection on the updates being made to the ESG for the new version that is expected to be adopted in May 2027.

The frameworks being addressed in the analysis are:

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015
- ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF), 2014
- African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA), 2019
- Principles of Good Practice (PBP) from the Ibero-American System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (SIACES), 2019 (updated in 2025)

The report will be a synthesis and extension of analyses produced under other initiatives:

- Comparison of the quality assurance reference frameworks of the European Higher Education Area and the Iberoamerican Knowledge Area, coordinated by ANECA (Spain) in 2025
- Comparability study of ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) and European standards and Guidelines (ESG), published by the SCOPE-HE initiative in 2025
- Comparative study between the ASG-QA and the ESG, to be published in late 2026 by the HAQAA3 initiative

The report is due to be published in early 2027. It is supported by the GLOBAL2030 project, which supports the Bologna Process Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue. The project is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

4.8.European Training Foundation (ETF)

Skills dimensions of migration

The European Training Foundation (ETF) has been cooperating with Asian partners in the following fields:

- Researchers and practitioners on labour migration from several Asian countries are members of the ETF Migration Community of experts (MIGCOM). Experts and institutions can join the community via this EUSurvey. MIGCOM, which has 4000 members, is part of the Skills Lab Network of Experts bringing together specialists from universities, research centres and public institutions to analyse labour migration trends and co-develop new knowledge.
- Ongoing ETF projects include:

  Skills for fair, efficient labour migration: policy-oriented research on aligning skills development, qualifications recognition and migration governance to support more balanced and mutually beneficial outcomes.

  Skills and migration in changing labour markets: a working paper on how labour market transformations, migration systems and skills formation reshape the relationship between mobility and human capital
- Data on Central Asian countries are included in the new ETF Migration dashboard: an interactive tool providing data on migration trends, skills and labour market dynamics across ETF partner countries.

Vocational excellence:

- The ETF Network on Excellence has members from 41 countries covering Europe, Asia and Africa. It facilitatec peer-learning to promote vocational excellence. Network members are listed in the ENE Atlas.
- The International Self-Assessment Tool for Centres of Vocational Excellence (ISATCOVE) supports VET providers and CoVEs to reflect on their progress towards the EU concept of centres of vocational excellence. During the guided implementation phase, centres in Africa, Asia and Europe have adopted and applied the tool. Centres that received the Committed to Vocational Excellence certificate are included in this registry. From autumn 2026, the tool will be available for any centre interested in conducting the self-assessment.
- ETF brings several ENE members to its annual Forum on Vocational Excellence. This year, for the first time, ETF collaborated with the ADB to bring a delegation from Asia as well, see article: Building bridges: CoVEs from Europe and Asia come together for Forum on Vocational Excellence | ETF

ETF Skills Lab Network of experts

- The ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts is a global knowledge community of labour market experts and researchers in the emerging skills needs and skills anticipation field. Launched by ETF in 2021, it currently counts nearly 900 members from ETF partner countries in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia, as well as EU Member States and beyond.
- the Network contributes to the achievement of four objectives:
  - Enhancing skills anticipation and matching in dynamic labour markets.

- Supporting policy reform through evidence-based research.
- Promoting knowledge exchange and capacity-building among members.
- Strengthening international collaboration in ETF partner countries and beyond.

- The Skills Lab organises annual live events, peer visits, online peer learning sessions, thematic webinars (network-wide and region-focused), thematic sub-groups (e.g., on skills and migration and graduate tracking). Additionally, members are engaged through calls for papers, a LinkedIn Group, the Network area on the ETF's OpenSpace, Flash News and Newsletters.

Digital Education for innovative teaching and learning

- The ETF supports the human-centred and inclusive digital transformation of education and training systems by promoting digital skills, supporting digital education reforms, generating evidence on the impact of digitalisation, and fostering digital inclusion across its partner countries.
- Highlights from 2026:
  - ETF's **mapping of AI policies and initiatives** in education and training in ETF partner Countries. It maps, classifies and analyses AI-related public policies across ETF partner countries, spanning a lifelong learning spectrum, from general education and VET to higher education and adult learning. The project includes three country case studies, namely Ukraine, Serbia and Türkiye. Outputs will include a database of AI-related policies and initiatives, an analytical report, and a policy brief distilling key findings and providing recommendations for policymakers and the ETF on scaling inclusive, human-centric AI in education and training. Publication is foreseen for early 2027.
  - The ETF studies on educators' digital competences in the Enlargement region. By collecting and analysing large-scale data on teachers' self-perceived digital competences, ETF provides policymakers and education stakeholders with evidence to monitor progress, identify priority areas for intervention and strengthen teachers' capacity to use digital technologies effectively for teaching, learning and assessment. A recent example is the newly released study on the digital competence of teachers in Ukraine's general education sector (K12) - A study on the digital competence of general secondary school teachers in Ukraine - Publications Office of the EU

Publication on AI impacts on labour markets and skills

- The ETF report The impact of AI on labour markets provides information to better understandthe transformative impact of AI on jobs and workplaces, which is crucial for seizing opportunities and reducing the risk associated with this technology. Artificial Intelligence is disrupting labour markets through its automation, augmentation, and redefinition of tasks and in how it is changing how work is carried out and valued. The ETF report gathers a comprehensive review of existing literature regarding the impact of AI on the labour markets, along with key insights from academic research, policy analyses of international/EU organisations, and industry reports. This report identifies key trends, challenges and opportunities arising from AI adoption in the workplace so fa,r and provides a synthesis of key findings in a structured overview. The main effects are presented systematically along the lines of job quantity, job quality and inclusiveness, while the final chapter is dedicated to AI's potential impact in developing

countries. The publication highlights major trends, challenges, and opportunities from AI adoption in workplaces for experts, practitioners and decision-makers in the ETF's partner countries.

- The report Changing landscape of skills in the age of AI has been prepared by ETF and is the result of joint collaboration between ETF, Cedefop, Eurofound, the European Commission, ILO, and UNESCO, which are members of the Inter-Agency TVET Working Group 1 on Skills Mismatch in Digitised Labour Markets. This report focuses on the consequences of the increasing adoption in workplaces of AI technologies which alter how workers use cognitive, socioemotional, and physical skills to perform tasks across a broad range of occupations. This shift is reshaping the variety and depth of the three skill categories required of workers, often increasing the need for higher-order cognitive and socioemotional skills, as well as general digital and data science skills. The report also examines the emerging technical occupations required to develop and maintain AI systems, which are currently a niche labour market but are growing rapidly as AI technologies spread. Finally, the report discusses the implications of these developments for skills policies, arguing that the impact of AI on life and work means that there is a new basic skill that everyone needs: the ability to understand and use AI tools safely and ethically.

ETF support to skills and qualifications portability and recognition in South Asian countries

- ETF has recently begun support to EU mobility cooperation initiatives with Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, undertaking operational work in portability of skills and qualifications.
- For Pakistan and Bangladesh, ETF is supporting implementation of the EU Talent Partnerships and other labour mobility pathways to the EU through an ongoing assignment in these countries. This project comprises, first, analyses of the respective national qualifications systems, and, second, development of practical manuals which will guide the two countries' respective VET actors in providing the necessary data on their vocational qualifications to achieve recognition of these by EU authorities.
- In India, under the same assignment, ETF is strengthening its knowledge base on the national qualifications system, in support to the growing EU-India cooperation on qualifications frameworks, recognition and labour mobility, which form part of the broader EU-India strategic partnership in many other sectors.
- ETF is also pioneering a digital platform that allows qualifications from different countries, EU and non-EU, to be described in a common format and compared on the basis of their respective learning outcomes, skills and occupations, using ESCO as the common reference language. This database increases transparency, comparability and trust, helping support skills portability, labour mobility and the recognition of qualifications. It is being continuously populated and tested with qualifications from both EU and partner countries, including now Bangladesh.

4.9.European University Association (EUA)

As the voice of Europe's universities, the European University Association (EUA) is the most comprehensive organisation representing the higher education and research sector in Europe, with a membership of over 800 higher education institutions and 34 national rectors' conferences across the 48 countries of the European Higher Education Area. Acting as the independent voice of universities, EUA leads advocacy for the university sector in European policy-making processes (Bologna Process, European Union) and supports university communities through exchanges, trends analysis and peer learning – among other activities. EUA's longitudinal studies such as the *Trends* series, which provides data and perspectives from European higher education institutions since 1999, also serve as a comparative knowledge base for global developments in higher education.

The Global Universities Associations Forum (GUAF)

The Global University Associations Forum was established in 2021, as a platform to foster systematic exchange between regional university association, and in order to mobilise the collective capacity of universities to tackle global challenges, and address the role of universities in shaping our future society. It complements the ongoing exchanges and collaboration initiatives developed by universities, and their national networks and associations.

Members of the GUAF are regional university associations, among them European and Asian ones:

- The Association of African Universities (AAU)
- The Association of Arab Universities (AArU)
- The American Council on Education (ACE)
- The Association of Indian Universities (AIU)
- The ASEAN University Network (AUN)
- The China Association of Higher Education (CAHE)
- The Latin American and The Caribbean Space for Higher Education (ENLACES)
- The European University Association (EUA)
- Universities Canada (UC)

As a space for open dialogue, GUAF seeks to strengthen existing links between its members, building upon longstanding cooperation in areas where the collective resources and influence of members can add value. It aims at identifying pathways for joint action to further enhance links between university associations and their relationships with member institutions. In addition, GUAF advocates for the vital role of partnerships as a vehicle for pursuing joint actions within and across regions. GUAF works with a rotating chairmanship: it was chaired by AUN in 2023, CAHE (China) in 2024 and AIU (India) in 2025. GUAF holds one physical meeting per year, with the latest one taking place in New Delhi on 13 November 2025.

In addition, GUAF members hold regular thematic meetings virtually, for peer-learning and exchanging on policy developments in their respective regions. As an output from these thematic focus, the GUAF has published in 2025 the report *Similarities and differences in the digital transformation of higher education*, with regional reports from associations involved.

4.10. SEAMEO RIHED

As a Stakeholder, The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) contributes to the ASEM Education Process by connecting Southeast Asian higher education institutions and policy stakeholders with partners across Asia and Europe. During 2024-2026, SEAMEO RIHED's cooperation has focused on two complementary areas: emerging engagement with EURAXESS and the MSCA-GLOPOL project to advance research partnerships and researcher mobility; and continued collaboration with the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and International Tuning Academy on qualifications excellence and higher education harmonisation. The initiatives are outlined below, with particular emphasis on the new research cooperation being developed in 2026 and beyond.

Emerging Cooperation with EURAXESS and MSCA-GLOPOL on Southeast Asia-Europe Research Partnerships

SEAMEO RIHED is developing a new collaboration with the EURAXESS ASEAN team under the EU-funded Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions Global Cooperation: Policy Enhancement and Strategic Promotion (MSCA-GLOPOL) project. The immediate focus is a series of three online thematic sessions designed to connect Southeast Asian and European researchers, institutions and policy stakeholders, identify shared research priorities and facilitate potential partnerships. Preparations for the first session are underway, including the identification of prospective expert speakers.

EURAXESS supports international researcher mobility, career development and research cooperation. MSCA-GLOPOL, a Horizon Europe-funded project running from June 2025 to May 2028, identifies Southeast Asia/ASEAN as a strategic region and seeks to strengthen participation in Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), international research cooperation and related policy dialogue.

The first session, on earth observation and disaster management, is planned for 16 December 2026, followed by proposed sessions on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in February 2027 and health sciences and biotechnology in April 2027. Each will combine short contributions from Southeast Asian and European institutions with facilitated small-group discussions to explore common interests and potential collaborations. Participants will also be introduced to opportunities under MSCA Doctoral Networks and Staff Exchanges, with follow-up introductions facilitated where appropriate.

Beyond the thematic sessions, other areas under consideration include policy dialogue and knowledge exchange on research cooperation, targeted information and capacity-building activities on European research funding and mobility opportunities, institutional networking and sharing practices in research ecosystem development and researcher careers. The cooperation may also help identify regional priorities and barriers to participation in international research programmes.

Although still at a preparatory stage, the collaboration offers a practical route from Southeast Asia-Europe dialogue to researcher connections, institutional partnerships and greater engagement with European research cooperation instruments. It also complements efforts towards a Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education by strengthening research connectivity and academic cooperation across the two regions.

Advancing Southeast Asia–Europe Cooperation in Qualifications Excellence and Higher Education Harmonisation

SEAMEO RIHED, in collaboration with the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and the International Tuning Academy, is advancing qualifications excellence, curriculum development and the international comparability of higher education programmes in Southeast Asia. This cooperation builds on European-supported initiatives, translating their methodologies and outcomes into sustained regional capacity and institutional practices.

The collaboration builds on two Erasmus+ co-funded initiatives: **Tuning Asia-South East (TA-SE)** and **Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Asia (CALOHEA)**. TA-SE engaged 23 universities in developing common reference points for degree programmes in Civil Engineering, Medicine and Teacher Education. CALOHEA subsequently developed three Recognition Mechanisms (RMs) and subject-specific Qualifications and Assessment Reference Frameworks (QARFs) to support learning outcomes comparability and qualifications recognition. Its dissemination activities, including 14 National Meetings, reached over 3,500 participants from 348 institutions across 22 countries.

Building on these foundations, **AUN Qualifications Excellence (AUN-QEx)**, implemented by AUN in association with SEAMEO RIHED, supports institutions in developing internationally comparable, competence-based degree programmes. Drawing on the Tuning methodology, it focuses on three interconnected areas: programme learning outcomes incorporating Knowledge, Skills and Responsibility (KSR), authentic assessment and student workload management.

Recent cooperation and capacity-building activities (2025–2026) include:



- **AUN-QEx Mastery Training Workshops (25–27 June 2025 and 1–3 April 2026):** Two workshops in Bangkok engaged 63 participants from universities and institutions across Southeast Asia, strengthening practical capacities in curriculum development, assessment and qualifications comparability.
- **1st AUN-QEx Online Meeting Forum: ASEAN Tuning Experts Reunion (8 September 2026):** Hosted by SEAMEO RIHED, the Forum reconnected experts and participants from TA-SE, CALOHEA and AUN-QEx to exchange institutional experiences, share good practices and identify opportunities for further cooperation.
- **AUN-QEx Guidelines Development Workshop (6–8 October 2026):** Held at Universiti Putra Malaysia, the workshop brought together experts and university practitioners to develop practical guidance on KSR, authentic assessment and workload management, including recommendations for institutional guidelines, templates and worked examples.

Looking ahead, cooperation will focus on finalising practical guidelines, expanding capacity-building and Train-the-Trainer approaches, and strengthening a regional community of AUN-QEx practitioners. Complementing existing quality assurance mechanisms, AUN-QEx demonstrates how Asia–Europe cooperation can evolve from individual projects into sustained regional ownership, advancing educational quality, qualifications transparency and comparability, recognition and student mobility between Southeast Asia and Europe.

4.11. UNESCO

Shaping a shared higher education space: UNESCO's Global and Regional Conventions on Higher Education

The Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, (Tokyo Convention) entered into force in 2018, and is open for ratification by all UNESCO Member States as well as the Holy See. It currently has 13 States Parties: Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, China, Fiji, Holy See, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Türkiye. UNESCO's Global and Regional Conventions (Tokyo, Lisbon, Addis, Buenos Aires, Arab States) provides an inclusive framework for Asia and Europe, as well as other world regions to exchange, connect and collaborate on recognition of qualifications, facilitating cross-border mobility of students, contributing to mutual understanding and lasting peace.

UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok and Office for UN Coordination for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok), as Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention Committee and Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC) promotes ratification and implementation of the Tokyo and Global Conventions. Within the Tokyo Convention Roadmap to 2030 and APNNIC Action Plan to 2030, an important dimension is inter-regional exchange and cooperation in recognition of higher education qualifications. Knowledge sharing between Asia and Europe was enabled through engaging ENIC-NARIC network members, and the President of the Global Convention Intergovernmental Conference in the 6th Tokyo Convention Committee Session and 6th APNNIC Plenary (18 – 19 November 2025, Bangkok, Thailand), as well as APNNIC webinar series. UNESCO Bangkok, and several APNNIC members (such as CSSD China, New Zealand Qualifications Authority) has also been participated in ASEM Expert Groups on Recognition and Mobility, and AI and digital transformation, enabling Asia-Europe exchange on higher education.

Green TVET in Thailand: Knowledge transfer and capacity building across Asia and Europe

The Green TVET Roadmap (2025–2030) was developed through consultation workshops and working group meetings in Thailand and learning visits to Germany. Representatives from Thailand participated in site visits to German training centres and vocational training colleges.



The roadmap, led by the Office of Vocational Education Commission of Thailand's Ministry of Education, co-developed with technical contributions from UNESCO-UNEVOC and UNESCO Bangkok, focuses on five areas: green TVET culture; developing vocational manpower with green skills; green leadership in colleges; community engagement; and research and innovation.

Following this, a professional educators' training workshop was held in April 2025 to strengthen the capacity of Thai TVET instructors and administrators to implement greening actions at the institution level. This resulted in the capacity building of 57 Thai educators from OVEC-supervised colleges who enhanced their green competencies and pedagogical skills.

In October 2024 – September 2025, 23 TVET institutes and their affiliated educational institutions in Bangkok jointly developed action plans to implement the Green TVET Roadmap, and implemented activities such as solar panel installation, green space building, reuse and recycling of materials, and reducing energy consumption. These actions strengthened awareness, integrated sustainability into existing educational practices, developed future-oriented skills, improved resource efficiency, encouraged green innovation, and created opportunities for collaboration with communities and enterprises.

More information:

Creating a comprehensive roadmap for green skills development in Thailand

Greening TVET systems: Insights from Project Implementation in Nepal, Senegal and Thailand

ASEAN Regional Conference on Learning Cities with Reginal Partners will be co-organized in Ho Chi Minh City on 10 and 11 December 2026 by UNESCO and Ho Chi Minh City. A keynote speaker from the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub will be speaking on the conference theme, 'Digital Transformation for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Learning Cities.' The Conference addresses a defining moment for education as cities across the region navigate the opportunities and risks of the AI era. Noting growing membership and interest in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities by cities in Asia and Europe, UNESCO expects more city-to-city collaboration across the two regions and more collaboration with ASEM Education.

4.12. UNESCO-UNEVOC

The UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training is the International Centre for connecting UNESCO Member States worldwide to develop and strengthen technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Innovation and Excellence in TVET project as part of the Towards a global TVET agenda initiative

The Innovation and Excellence in TVET project builds on the Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project, implemented since 2019. The project aims to effectively enhance the strategies for innovation and excellence in TVET, and foster collaboration resulting in the active promotion of better TVET systems that address the needs of individuals, economies and societies.



The project contributes to the broader Towards a Global TVET Agenda (TGTA) initiative which is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens and Youth (BMBFSFJ) and coordinated by

the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). Other multilateral organizations that contribute to the TGTA initiative include ETF, OECD, ILO and UNIDO.

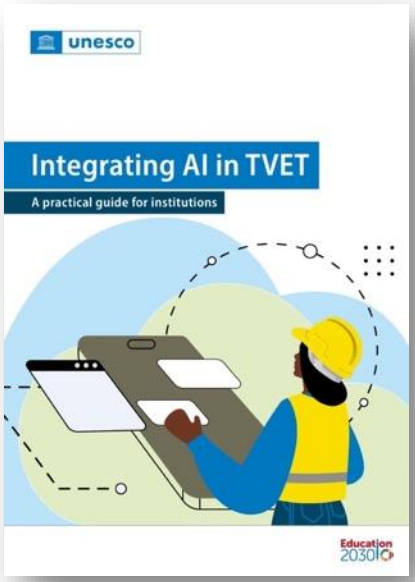


UNESCO publication on AI in TVET

The UNESCO publication Integrating AI in TVET: A practical guide for institutions was launched in July 2026.

As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms industries worldwide, its implications for education are receiving increasing policy attention. UNESCO has helped shape this dialogue through key frameworks, including the *Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education* (2019), the *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* (2021), *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research* (2023), and the *AI Competency Frameworks for Teachers and Students* (2024).

Building on this work, the guide responds to the specific opportunities and challenges AI presents for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Developed by Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, Shenzhen Polytechnic University and UNESCO-UNEVOC, with contributions from 34 experts worldwide, it provides practical, institution-focused support for policymakers, institutional leaders and educators across diverse contexts.



Grounded in UNESCO's work on AI ethics and international TVET expertise, the publication addresses governance, curricula, pedagogy, assessment, professional development, safety-critical training and institutional innovation. It combines principles for responsible, human-centred AI use with practical tools to support phased implementation at the institutional level.

Since its launch, the publication has been translated into Chinese, French and Spanish, further expanding its accessibility to TVET stakeholders worldwide.

5. International Projects and Initiatives

The ASEM Education Process is based on inter-regional cooperation and there is a huge number of international relevant projects carried out in and in-between the two regions. This chapter is listing projects that were brought to the attention of the ASEM Education Secretariat. The following is a non-exhaustive list of international projects fostering cooperation of Asia and Europe in the field of (higher) education and shall show some examples of good practice in the ASEM Education context.

5.1. Global Inventory of Regional and National QFs by Cedefop-ETF-UNESCO-UNESCO-UIL

The two-volume publication "**Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks**" monitors and analyses the development and progress of qualifications frameworks worldwide. Featuring in every ASEM programme since it was first published in 2013, the new edition of the Global Inventory is the sixth co-produced by experts from Cedefop, the European Training Foundation, UNESCO and UNESCO-UIL, who will present it at ASEM SOM2 in Panglao, Bohol, the Philippines, in November 2026. Cedefop coordinated publication and production this round.

The Inventory comprises two volumes. Volume 1 is thematic, comprising a series of chapters, each of which takes one of the salient functions of current NQF development, and describes and assesses how, and how widely and deeply, these are being implemented in practice.

In this new edition it is National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) as facilitators of lifelong learning, specifically, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and micro-credentials, and mobility, via its transparency and recognition functions, that stand out.

Each of the thematic chapters in Volume 1 is co-authored by teams of experts from two or more of the agencies.

Volume 2 is geographical, consisting of 81 reports on NQFs worldwide, which provide detailed information on the objectives and functions of the covered NQFs: their structures; the types of qualifications they include and how they are quality-assured; what development stage they have reached and their implementation tools such as qualifications databases; their governance arrangements; and their interaction with broader policy areas. These reports provide the national data to inform the chapters in Volume 1.

The Inventory aims to be of use to ministries, authorities, experts, projects, and other actors who implement national or regional qualifications frameworks. Examining the publication, they will see that the great majority of frameworks surveyed are operational, with multiple qualifications included, settled and functioning institutions of governance, and supported by implementation tools and systems such as qualification databases and credit systems. They can also see highlighted those factors that can hinder NQF development, and, conversely, the conditions that facilitate progress.

5.2. EU–ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education (SCOPE-HE)

Advancing sustainable connectivity through education, research and skills

The EU–ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education Programme (SCOPE-HE) supports stronger connectivity within ASEAN and between ASEAN and the European Union through higher education, research and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Funded by the European Union with a budget of EUR 9.3 million, the programme is implemented from February 2024 to January 2028 by Nuffic in partnership with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Building on the achievements of the EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) Programme and Erasmus+, SCOPE-HE combines three areas of cooperation: strengthening student and academic mobility; supporting cross-regional university networks for research and innovation; and improving collaboration between TVET institutions and businesses. Across these areas, SCOPE-HE promotes gender equality and supports the skills, research and institutional cooperation needed for the green transition, digital transformation and a sustainable blue economy.

Advancing mobility through policy dialogue and trusted frameworks

Since its launch at the ASEAN Headquarters in Jakarta in July 2024, SCOPE-HE has created a series of platforms for policymakers, education institutions, youth, regional organisations and the private sector to shape ASEAN–EU cooperation in higher education.

The first ASEAN Policy Forum on Higher Education, held in Vientiane in November 2024, brought together 154 participants to examine barriers to mobility, regional cooperation, equality and participation. The second Policy Dialogue convened 101 ASEAN and European stakeholders in Brussels in May 2025, focusing on mobility schemes, qualifications frameworks, youth participation and institutional partnerships. This was followed by the third Policy Dialogue in Kuala Lumpur in October 2025, which addressed talent development, flexible learning pathways, qualifications harmonisation and cooperation between education and industry. Recommendations from the three dialogues were consolidated respectively in the Vientiane Policy Brief, Brussels Policy Brief and Kuala Lumpur Policy Brief.



The series continued in Metro Manila on 27–28 October 2026 with the 4th ASEAN–EU Policy Dialogue on Higher Education, organised in collaboration with the Philippine Commission on Higher Education. Under the theme Advancing Innovation and Skills for a Sustainable Blue Economy, participants examined how higher education and TVET can develop blue and green talent, strengthen education–industry partnerships and contribute research and innovation to blue economy sectors. The discussions are being consolidated in the Manila Policy Brief for ASEAN and EU stakeholders.



Alongside the policy dialogues, SCOPE-HE has supported the frameworks that underpin recognition and academic mobility. Its Comparability Study of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and the European Qualifications Framework identified similarities between the two frameworks and practical areas for strengthening their implementation. Peer-learning and technical discussions in February 2026 subsequently brought together experts from ASEAN and Europe to consider qualifications referencing and emerging forms of learning and credentials.

A second comparability study found a high degree of comparability between the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Rather than recommending further technical alignment, the study highlighted the need to strengthen implementation, visibility and stakeholder ownership of the ASEAN framework.

At the time of publication, SCOPE-HE was preparing an ASEAN–EU Workshop on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, to be held in Bangkok on 17–18 November 2026. The workshop will bring together quality assurance bodies, higher education institutions, students and other stakeholders to discuss how regional frameworks can support recognition, mobility and mutual trust.

SCOPE-HE is also examining the ratification and implementation of the Tokyo and Global Conventions on the recognition of higher education qualifications in ASEAN. A regional validation workshop held in Jakarta in September 2026 enabled representatives from Southeast Asian countries, UNESCO and international recognition specialists to review the study's preliminary findings and national experiences.

Universities collaborating on shared challenges

In 2025, SCOPE-HE selected three EU–ASEAN research clusters involving 17 universities. Each cluster received a grant of EUR 545,000 to develop cooperation around a shared regional and global challenge.

GreenTrans-EDU focuses on embedding green transformation in higher education. DIGIHAZ applies digital transformation to disaster preparedness and natural-hazard management. STABLE develops partnerships for a sustainable blue economy. Together, the clusters support joint research, staff and student exchange, and longer-term institutional cooperation between ASEAN and Europe.

Connecting TVET with the labour market

SCOPE-HE's TVET activities connect policymakers, training institutions and businesses around employability and workforce readiness. The Closing the Gap workshop series has provided a regional forum for discussing practical skills development, education–industry collaboration and the changing needs of the labour market. Workshops were held in Bangkok in 2024, Phnom Penh in 2025 and Malaysia in 2026.

The programme also supported an ASEAN study on the employability of vocational graduates in the agrifood sector, developed with SEAMEO VOCTECH. Further activities have strengthened the use of labour-market information, institutional leadership and TVET–business collaboration. These include the BizConnect initiative, capacity building for TVET institutions, and grants applying triple and quadruple helix partnerships to digital transformation, the green transition and sustainability.



Through these interconnected activities, SCOPE-HE is carrying forward the cooperation established under SHARE while expanding it to research, TVET and business engagement. Its contribution to the ASEM Education Process lies in connecting Asian and European experience around common priorities: trusted qualifications, quality assurance, equitable mobility, relevant skills and research collaboration that responds to shared challenges.

5.3.MicroCASA

The MicroCASA project (2023-2026, **Micro**-credentials for life-long learning and employability: building **C**apacities for developing **A**gile educational interventions in **S**outheast **A**sian universities) has held its Final Conference on **"Microcredentialing in Higher and Vocational Education of Southeast Asia"** on 3-4 February 2026 at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang. This meeting marked a significant milestone in the strategic modernisation of higher and vocational education frameworks across Southeast Asia. Serving as the definitive dissemination initiative of this Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education project, the two days international symposium successfully brought together approximately 100 academic stakeholders, mainly from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, including policymakers, and industry leaders, supported by a secretariat of over 50 committee members and volunteers.



The primary objective of the conference was to rigorously evaluate and propagate the outcomes of the MICROCASA project, specifically focusing on the institutionalization of micro-credentials. Designed to foster cross-regional dialogue, the event engaged a comprehensive ecosystem of educators, regulatory bodies, and students to promote institutional alignment, accelerate the deployment of the MICROCASA results, and establish robust sustainability roadmaps within the Southeast Asian higher education landscape.

A critical component of the symposium was the integrated Policy Panel, which facilitated a high-level discourse on regulatory frameworks and quality assurance. Featuring prominent representatives from the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), the Department of Higher Education (JPT-KPT), the ASEM Education Secretariat and the European partner institutions, the panel addressed the complexities of mutual recognition, digital credential standards, and the macro-level sustainability of micro-credentials within national qualification frameworks.





Post-Conference Synergies and Ethical AI Governance

While the conference successfully demonstrated the institutional readiness of the Southeast Asian partner higher education institutions to adopt micro-credentialing models, its conclusion marked the transition into a broader phase of cooperation. In the post-conference period, the international consortium has maintained active, institutionalized collaboration to secure the long-term sustainability of the project's deliverables and ensure the permanent exploitation of its pedagogical tools.

Crucially, the partnership has evolved to address contemporary paradigms in higher education, focusing on the rapid proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic settings. Recognizing the profound implications of generative technologies, the partners are actively co-developing new research initiatives and project proposals aimed at orchestrating a systematic, ethically grounded deployment of AI tools within Southeast Asian universities.

By designing advanced pedagogical frameworks and governance models, this ongoing collaboration seeks to manage current technological challenges effectively. The overarching objective is to harness the potential of AI to enhance teaching methodologies and student learning outcomes, while strictly safeguarding academic integrity, data privacy, and intellectual rigor from an uncompromising ethical perspective.

This project description is drafted by Italy.

5.4.Q-ENTRY Database

The Q-ENTRY database is an online database containing information and samples of school leaving qualifications giving access to Higher Education in the national system of education. The database aims to enhance automatic recognition of these qualifications thanks to a common platform of collaboration among national authorities from different countries, as they directly upload information to enrich the database. This way, the database guarantees trust and quality as it is filled only with first-hand information.



It has been developed in the framework of two EU co-funded projects, in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme:

- Q-ENTRY – International Database on Higher Education Entry Qualifications (2018-2020)
- qENTRY+ – International Database on Higher Education Entry Qualifications (2020-2022)

The database is available for the general public and provides, in a simple and standardised format, all the relevant information that can be used by students, admission officers, guidance practitioners, ENIC-NARIC centres, ministries, funding agencies. CIMEA coordinated the project, which was carried out with partner ENIC-NARIC centres from: Belgium Flemish Community, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, The Netherlands.

Thanks to the cooperation in other initiatives such as other international Erasmus+ projects or bilateral agreements among CIMEA and other institutions, the Q-ENTRY database has been enriched also with qualifications from Asian countries: Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea and Mongolia.

This project description is drafted by Italy.

6. Conclusions and Outlook

6.1. Main Conclusions of the Stocktaking Report

Based on the information outlined in this report and the progress of the ASEM Education Process since the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9), held on 25–26 January 2024 in Floriana/Valletta, Malta, the following key conclusions can be identified:

1. The Chair's Conclusions of ASEMME9 (January 2024) have set the political and practical agenda for the ASEM Education Process until ASEMME10 (November 2026). The Ministers have reconfirmed their willingness to further implement and update the ASEM Education 2030 Strategy and accompanying Action Plan as frameworks for stronger collaboration and dialogue and an invitation to the ASEM partners and stakeholders to develop, implement and monitor result-oriented initiatives and projects to be realised through the interaction between ASEM Education partners and stakeholders, with the support of the ASEM Education Secretariat, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), and other stakeholders. The ASEM partners and stakeholders continued to further work on the four thematic priorities: 1. Quality Assurance and Recognition; 2. Engaging Business and Industry in Education, 3. Balanced Mobility and 4. Lifelong Learning including TVET, the two transversal themes Sustainable Development and Digitalisation.
   During ISOM (Bangkok, November 2024) and SOM1 (Bucharest, November 2025) as well as during other ASEM Education Process events and expert group meetings, Senior Officials, stakeholders, education experts and the ASEM Education Secretariat discussed issues related to the further development of the AEP and current emerging topics for education. Interactions among ASEM partners and stakeholders reflected a shared conviction that the Asia-Europe Meeting process serves as a vital platform for dialogue and collaboration, capable of tackling both cross-regional and global challenges and therefore meriting ongoing commitment. Such an optimistic outlook provides a strong foundation for those who seek to strengthen and broaden Asia-Europe ties in the years ahead within the ASEM framework.
2. The period between ASEMME9 and ASEMME10 has been influenced by multiple regional and global challenges leading to less or different investment of funds by the governments. The fact that many events have shifted to online or hybrid meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic made us again experience both the advantages and drawbacks of online and hybrid meetings. On one hand, the widespread adoption of virtual meetings has made it considerably easier to organise gatherings without the logistical constraints of travel. On the other hand, we have observed a notable decline in participant engagement, largely due to the fatigue associated with prolonged online interaction, as well as the financial and organisational challenges that arose when funding for travel was limited or unavailable in the context of hybrid events. It has become increasingly clear that people are not as actively involved or connected during online participation as they are when meeting face to face. In-person meetings hold an irreplaceable value when it comes to fostering genuine people-to-people connectivity, building trust, and strengthening relationships — benefits that virtual formats, however convenient, cannot fully replicate over an extended period of time. The AES has put additional efforts in motivating countries and stakeholders to participate in-person in meetings and it seems necessary to re-establish and redefine cooperation and partnerships among countries and stakeholders in the next period, while building on lessons learned and positive past experiences.
3. This Stocktaking Report demonstrates that, despite the various regional and global challenges, a significant number of ASEM Education activities and initiatives carried out by ASEM partners and

stakeholders, as well as the four Expert Groups, have made significant progress and achieved most of their objectives to contribute to the AEP's priorities and further development of the Process. Nevertheless, it would be desirable that more ASEM partners and stakeholders coordinate activities, establish new projects and further strengthen cooperation between Asia and Europe.

4. While notable progresses have been made, opportunities for further development remain, and our focus in the coming period will be directed toward strengthening key dimensions of the ASEM Education Process — namely, fostering meaningful policy dialogue, enhancing outreach and visibility, and building closer and multilateral synergies with organisations and broader international processes.

Policy Dialogue: The ASEM Education Process has demonstrated considerable progress in its informal capacity, with partners and stakeholders continuing to advance the implementation of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030. As an advanced transregional platform for dialogue and cooperation, the ASEM Education Process fosters inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education and training through balanced and mutually beneficial partnerships between Asia and Europe, underpinned by robust people-to-people connectivity. Through collaborative exchanges, joint initiatives, and sustained partnerships, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders work to equip individuals with the skills and adaptability needed to thrive in rapidly evolving societies and labour markets — all while respecting the diversity of national, regional, and local educational contexts, practices, and academic values.

Going forward, the ASEM Education Process will continue to serve as an open and informal dialogue space for policymakers operating at various levels within the education sector. Its high-level political meetings — including Senior Officials' and Ministers' meetings — along with the work of Expert Groups and other collaborative structures, will continue to provide partners with the opportunity to develop and exchange innovative ideas and promising practices that can inform future policies. These fora bring together a broad spectrum of actors, from governmental bodies and civil society organisations to youth representatives, academic institutions, researchers, quality assurance and recognition agencies, and business and industry partners.

Stronger linkages are needed between the activities within the ASEM Education Process and its Senior Officials and Ministerial Meetings. Through the systematic exchanges of information within the AEP (e.g. through updates at Senior Officials' Meetings or the Stocktaking Reports), ASEM Education partners and stakeholders can actively seek to create more structured opportunities for dialogue, with a view to ensuring greater coherence, continuity, and follow-through across activities, projects, and initiatives.

Synergies with International Organisations and Processes: The ASEM Education Process engages with some of the most pressing and timely issues in the field of education — topics that are equally prominent on the agendas of other international bodies and fora.

Operating within a broad and interconnected global ecosystem, the ASEM Education Process is embedded in an extensive network of international actors and organisations. With this in mind, enhanced cooperation and structured dialogue should continue to be actively promoted among ASEM Education partners and stakeholders, while all participating actors are encouraged to deepen their engagement with other relevant multilateral frameworks and organisations. These include, among others, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) with its Global Policy Forum and Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue, as well as the activities taking place within the ASEAN Chairmanship, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO and bodies responsible for quality assurance and academic recognition, such as the ENIC-NARIC

Networks, the APNNIC Network, and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). This enumeration is indicative rather than exhaustive, and ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will remain open to engaging with additional multilateral actors and forums as opportunities arise.

A key priority of the ASEM partners is to cultivate meaningful synergies with multilateral organisations and processes in pursuit of shared goals, optimising the use of collective resources and capacities wherever feasible, minimising duplication of effort, and establishing more consistent and structured forms of collaboration. This can be achieved by mapping areas of common interest and aligned objectives, and subsequently intensifying engagement — both among ASEM partners themselves and with broader multilateral processes.

Through policy dialogue, strategic partnerships, networking, and tangible institutional collaboration, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will continue to build upon existing programmes and projects while also launching new joint initiatives. These will span areas such as mobility and international exchanges, the development of transversal competencies, and lifelong learning across all education sectors and levels.

Furthermore, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will maintain close attention to relevant developments and emerging initiatives within their areas of expertise, adopting a proactive stance and contributing meaningfully wherever appropriate.

Visibility and Communication: Despite the fact that ASEM member countries collectively account for 60% of the global population, raising the profile of the ASEM Education Process remains an ongoing and significant challenge. Fresh approaches to awareness-raising and a better involvement of all ASEM partners should be explored in order to bring this forum to the attention of a wider audience within the education sector and beyond.

Enhancing the visibility of the ASEM Education Process and promoting its initiatives and projects through the sharing of concrete success stories is of strategic importance for a number of reasons. To begin with, showcasing exemplary practices from within the process (as in this Stocktaking Report) demonstrates its continued relevance and provides a strong justification for its existence. Moreover, communicating the tangible benefits of active participation in ASEM Education activities can serve a dual purpose: deepening the existing collaboration between Asia and Europe within the ASEM framework, while simultaneously attracting new partners and stakeholders to contribute to the process. Ultimately, greater visibility leading to stronger commitment and more meaningful collaboration has the potential to generate a positive impact on the four core strategic objectives, enabling them to deliver more substantial and far-reaching results.

At the heart of this effort lies communication, which must be strengthened both internally — within the ASEM Education Process— and externally, in relation to partners and stakeholders outside the framework. All available tools and channels should be mobilised to this end, including official documentation, the dedicated ASEM Education Process website, the ASEM Infoboard platform, social media, and e-mails informing on events, ensuring that flagship initiatives, key outcomes, and relevant information are effectively disseminated. At the same time, the ASEM Education Secretariat cannot operate in isolation: partners and members should be regularly reminded to promote the process within their own networks and institutions, thereby generating a multiplier effect. Where existing communication materials are found to be lacking, the development of new formats and tools should be actively considered.

Finally, diversifying and combining communication channels and formats would not only extend the reach of the ASEM Education Process to broader audiences, but also allow for more targeted outreach to specific groups that remain underrepresented among its beneficiaries.

6.2.Call for Involvement and Commitment

The extensive range of activities and projects documented in this Stocktaking Report reflects the significant commitment of many ASEM partners and stakeholders toward strengthening dialogue and cooperation in education within the political framework of the ASEM Process. At the same time, the report identifies opportunities to further improve these efforts, especially by encouraging more ASEM partners and stakeholders to participate in the various activities and to take on coordination responsibilities for certain initiatives. The effectiveness of informal political cooperation frameworks like the ASEM Education Process relies greatly on the continued engagement and active participation of its partners and stakeholders, together with the promotion of people-to-people connectivity.

In light of this, the ASEM Education Secretariat would like to conclude this Stocktaking Report by **inviting ASEM partners and stakeholders to express their interest to coordinate or participate in specific existing initiatives and welcomes suggestions for new initiatives, projects or activities**. All ASEM partners and stakeholders are in addition encouraged to report regularly to the ASEM Education Secretariat on their initiatives and activities, so that awareness can be raised.

It is our hope that this Stocktaking Report provides ASEM Education partners and stakeholders with a thorough understanding of current activities and initiatives, while at the same time motivating continued engagement and active involvement in the ASEM Education Process.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for your valuable contributions, your constructive feedback, and the rewarding collaboration throughout the years since we assumed the role of Secretariat.

Prof. Luca Lantero, Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat Italy
and Vera Lucke, Executive Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat Italy

21 November 2026