

## Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM)

preparing the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10)

**“Navigating the Digital Age: Lifelong Learning and Future Skills for a Hybrid World”**

**18-19 November 2024**

**Bangkok, Thailand**

[Meeting's webpage with presentations and other material](#)

### Draft Minutes

#### Participants List

#	Country	Title	First Name	Last Name	Ministry or Organisation	Position/Job title
1	ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)	Prof.	Luca	Lantero	CIMEA-NARIC Italia	Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat
2	ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)	Ms.	Vera	Lucke	CIMEA-NARIC Italia	Deputy Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat
3	Austria	Mr.	Reinhard	Nöbauer	Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research	Senior Expert
4	Belgium	Dr.	Marie-Anne	Persoons	Flemish Department of Education and Training	Advisor International Policy
5	Brunei Darussalam	Dr.	Sheikh Lukman	Sheikh Abdul Hamid	Ministry of Education	Director
6	Brunei Darussalam	Mr.	Pg Zainal Yusri	Pg Hj Johari	Ministry of Education	International Desk Officer
7	Cambodia	Dr.	Bunlay	Nith	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	Deputy Director General of Higher Education
8	Germany	Mr.	Hans-Gerhard	Reh	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)	Deputy Head of Division: Erasmus+, International cooperation in VET
9	Germany	Mr.	David	Akrami Flores	German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)	Head of Section EU04
10	Hungary	Mr.	Robert	Kerti	Embassy of Hungary	Consul
11	Italy	Mr.	Giannandrea	Guglielmi	CIMEA-NARIC Italia	Senior Credential Evaluator
12	Italy	Ms.	Giselle	Heleg	CIMEA-NARIC Italia	Digital and AI Expert
13	Italy	Ms.	Francesca	Villa	Italian Professional Association of Credential Evaluators (APICE)	Director
14	Japan	Mr.	Toshiaki	Mizuno	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	Director
15	Kazakhstan	Ms.	Aitzhan	Kulumzhanova	Ministry of Science and Higher Education	Head of Internationalization of Higher Education Unit

#	Country	Title	First Name	Last Name	Ministry or Organisation	Position/Job title
16	Lao PDR	Ms.	Viengdavong	Luangsithideth	Department of Higher Education	Deputy Head of Academic Affairs Division
17	Lithuania	Ms.	Jurga	Strumskienė	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	Head of the International Cooperation Group
18	Malaysia	Mr.	Khairil Azwan	bin Abu Mansor	Ministry of Higher Education	Senior Principal Assistant Secretary
19	Malaysia	Prof. Dr.	M. Iqbal	Saripan	Malaysian Qualifications Agency	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
20	Malaysia	Mr.	Muhammad Hasfarizal	Kamaludin	Malaysian Qualifications Agency	Director
21	Netherlands	Mr.	Christiaan	Bergwerff	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	First Secretary - Political Counsellor
22	Netherlands	Ms.	Manal	Zehouani	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	Political and Economic Trainee
23	Poland	Ms.	Małgorzata	Piątek	Ministry of Science and Higher Education	Head of Unit
24	Romania	Ms.	Elmira	Chengiali	Ministry of Education	Director
25	Singapore	Ms.	Siew Lee	Lim	Ministry of Education	Assistant Director, International Cooperation & Strategy
26	Slovakia	Mr.	Karol	Jakubík	Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth	General Director
27	Spain	Mr.	Jordi	Marín Badenes	Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports	Education Advisor at the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain in Thailand
28	Thailand	Dr.	Pichet	Popakdee	Ministry of Education	Deputy Permanent Secretary
29	Thailand	Ms.	Chitralada	Chanyaem	Ministry of Education	Acting Director, Bureau of International Cooperation
30	Thailand	Mr.	Pongsakorn	Rudravanija	Ministry of Education	Foreign Relations Officer
31	Thailand	Mr.	Panthep	Larpkesorn	Ministry of Education	Director, Multilateral Cooperation Unit
32	Thailand	Ms.	Punramol Sutthirit	Miller	Ministry of Education	Chief of Foreign Relations Section, Department of Learning Encouragement
33	Thailand	Ms.	Duriya	Amatavivat	Ministry of Education	Advisor to the office of the Permanent Secretary
34	Thailand	Prof. Dr.	Supachai	Pathumnakul	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Permanent Secretary
35	Thailand	Ms.	Luksmon	Smansin	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Director, International Affairs Division
36	Thailand	Ms.	Nongnuch	Chunbandhit	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Director, International Cooperation Strategy Group

#	Country	Title	First Name	Last Name	Ministry or Organisation	Position/Job title
37	Thailand	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Bundit	Thipakorn	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Chairman of Next Generation of Graduate Program Committee
38	Thailand	Ms.	Paranin	Jotikasthira	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Plan and Policy Analyst, Professional Level
39	Thailand	Ms.	Isaree	Chotputiphan	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation	Plan and Policy Analyst, Professional Level
40	AUN	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Thanaphan	Laiprakobsup	ASEAN University Network	Deputy Executive Director
41	ASEM-DUO	Mr.	Keuk Je	Sung	ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme Secretariat	Director General
42	ASEM-DUO	Ms.	Seulki	Lee	ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme Secretariat	Director
43	ASEF	Ms.	Réka	Tózsza	Asia-Europe Foundation	Director, Education Department
44	ASEF	Ms.	Cleo	Cachapero	Asia-Europe Foundation	Senior Project Executive
45	ASEF	Mr.	Martin	Hammerbauer	Asia-Europe Foundation	Senior Project Executive
46	AEI	Prof. Dr.	Azirah	Hashim	Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya	Professor
47	ASEM LLL Hub	Dr.	Séamus	O' Tuama	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & University College Cork	Chair of the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & Director of ACE
48	ASEM LLL Hub	Assoc. Prof.	Suwithida	Charungkattikul	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub	Southeast Asia Coordinator
49	ESU	Ms.	Ann	Gvritshvili	European Students' Union	Representative
50	EUA	Dr.	Thérèse	Zhang Kai Ying	European University Association	Deputy Director for Higher Education Policy
51	SEAMEO RIHED	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Romyen	Kosaikanont	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development	Centre Director
52	SEAMEO RIHED	Ms.	Supansa	Kajavong	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development	Senior Programme Officer
53	UNESCO Bangkok	Dr.	Wesley	Teter	UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok	Education Section
54	Guest	Prof.	Graeme	Atherton	Ruskin College, Oxford	Vice Principal

Monday, 18 November 2024

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

Dr. Luksmon Smansin, Director of the International Affairs Division at the Thai Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, welcomed the Senior Officials and stakeholder representatives to this ASEM Education Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting and underlined that she was looking forward to the discussions of important topics in the field of education from different perspectives. This meeting shall give the opportunity to cooperate and to share experiences and it was organised to continue fostering dialogue among Asia and Europe.

### 1.1 Welcome by the Thai Authorities

Dr. Pichet Pothipakdee, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Thai Ministry of Education welcomed all the ASEM partners and stakeholders and said that Thailand is honoured to host this important meeting on the way to the next Ministers' Meeting. Asia and Europe come together at this meeting to explore how to navigate the Digital Age and how to further implement Lifelong Learning to build the right skills for the future. Changes are going fast, and education systems must adapt to the new developments. Policy has to understand how to prepare learners of all ages to succeed in their lives and should understand the needs of all learners, as learning must continue through the whole lifetime with upskilling and reskilling. Thailand is committed to foster Lifelong Learning, to understand the labour market needs, and to anticipate future careers when the world is in constant transformation. People need to have access to continuous learning, and Thailand launched several initiatives providing accessible high-quality training e.g. on critical thinking, also for adult learners. Education must be seen as a lifelong journey and no country in today's world can achieve its goals alone, therefore cooperation is very important. Dr. Pothipakdee wished everybody a fruitful and inspiring meeting in which the participants can learn from each other and share best practices.

Prof. Supachai Pathumnakul, Permanent Secretary, Thai Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, welcomed the participants and hoped that people enjoy their time in Bangkok and the cultural experience. He said that we are living in a pivotal moment of the digital transformation, and that the rapid evolution is changing how, where and what we learn. Today's and tomorrow's workforce need to be equipped with a new range of skills, as traditional skills are no longer sufficient. Lifelong Learning is an absolute necessity, as education is no one-time process any longer, but Lifelong Learning is the continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills development, which is crucial for everyone and for societal growth. Systems have to adapt, and Lifelong Learning empowers to remain flexible. People should be enabled to stay relevant and competitive in their field for their whole life by upskilling and reskilling. This ASEM meeting will serve as collective platform to share insights and best practices on building a world where Lifelong Learning is not only encouraged, but embraced as essential for individuals and societies. Prof. Supachai Pathumnakul wished the participants a fruitful meeting and a beautiful stay in Bangkok.

### 1.2 Welcome by the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)

Prof. Luca Lantero, Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat, welcomed all the participants and thanked the Thai Ministry of Education and the Thai Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation for hosting this meeting in Bangkok, the first physical Senior Officials' Meeting in Asia since the COVID-19 pandemic. He added that it is important for the ASEM Education Process to have physical meetings alternated between Europe and Asia so that the cooperation can be continued in the best way. The ASEM Education Secretariat is present to help with activities that the

partners and stakeholders would like to organise. This meeting is important on the path towards the next Ministerial Conference, and it will give the possibility to discuss important topics that will then be part of the next ASEMME's Chair's Conclusions. Prof. Lantero thanked the whole team of the Thai hosts who did an excellent job.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The [agenda](#) was adopted.

## **3. Adoption of the Minutes from the SOM2 and ASEMME9 held in January 2024**

The minutes from the [2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting Minutes \(SOM2\) \(24 January 2024, Malta\)](#) and the [9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting Minutes \(ASEMME9\) \(25-26 January 2024, Malta\)](#) were adopted.

## **4. Keynote "Empowering the Global Workforce: How Digital Transformation is Redefining Education and Lifelong Learning" by Assoc. Prof. Bundit Thipakorn**

Assoc. Prof. Bundit Thipakorn, Advisor to the President and professor at the King Mongkut's University of Technology Thoburi, started his keynote by stating that the current Digital Era is bringing an unprecedented change to society that has never been seen before. The question is how to empower workforce in this kind of new system. According to the speaker, everything in today's world is contemporary, unplanned, and in continuous disruption. People focus on the "now" and have to be just in time. Work life is clustered in episodes that are changing all the time. In the "New Normal" similarity moves to diversity, continuity becomes discreteness, equality moves to equity and exclusion becomes inclusion. The evolution of work through technologies means that we need to think about how work gets done, who does the work and what work looks like. Prof. Thipakorn introduced the shift from the "ME-egosystem" to the "WE-ecosystem", which means a shift from centralized to distributed, from scheduled/their times to real-time/my-time, from all invented inside to invented anywhere, from owned and closed to shared and open, from hyper-competition to hyper-collaboration and from monolithic to networked. The future of work encompasses changes in the work/automation level (what work can be automated?), the workforce/talent category (who can do the work?) and the workplace/physical distance (where is the work done?). Prof. Thipakorn compared the analogue with the digital world of work and stated that "Digital transformation goes beyond "integrating digital technology" to digitizing processes and enhancing efficiency". He explained that "Digitisation" is the transforming process into digital form, "Digitalisation" improves and optimises processes using tools and technology, focusing on efficiency, whereas "Digital Transformation" is a fundamental change in organisational culture, structures and operations and concerns the people, which means empowerment of the global workforce. There will be a race with technology and workforce, as the industrial digitalisation is fast, most companies are using AI, but there is a big talent gap and a high demand of digitally skilled workers. In the existing Thai workforce, digital skills for using and creating technology still have growth potential when compared to the regional peers. Prof. Thipakorn introduced the new necessary shift from automation to re-humanisation. People have to be partners with AI and leave e.g. standardised job, analysis, etc. to automation, whereas re-humanisation applies to all the fields where passion, humour, empathy, creativity, curiosity, informal learning, etc. are concerned. The question is how to empower the workforce and how to make sure people have the right digital skills for society and the labour market. Future jobs' roles are expected to be more focused on deep skills with knowledge across functions applied for various contexts to make informed decisions and interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary

competences are needed. Universities must find a way to prepare the workforce and peoples' intellectual dexterity.

Towards the end of his keynote, Prof. Thipakorn closed with some considerations on Lifelong Learning, which he sees as the key to empower the global workforce in the New Digital Era. People should be enabled to acquire knowledge and certificates throughout their working life and further develop and construct their skills to achieve personal fulfilment. On-the-job learning is part of the curriculum and high-quality and stackable credentials are part of the long-life learning curriculum as well. Higher education should be seen as human resource development and it should enable the learning continuum, which will then result in lifelong employability.

Comments from the audience were that ASEM countries have different issues with the workforce, e.g. in Europe most countries and also Japan are struggling with the ageing population and with finding young people to replace older workers. In addition, the workforce is becoming more and more international. Prof. Thipakorn answered that it would be interesting to know about the situation in all the ASEM member countries and to discuss on how to share the talented workforce and how people can work across the country/countries. Another comment was that concerning AI, the human-centric approach is very important and that the concept of "Re-humanisation" was very inspiring, as we now have the possibility to put the person at the centre of the digital transformation. Universities and education providers need to adapt their courses and degrees, and literacy today means that people have to learn, unlearn and relearn.

*Presentation of item 4: [ASEM ISOM 2024 item4 keynote.pdf](#)*

## **5. Updates from the ASEM Education Expert Groups (EGs)**

The (Co-)Chairs of each Expert Group shared updates on their groups' activities and future.

*Presentations of item 4: [ASEM ISOM 2024 item5 Expert Groups update.pdf](#)*

### **EG1 on Sustainable Development Goals and Education**

Expert Group 1 on Sustainable Development Goals and Education is currently co-chaired by Ms. Duriya Amatavivat from Thailand and Mr. Adam Liwak from Malta. Ms. Duriya Amatavivat presented the updates at this meeting. The Expert Group brings together policy makers, academics, practitioners and international organisations to share knowledge and best practices on SDGs implementation. The key objectives of the group are 1. Aligning education policies with the SDGs, 2. Addressing regional challenges and 3. Promoting innovation and inclusivity. Findings from the 2024 SDGs report show that progress towards the achievement of SGD 4 is slow, challenges include inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages and technology-driven inequalities and also the lack of adequate data.

Achievements of the Expert Group are advocating for education for sustainable development, strengthening regional partnerships and creating regional education platforms. The role of this Expert Group is increasingly relevant and future priorities and key areas of focus could be: 1. Strengthening the link between education systems and SDG implementation, 2. Advancing digital learning solutions while ensuring that no one is left behind, 3. Promoting education for sustainable development, and global citizenship education. The Co-chairs of this Expert Group would like to further collaborate and find connections with the other groups.



## EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility

Expert Group 2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility is co-chaired by Dr. Pankaj Mittal from India and Mr. Giannandrea Guglielmi from Italy. Mr. Giannandrea Guglielmi presented the updates at this meeting. The group is composed by 23 countries and 8 stakeholders from Asia and Europe, Kazakhstan and ASEF have recently joined the group. The objectives are to foster dialogue and promote mutual understanding, transparency and cooperation between Asian and European counterparts through systematic exchange of information and closer cooperation; to promote peer learning among the Asian and European counterparts, share experience on the existing conventions on recognition, such as the Global Convention on Recognition, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Tokyo Convention; to further develop the ASEM Compendium; to strengthen collaboration and connectivity by identifying, sharing and promoting good practices; and to complement the work of other ASEM expert groups by providing expertise in the field of recognition of qualifications. The group had six online meetings and one in-person meeting in New Delhi, India. It worked on the establishment of a pool of experts in the field of recognition specifically working within the ASEM context, held Peer Learning Activities and shared good practices and has further updated the [ASEM Compendium](#) with the help of the concerned countries. **Every ASEM members is kindly reminded to have a look at the [Compendium](#) and, if necessary, amend the information by sending an e-mail with the concrete updates to the Secretariat.** Countries which don't have a country profile yet, are encouraged to create one using the "[Guide for contributors](#)".

The group is discussing the organisation of webinars on specific relevant topics, and would like to enhance the cooperation with the other Expert Groups, e.g. on topics of common interest, like Micro-credentials, Digitalisation or Artificial Intelligence, so that these topics can be analysed from different perspectives.

## EG3 on Lifelong Learning and TVET

Expert Group 3 on Lifelong Learning and TVET is currently chaired by Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama from the ASEM LLL Hub (University College Cork, Ireland). He updated the participants on the possibility that Malaysia could become Co-chair of the group. In addition, many synergies with the Research Network 2 of the ASEM LLL Hub, which is researching on "Learning in the workplace", could be found and a collaboration would be fruitful.

## EG4 on Digitalisation

Expert Group 4 on Digitalisation is chaired by Ms. Stefanie Engert from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Germany. During this meeting Mr. David Akrami Flores, Head of Section in charge at the DAAD, explained that the group was established in 2019 when digitalisation was declared a transversal theme of the ASEM Education Process. The group has 53 members and the main objectives are to foster dialogue on the potential of digitalisation and to strengthen collaboration and connectivity among the ASEM members and stakeholders. The meetings of this working period follow a peer-learning approach, with topics on e.g. Micro-credentials, digitally enhanced learning and teaching, and the impact of AI on learning and teaching. In early 2024, the group held virtual peer-learning exercises on "Digital Transformation" with speakers from India and Switzerland and "Gender imbalance in AI" with speakers from Indonesia and the OECD in France. Furthermore, it held a hybrid meeting in October 2024 in cooperation with ASEF and hosted at the Fudan University in Shanghai, China. During the hybrid meeting, the group had a peer-learning exercise on "The Contribution of AI to Recognition, Selection and Admission Processes in Higher Education (HE)", drafted Factsheets on the Expert Group Digitalisation and participated in the ASEFInnoLab5 on-site

event. In early November 2024, the Expert Group held a public online seminar on "[Best Practices on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education](#)" as a follow-up of last year's public online seminar on "[The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Learning & Teaching in Higher Education](#)". Four speakers from Asia and Europe shared the students' and teachers' perspectives on AI tools. The session involved an exchange of views and concrete examples on the use of AI in today's learning and teaching with 145 participants from the European and Asian academic communities. It was mentioned that the recordings are available on the [ASEM Education website](#).

Mr. David Akrami Flores concluded by thanking the ASEM Education Secretariat for its support and reiterated Germany's commitment to continue working with the group, ensuring ongoing dialogue between the two regions on digital advancements in higher education. He welcomed any suggestion for the group's future work and **encouraged all to actively engage**.

## 6. Updates on the Workplan 2022-2026 by the AES

The Ministers at the last [9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting \(ASEMME9\)](#) appreciated the work done by the four Expert Groups (see [Chair's Conclusions](#)) and encouraged them to continue and "to find synergies with other ASEM Expert Groups and to build on the achievements from previous working structures."<sup>1</sup> To foster cooperation, the Co-chairs could have meetings among themselves or invite each other to their Expert Group meetings.

All Expert Groups are and remain open for participation, and countries and stakeholders can contact the ASEM Education Secretariat and become members at any time.

There were some proposals to slightly adjust the workplan:

- As the Ministers at the ASEMME9 have encouraged ASEF to continue its support for the Expert Groups, ASEF offered to co-chair Expert Group 1 on SDGs and Education and work together with the current co-chairs Malta and Thailand to organise activities. ASEF highlighted the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion in education, which are core to the achievement of SDG 4. Equitable access and support for students to complete their studies are key principles in the European Higher Education Area, as well as in the ASEAN-SEAMEO Joint Declaration on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education, therefore, it is an important topic for evidence-based exchanges and peer learning across Asia and Europe. ASEF proposed to include equity, diversity and inclusion in the ToR of EG1 and that ASEF becomes the third Co-chair of this Expert Group. The ISOM participants welcomed these two proposals.
- The Belgium Flemish Community asked to add discussion on "Global Citizenship" to the Terms of Reference of Expert Group 1 on SDGs and Education and this proposal was welcomed by the ISOM participants.
- The ASEM Education Secretariat explained that Malaysia is considering becoming Co-chair of the Expert Group 3 on LLL and TVET and that the Malaysian colleagues are still working on the internal approval process with their government. The ISOM participants welcomed Malaysia's willingness to become Co-chair and preliminarily gave their approval to the proposal that the group would be co-chaired by Malaysia and the ASEM LLL Hub (Ireland). In consequence, if everything will be internally approved, Malaysia will become Co-chair of the group as soon as possible.
- As the Expert Group 4 on Digitalisation has recently focused much of its work on Artificial Intelligence and given that this topic has been one of the most discussed subjects in the

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<sup>1</sup> ASEMME9 Chair's Conclusions: [https://asem-education.org/documentation/Conclusions\\_by\\_the\\_Chair\\_ASEMME9.pdf](https://asem-education.org/documentation/Conclusions_by_the_Chair_ASEMME9.pdf)



recent years, Italy proposed renaming the Expert Group to “EG4 on Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence”. The proposal was welcomed and approved by the ISOM participants. Since this Expert Group currently has only one European Chair, the ASEM Education Secretariat invited all Asian countries to consider becoming Co-chairs and, if interested, to contact the ASEM Education Secretariat.

The Terms of Reference (ToRs) of all Expert Groups will be updated by the ASEM Education Secretariat together with the Co-chairs of the Groups.

## 7. Updates from the ASEM Partners

The ASEM countries were invited to shortly present the current state of play of their relevant activities, projects and initiatives carried out and implemented since the last ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9, January 2024).

*Presentations of item 7: [ASEM ISOM 2024 item7.pdf](#)*

### Austria

Reinhard Nöbauer is involved in the ASEM Education Process since 2011 and his main working area is vocational education and training. Austria is always looking for cooperation in this field and also in higher education. Austria is active member in all four ASEM Education Expert Groups and very active in the ASEM LLL Hub. Mr. Nöbauer thanked for the well organised Lifelong Learning Conference in May 2024 in Cork, where he could establish some cooperation with India, and he is going to be a speaker at the [Lifelong Learning Conference taking place in Kerala in January 2025](#).

### Belgium Flemish Community

Marie-Anne Persoons shared an update on the involvement of the Flemish Community in the [ASEM Work Placement Programme](#), which is a success with about 60 scholarships every year. Countries of destination are in sending order Philippines, Viet Nam, Thailand, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, China, Korea and Singapore. Other destinations will hopefully be added in the future. Ms. Persoons added concerning student mobility that incoming students from Asia in general come for full degree programmes, not so much for parts of a study programme, unless there is cooperation between two specific universities in the two regions. 25% of international students within full degree programmes in the Flemish Community are from Asia and the number is still growing. Most of the students come from China and India, but also students from the ASEAN countries are well represented. She suggests building on the presence of so many students to build stronger ties between Asia and Europe.

### Brunei Darussalam

Dr. Sheikh Lukman Hamid presented the Lifelong Learning Centre (L3C) which was established in July 2020 to coordinate lifelong learning programmes and activities under the purview of the Ministry of Education. Since its establishment, the Lifelong Learning Centre has trained about 8.000 people, also during the COVID pandemic. The strategic goals are to nurture future ready workforce, enhance the innovative education system, and build up human resources. The four types of programmes for youth and mainly for adult learners are: 1. workforce development, 2. academic upgrading, 3. community development and 4. personal development. Brunei's digital transformation in education strategy comprises 1. digital literacy (integrating digital skills across all educational levels, empowering students for the future); 2. e-learning platforms (implementing robust online learning

systems to ensure equitable access to high-quality education nationwide), 3. teacher training (equipping educators with cutting-edge digital pedagogy skills to enhance classroom experiences); 4. digital ecosystems (creating a seamless network connecting institutions, learners, and industry for collaborative growth).

Artificial Intelligence can be a catalyst for Lifelong Learning. Education should be reimagined shifting from traditional models to flexible, accessible market-responsive educational paradigms that enhance employability. The strategic priorities for Brunei in Lifelong Learning are: 1. fostering future skills, 2. further developing inclusive learning for adults and 3. international collaboration.

Dr. Lukman Hamid concluded that for building a Learning Society, Lifelong Learning is an important pillar, together with global collaboration and the commitment to innovative educational approaches that prepare citizens in and for the Digital Age.

## Germany

Mr. Hans-Gerhard Reh updated the participants on a number of German policies concerning digitalisation and accessibility. As digital skills are very important, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research has started several programmes.

Under the [Digital Pact for Schools](#) initiative, the Federal Government together with the German Länder (Federal States) are building an infrastructure for schools to purchase up-to-date learning materials that teachers can adapt to.

Germany promotes the development of digital skills through [Competence Centres for digital and digitally supported teaching in schools and continuing education](#), that provide training and material.

Another important initiative is the “[Startchancenprogramm](#)”, which is the largest education programme in Germany. It supports socially disadvantaged children to have success in their learners’ journey and to give a good start for their careers. This programme shall promote a fair education system and therefore supports schools (especially primary schools) with weaker outcomes. The modern learning environment and curricula with the support of multi-professional teams (e.g. social workers together with teachers) shall help to make a significant shift for the young people.

Concerning digital learning, Germany is developing the “[Mein Bildungsraum](#)” platform to link a person’s individual education journey with the digital world. Learners can have their digital identity and certificates in one space.

Mr. Reh concluded Germany’s update by presenting information on the [Open Educational Resources \(OER\) strategy](#), which shall reduce barriers and make co-creative open materials accessible for teachers and learners.

## Italy

Prof. Luca Lantero started by confirming that the Italian Ministry of University and Research is continuing to host the ASEM Education Secretariat also in this period and thanked for the support. He presented Italy’s new bilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan, which started with contacts in the ASEM context and from the need to structure, develop and implement micro-credentials. Italy and Kazakhstan are co-designing a project together, are having preliminary study visits and are organising a seminar on assessment, certification and recognition of micro-credentials in Kazakhstan at the end of the year. Italy and Kazakhstan will propose a project on supporting the Tirana Objectives in Kazakhstan and Central-Asia within the next call for proposals of the European Commission and will continue to cooperate also in other projects, like Fraud-ACT (combatting fraud

through a holistic approach and data collection), and TPG-LRC+, which is the project supporting the European Higher Education Area's Thematic Peer Group B working on the implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The cooperation is very fruitful, and Italy is open to other cooperations within ASEM countries and to co-designing projects with interested countries as well.

## Japan

Mr. Toshiaki Mizuno presented the current situation in Japan, which has high labour productivity and high adult learning participation, but companies tend to not provide enough and tailored learning opportunities and working adults face issues when studying. Some measures are needed for making it easier for working adults to study at universities (financial support, short-term programmes, classes on Saturdays, more practical and accessible programmes using online lessons, greater priority on corporate evaluation and improved work environment). Mr. Mizuno presented three good examples of university programmes that are designed for working adults, which are described [on the slides](#).

## Malaysia

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Saripan from the [Malaysian Qualifications Agency \(MQA\)](#) explained the functions of the agency, which maintains the Malaysian Qualifications Register, and which develops national standards, credits and other relevant instruments for the conferment of awards. The agency accredits courses and implements the Malaysian Qualifications Framework as reference point for Malaysian qualifications. The agency facilitates the recognition and articulation of qualifications and quality assures higher education providers and programmes. The future of education in Malaysia is based on flexible education and Lifelong Learning. Malaysia is exploring the establishment of dual degrees (either within Malaysia or with other countries), is since 2011 working on the recognition of prior experiential learning (APEL.A, C, Q and M), and is working a lot on micro-credentials. [Guidelines to Good Practices for Micro-credentials](#) have recently been published. Malaysia has several initiatives on micro-credentials, is doing accreditation of micro-credentials and is working on criteria for the recognition of micro-credentials as well. Malaysia has over 20.000 registered micro-credential courses, which are associated to over 1.000 accredited courses.

## Romania

Ms. Elmira Chengiali explained that Romania has a new legislative framework for higher education since fall 2023. Several conferences and projects were organized and implemented in 2024, with impact on the development of inter-university cooperation between Romanian Universities and Asian universities, funded through the Capacity-building projects in the field of higher education (CBHE) of the Erasmus+ Program. The aim of these projects is to support eligible third countries to “modernize, internationalize and increase access to higher education, address the challenges facing their higher education institutions and systems, increase cooperation with the EU, voluntarily converge with EU development in higher education, and promote people to people contacts, intercultural awareness, and understanding”<sup>2</sup>. Ms. Chengiali gave two good practice examples of projects coordinated by the *National University of Science and Technology Politehnica of Bucharest*: 1. [“CATALYST – Communicative Approaches in University Vocational Teaching Methodology Focusing on Improving Educational Yield and Sustainability”](#) 2016 – 2021 with Germany, Ireland, Laos, Romania, United Kingdom, Vietnam and 2. [“SOHO - Smart, Optimized, High-quality, and On-demand Tourism](#)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/capacity-building-higher-education>

[Innovative Education for Sustainable and Green Development](#)” 2023-2026 Bangladesh, France, Italy, Malaysia, Romania, Vietnam.

Ms. Chengiali added information on the [14<sup>th</sup> INQAAHE Biennial Forum 2024](#) hosted by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) with the theme: “Transforming Society: Social Responsibility through Quality Assurance of Tertiary Education”, which was held in June 2024 in Bucharest (Romania) with 200 participants from Europe and Asia, experts, researchers, and professionals from universities and national quality assurance agencies.

## Spain

Mr. Jordi Marín Badenes presented three international education programmes with major impact in Spain and the countries concerned. The Spanish Language Assistants programmes is carried out in more than 30 countries with over 8.000 university students giving schools support by helping and assisting the Spanish language teachers abroad. The second programme is the Spanish Conversation Assistants programme with more than 1.000 Spanish teachers helping in foreign education systems, also teaching other subjects in Spanish. These full-time teachers are selected by the Ministry and must have long work experience. This programme is currently carried out in the USA, Canada, Germany, China and Ireland and the teachers can use the upskilling and reskilling for when they come back to Spain. The last programme presented was the ELEPROF programme carried out in the Philippines in collaboration with the *Instituto Cervantes* with 30 Filipino teachers selected to reskill their Spanish language skills through virtual lessons from language level A2 in two years to language level B2.

Mr. Marín Badenes concluded by summarising that with these Spanish Education Action Abroad programmes over 40 countries, over 5.000 schools, 10.000 teachers and 7.000 language assistants are upskilled in digitalisation and multiculturalism.

## 8. Summary of the Day and Closing Remarks

Prof. Luca Lantero and Dr. Luksmon Smansin thanked the ISOM participants for the productive and inspiring day and invited everybody to participate at a dinner offered by the Ministry of Education with traditional Thai music and dance.

Tuesday, 19 November 2024

## 9. Opening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day with Welcoming Words

Prof. Luca Lantero, Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat, thanked the Ministry of Education for the beautiful dinner the day before and warmly welcomed the participants together with Dr. Luksmon Smansin, Director of the International Affairs Division at the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation.

## 10. Presentation “Academic Recognition Practitioners’ Experience with Digital Solutions and Artificial Intelligence for Mobility and Recognition of Qualifications”

Ms. Francesca Villa (Senior Credential Evaluator) and Ms. Giselle Heleg (AI Expert) from Italy presented [CIMEA \(Information Centre on Mobility and Academic Equivalence, Italy\)](#), its work on the process of digitalisation, its research in the field of Artificial Intelligence and emphasised the growing importance of academic recognition in a world with increasing students and workers mobility. Digitalisation is crucial for recognition and finding innovative digital solutions is important for CIMEA

to enhance process automation, improve transparency, standardize practices and interoperability with other platforms/databases, and to promote international cooperation. Several Regulatory Frameworks on Digital Transformation and AI exist within the European and International context (among which the [European Commission Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\)](#), [Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights](#), [AI Act of the European Union](#), [UNESCO Six pillars for the digital transformation of education](#), [UN Global Digital Compact](#), [UNESCO frameworks for AI in Education and Research](#)). On the basis of the regulatory frameworks, CIMEA has since 2018 developed several platforms to enhance digital transformation within the centre: in 2019 DIPLOME was the first digital platform for blockchain-based recognition statement services, in 2022 CIMEA has developed a WIKI to manage internal information on recognition and has in 2023 published [ARDI \(Automatic Recognition Database\)](#), which is a platform that compares qualifications and issues statements of Automatic Recognition for the 49 countries of the European Higher Education Area. In 2024, CIMEA has published the new DIPLOME, which is a renewed digital platform for blockchain-based statement service. CIMEA is very active within the [ENIC-NARIC Networks](#), participates in a number of international projects on these topics and coordinates an active network of Italian Credential Evaluators providing training and providing a platform for exchange of experience and expertise. The methodology of CIMEA's digital transformation is Quality by Design with a holistic approach (comprehensive workflow design, sequential implementation, rigorous end-to-end testing), with a participatory approach (hands-on analysis with insights from varied educational systems) and service design (user research and journey mapping). CIMEA's services are user-centric and user-friendly for applicants, higher education institutions and evaluators. As next step CIMEA is now starting to integrate AI in its services, e.g. for streamlining decision making processes, verification of authenticity and fraud detection and to overcome language barriers.

Artificial Intelligence can have several benefits, such as the possibility to streamline recognition processes, it could prevent delays and inconsistencies. Several challenges concerning the use of Artificial Intelligence are taken into consideration, such as how to safeguard personal and academic data, how to ensure that the data used to train AI models is representative and accurate. How to ensure fairness in AI-decision making. How to ensure that AI complements rather than replaces human judgement and many more. It is important that in recognition human decision-making is kept and that a collaborative approach and capacity building to ensure AI literacy of credential evaluators is in the focus of the recognition centre. For recognition AI promises to automatise the more routine work and can potentially improve accuracy and reduce human errors. Credential Evaluators could then focus on more complex and value-added activities. AI can help to check patterns and elements of a qualification, identify false diplomas and give support in the research of information.

The speakers concluded their presentation by presenting the five opportunities that CIMEA has identified where AI could be integrated into the recognition process: 1. Completeness of the submitted request (intelligent detection of the information provided by the user is sufficient for moving forward the request and to confirm that each document submitted matches the expected type); 2. Assignment (assistance in assigning cases to credential evaluators with automatic notifications); 3. Verification of authenticity (AI to detect anomalies in documents that may indicate fraudulent or different formats on titles); 4. Customer Service (conversational agent for initial inquiries, document submission, status updates and notifications); 5. Prediction of request procedures (automating the prediction and the demand behavior based on patterns and trends).

In the short discussion several countries suggested to pay close attention to the limitations of AI solutions, especially when human ethical decision-making is crucial, and to balancing AI tools with the regular face-to-face and offline procedures and examinations.

Presentations of item 10: [ASEM ISOM 2024 item10.pdf](#)



## 11. Parallel Workshops

### Workshop A: “From Campus to Career: Redefining Equity, Access & Success in Higher Education in the Digital Age”

#### Speakers:

- Dr. Graeme Atherton, University of West London
- Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont, SEAMEO RIHED
- Ms. Ana Gvritishvili, European Students’ Union (ESU)

Moderated by Ms. Réka Tózsa, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

Rapporteur: Cleo Cachapero, Asia-Europe Foundation

Participants: Cambodia, Italy, Romania, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, ASEM-DUO (South-Korea)

[Presentation shown during this workshop](#)

#### **Workshop outcomes:**

Speakers did short pitches on each of the three questions to kickstart discussion. Participants afterwards shared their insights and ideas based on their context and experiences.

#### **Question 1: How does equity, access, and success in higher education look like in your country/region?**

The workshop began with a global picture of the work on access, equity, and success, where Dr. Graeme Atherton highlighted the fact that in almost all the countries where data is available on national equity strategies, there are differences and gaps in participation in higher education.

However, even though there is data and information available in this area, Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont said they do not capture what really happens on the ground. Gender inequities still persist. Underrepresentation and imbalances continue to exist in areas where progress has been made, like in STEM and TVET. Concerning policy, the 2024 ASEAN-SEAMEO Joint Declaration on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education, highlights the core principle of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB).

Ana Gvritishvili shared that students also continue to face barriers to access, such as high tuition costs and lack of access mechanisms for those with disabilities.

Hearing from the participants, colleagues from Cambodia, Romania, and ASEM-DUO mentioned key areas of concern such as gender inequities, learners who engage in part-time work, the transition from high school university, and distribution of opportunities for students and universities alike. They mentioned policies and programmes in place that help address these, such as counselling and guidance, re-enrolment mechanisms, context-based university exchanges, and prioritisation indices. Still, much work needs to be done on these areas.

#### **Question 2: Why should policymakers focus on creating more equitable and accessible higher education systems?**

Based on the sharing of the speakers, there are three main reasons:

- Policymakers are in the position to provide an enabling environment to facilitate access, equity, and success. It can be through legal policies, and providing an array of resources among them funding.
- There are economic and political costs involved when we don’t work on ensuring access, equity, and success. People who are unable to participate and complete cannot attain their



maximum potential, and therefore will not be able to contribute to progress. Excluding sectors also result to political fallouts, which are manifestations of dissatisfaction and the call for better opportunities.

- Education, as a human right, is key towards sustainable living. Policymakers, or governments, have a responsibility to facilitate empowerment and welfare.

In this context, participants from ASEM-DUO, Malaysia, and Thailand highlighted the important – albeit difficult issues – of ensuring social balance and the costs of doing so, rethinking the role of merit and its impact, and the economic losses that come from implementing social justice measures. In these issues, policymakers occupy a central role in finding solutions that support students from access to success, while balancing the costs and benefits.

### **Question 3: How do you think the current digital transformation will affect equity, access, and success in higher education?**

Digital transformation can be a double-edged sword, due to the following considerations:

- On one hand, it addresses gaps as it provides more opportunities and flexible means for students to learn; but
- For the poorest segments of society, there are limited means to learn how to use these tools. So, in the absence of efforts to guarantee access to and successful use of digital tools, inequality will only be deepened.
- Another interesting point is that there are no robust policies on access, equity, and success. So, in the face of great system changes, like what digital transformation has triggered, these policies cannot stay aligned.

To conclude the workshop, some more questions were gathered by the participants:

- What are tangible strategies to reduce inequality?
- What is the role of students in drafting these strategies?
- How do we collaborate with each other in advancing solutions to access, equity, and success problems?
- What are data-driven policies in place in this area?
- What is the impact of these solutions and policies on university performance?

## **Workshop B: "Transforming Education and Skills Development for the Digital Age"**

### Speaker and moderator:

- Prof. Dr. Bundit Thipakorn, Thailand

Rapporteur: Nongnuch Chunbandhit, Thailand

Participants: Germany, Italy, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Poland, Spain, Thailand, ASEAN University Network (AUN), Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), European University Association (EUA)

### Presentation shown during this workshop

After a presentation of Prof. Dr. Bundit Thipakorn, the participants emphasized the transformative potential of generative AI in education and the workforce. Effectively leveraging AI requires individuals to possess skills such as digital literacy, adaptability, and critical thinking. Key competencies include guiding AI systems, ensuring output relevance, and bridging the gap between AI capabilities and practical applications. Curricula must embed AI-related skills to prepare students for an evolving labour market.

The need for flexible, modular, and industry-aligned curricula was a recurring theme. Examples of innovative approaches included:

- Thailand's Modular Programs: Short-term, skill-specific non-degree programs that are stackable and tailored to industry needs.
- Micro-credentials in Europe: these shorter, flexible learning opportunities complement traditional degree programs and support Lifelong Learning.

Challenges include defining industry-relevant skills and integrating modularity and stackability effectively.

The participants also emphasized the importance of fostering international cooperation to develop future skills. Initiatives such as capacity-building programs, boot camps, and exchange programs can enhance mobility and facilitate shared learning among students from Asia and Europe.

The integration of AI into education highlighted several critical skills for the future:

- AI Literacy: Responsible and effective use of AI in academic and professional contexts.
- Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Engaging critically with AI outputs and applying innovative solutions.
- Interdisciplinary Communication: Bridging diverse fields such as data communication, multimedia, and engineering.
- The need for ethical guidelines for AI use in education, particularly concerning assessments and academic integrity.

Finally, the participants identified several challenges to achieve these goals:

- Assessment redesign: Evolving assessment methods to evaluate cognitive skills rather than AI-generated outputs.
- Institutional Adaptation: Balancing traditional knowledge frameworks with industry demands.
- Resource Constraints: Addressing the lack of capacity and expertise in many institutions.

On the basis of the overall discussion, Thailand proposed collaborative efforts to integrate generative AI in education and workforce development, aligning with ASEM's Expert Group on Digitalization and AI.

### **Workshop C: “Five Key Steps for Lifelong Learning in a Knowledge Based Economy: Learning Capital Accumulation in Context”**

Speaker and moderator:

- Prof. Séamus Ó Tuama (LLL Hub, Ireland)

Rapporteur: Dr. Suwithida Charunkaikkul (LLL Hub, Thailand)

Participants: Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Slovakia, ASEM LLL Hub, SEAMEO RIHED

[Presentation shown during this workshop](#)

Prof. Séamus Ó Tuama from the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub (Ireland) emphasised the importance of Lifelong Learning in knowledge-based economies, where continuous skills development and knowledge acquisition are essential for personal and professional growth. The speaker explained the concept of Reflexive Modernity claiming that, when constructing architecture for Lifelong Learning, it is essential to place the learner at the centre. The speaker highlighted the emergence of a mode of thinking where individuals understand themselves through the idea that each person

creates their own personal portfolio of identity. Learners will increasingly define their own learning objectives, and to create a Lifelong Learning infrastructure that responds to the needs of learners, it is essential to be aware of learners' reflectivity and their sense of self-identity.

Prof. Séamus Ó Tuama developed a framework for Lifelong Learning based on five key types of capitals: 1. Seed Capital, 2. Identity Capital, 3. Cultural Capital, 4. Social Capital and 5. Human Capital. These capitals are essential for understanding how individuals can accumulate and leverage different forms of value throughout their learning journeys.

1. Seed Capital are the initial resources and opportunities that a learner starts with. It includes the capacity to accumulate additional capital and the opportunities for learners to invest the existing capital with a reasonable chance of success, regardless of the initial capital they have. In this context, parental education is a key factor. In particular, when mothers engage in education, they influence their children, their siblings, their friends, and their wider community. For this reason, while investing in early childhood education, it is essential to invest in the education of adults as well, as parental education continues to influence future generations. After these considerations, the real challenge is reaching 90% of people who are not engaged in education or learning opportunities. Many of these individuals do not have the resources, time, or motivation to continue learning.

2. Identity Capital refers to the self-esteem and personal identity that individuals develop through education. It encompasses how learners view themselves and how education can enhance their self-perception and confidence. The speaker also highlighted the concept of double contingency, as the process when individuals learn to see themselves as a separate entity from their primary caregiver. This process of identity development occurs through interactions with others, where the feedback received from these interactions helps individuals to learn more about who they are. This idea of identity is critically relevant when considering Lifelong Learning. In the educational context, one of the critical factors in this transformation is the learner's experience within a specific education system. It is important to offer guidance, negotiate, and engage with people, but learners need to decide on their own their education journey. Educational programs are often rigid in their structure. It is essential to include more flexibility, more responsiveness, and more opportunities for individuals to engage in the small, personal steps that make a big difference to their identity. Prof. Ó Tuama claimed that one of the goals in this context is to meet people where they are and allow them to shape their own learning journey, based on their personal needs, aspirations, and sense of self.

3. Cultural Capital refers to the competencies and knowledge that enable individuals to participate effectively in society. It involves understanding and engaging with cultural norms, values, and practices. Many people find their culture undervalued because they feel they are not part of the dominant culture. In fact, multicultural societies, with their variety of cultures, create richness and bring substantial benefits. Prof. Ó Tuama introduced the issues of acceptance and language. A person's ability to engage in society is often determined by whether they can speak the dominant language of that society. It is also important for the next generation to be able to speak the language and understand the culture of their parents and grandparents. Otherwise, they risk losing their connection to their own families and heritage. Strengthening one's connection to family and culture, while still being able to participate fully in society, should be seen as an asset.

4. Social Capital is the network of connections and relationships that individuals build through their learning experiences. This includes the relationships that provide support, opportunities, and access to resources, all of which are crucial for an individual's ability to navigate society. In the context of education and learning, one of the key transformations for learners is the creation of new social ties. These ties may include connections with fellow learners or with instructors, who typically have access to opportunities and resources that learners may not otherwise encounter. As people make new connections, they gain bridges to other places and opportunities.

5. Human Capital represents the accumulation of skills, knowledge, and abilities that individuals can use in the workforce. It highlights the importance of keeping skills up-to-date and relevant to the current job market. These aspects are interconnected and collectively contribute to a holistic approach to Lifelong Learning, emphasizing the importance of personal aspirations, autonomy, and the ability to adapt in a rapidly changing world. Individuals need all the other forms of capital to truly capitalize on their Human Capital.

Several key aspects ensure the 5 Capital Framework effectively supports Lifelong Learning:

- **Personalization and Autonomy:** place the learner at the centre of their learning journey. This means recognizing their unique goals, aspirations, and starting points. Encourage learners to take ownership of their learning paths, making decisions that align with their personal and professional objectives.
- **Building Identity Capital:** foster environments that enhance learners' self-esteem and personal identity. This can be achieved through supportive educational practices that validate and build on their existing knowledge and experiences.
- **Enhancing Cultural Capital:** provide opportunities for learners to engage with diverse cultural contexts and practices. This helps them develop the competencies needed to navigate and contribute to society effectively.
- **Strengthening Social Capital:** facilitate the creation of networks and connections among learners. This can be done through collaborative projects, peer learning groups, and community engagement activities. Strong social networks provide support and open up new opportunities.
- **Updating Human Capital:** ensure that the skills and knowledge being taught are relevant to the current job market and future trends. This involves regularly updating curricula and offering professional development opportunities to keep learners' skills up to date.
- **Reflective Practice:** encourage learners to regularly reflect on their progress and experiences. This helps them identify areas for improvement and adapt their learning strategies accordingly. Reflection also reinforces the value of Lifelong Learning and continuous improvement.
- **Inclusive and Accessible Learning:** make learning opportunities accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstances. This includes providing resources and support for marginalized groups to ensure they can fully participate and benefit from Lifelong Learning.

Finally, these five key steps help in accumulating learning capital, which is the knowledge, skills, and competencies that enhance an individual's ability to contribute to and benefit from the knowledge economy.

## 12. Updates from the ASEM Stakeholders

The stakeholders were invited to shortly present the current state of play of their relevant activities, projects and initiatives carried out and implemented since the last ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9, January 2024).

*Presentations shown during item 12: [ASEM ISOM 2024 item12.pdf](#)*

### ASEAN University Network (AUN)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thanaphan Laiprakobsup, Deputy Executive Director of the ASEAN University Network (AUN), presented AUN's projects and activities that are clustered in the two high-impact outputs *AUN Youth Platform* and *Academic & Research Collaboration*. The AUN comprises currently

291 Universities (30 AUN Core Member Universities, 21 ASEAN+3 University Network Member Universities and 240 Associate Members Universities). AUN overseas 19 Thematic Networks and one of these, the *AUN Quality Assurance (AUN-QA)*, was further presented with its *Guidelines for Programme Assessment*. AUN has four Policy and Networking Platforms (*AUN Board of Trustees' Meeting, AUN Rectors' Meeting, ASEAN+3 Head of International Relations Meeting, ASEAN+3 Rectors' Conference*), and provides five Key Youth Platforms (*ASEAN and ASEAN+3 Youth Cultural Forum (AYCF); AUN and ASEAN+3 Educational Forum and Young Speakers' Contest 2024; ASEAN Student Leaders Forum (ASLF); AUN ASEAN Experiential Learning (AELP); AUN Summer Camp*) together with an Internship Programme. Further information can be found in the [presentation](#) and on the [website](#).

### ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme

Dr. Keuk-Je Sung, Director General of the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme Secretariat, presented the work of ASEM-DUO, by underlining that that ASEM-DUO targets balanced mobility and supports only pairs of people: one from an Asian and the other from a European institution. He showed the numbers of scholarship awardees from the different countries. More contribution from European partners is highly encouraged to tackle the current imbalance of 80% coming from Asian members. More information can be found on the [presentation](#) and the [website](#).

### Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

Ms. Réka Tózsza, Director of ASEF's Education Department, presented the target groups of ASEF's activities: 1. Teachers and teacher trainers, 2. Policymakers, university and student leaders, and 3. Young leaders. All are involved in ASEF's activities through 5 projects with multiplier effects.

The [ASEF Young Leaders Summit \(ASEFYLS\)](#) with the theme "Leadership in Society 5.0" has taken place in 2024. In 2025 the hybrid *6<sup>th</sup> Young Leaders Summit* is planned to take place.

The [Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Initiative for Young Leaders](#) has in 2024 produced a comparative regional report to map over 40 national strategies on science and technology diplomacy and in 2025 a *Country Focus Workshop Series* showcasing Asian and developing country Sci-Tech strategies and ecosystems will take place.

The [10<sup>th</sup> ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education](#) is discussing *[Un]debated Ways of Rethinking Higher Education* with a Debate Webinar series in 2024 and two physical Dialogue Events. In 2025 hybrid Policy Dialogue Workshops on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education are planned and ASEF plans to work with the ASEM Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals and Education with one in-person event and will find synergies with other ASEM Expert Groups and the EHEA's Global Policy Dialogue Group.

In 2024 the [ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory \(ASEFInnoLab\)](#) held online an InnoLab workshop series on *Universities' Role in AI Innovation Ecosystems* with 100 participants from 33 countries who produced 16 Joint Position Papers. An onsite InnoLab workshop in collaboration with the ASEM Expert Group on Digitalisation at the Fudan University, Shanghai, has taken place in October 2024 and produced three whitepapers. In 2025 there will be an online InnoLab workshop for 200 participants together with three onsite InnoLab events in three locations (China, Asia and Europe). ASEF is inviting the ASEM EG on Digitalisation to continue collaboration.

The [ASEF Classroom Network Project](#) had in 2024 organised online knowledge building and team learning workshops, held a *School and Faculty Collaboration Conference* in the Philippines and

launched the publication “[Artificial Intelligence and Education: The Views of Teachers from Asia and Europe](#)”. In 2025 online learning for at least 400 teachers will continue and two onsite conferences are planned to take place.

### Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)

Prof. Azirah Hashim from the [Asia-Europe Institute \(AEI\)](#) located at Universiti Malaya reported on the AEI-ASEM Summer School that has taken place in July/August 2024 under the theme “Global Citizenship: Embracing Diversity, Fostering Sustainability”. There was an engaging mix of lectures, discussions and field trips that focused on sustainability, diversity, and global citizenship. She added information on other AEI events and the AEI Masters Programmes (Master in ASEAN Studies and Master in European Studies).

### ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub (ASEM LLL Hub)

Prof. Séamus Ó Tuama, Chair of the [ASEM LLL Hub](#) (Ireland 2020-2025), recalled the key aspects of the Hub, which are Research and Dialogue. The Hub facilitates collaborative research by providing a platform for academics, policymakers and practitioners, developing evidence-based knowledge and support policy, driving innovation on the global topic of Lifelong Learning, and promoting capacity building by linking emerging and established researchers. The LLL Hub is a Global Network that cultivates inter-regional networks of higher education, researchers, policymakers, stakeholders and practitioners in Asia and Europe. It has 7 research networks, each focused on specific domains, but engaging in cross-cutting issues and collaboration. The Hub is linked to other global networks and organisations with influence also beyond the Asia-Europe context. The current research networks (RNs) are: RN1: e-ASEM (Digital Learning Management Systems, Techno-Pedagogic Skills and Knowledge Network Communities in Lifelong Learning); RN2: Workplace Learning; RN3: Professionalization of Adult Teachers and Educators in ASEM countries; RN4: National strategies for Lifelong Learning; RN5: Lifelong Learning Transitions; RN6: Learning Cities and Learning Regions; RN7: Non-Formal, Informal Learning & Civil Society. All research networks also work on cross-cutting issues, such as education and learning for girls and women, AI and Super Intelligence, and climate challenges. The Hub has 227 members in 44 countries and 138 higher education institutions and has produced over 100 publications.

The Global LLL Week has taken place in May 2024 at the University College Cork, Ireland, with over 200 participants and over 50 speakers from over 40 countries.

The ASEM LLL Hub South Asia Centre organizes on 6-8 January 2025 a [Conference on Lifelong Learning for a Sustainable Future](#) in Kochi, India.

The Chair thanked the regional coordinators (Dr. Suwithida Charungkaitikul for Southeast Asia and Dr. Shalini Singh for South Asia) and the national contact persons for their work.

### European Students' Union (ESU)

Ms. Ann Gvritshvili presented the current activities of the [European Students' Union](#) (ESU), which is the umbrella organization of 44 students' unions from 40 European countries and works on various policy topics (social dimension, European Education Area, Quality, Public Relations, International Mobility, Organizational Development and Capacity Building, Digital Education, Development of Students Involvement in Quality Assurance (QA), international dimension of QA, Micro-credentials, AI, revision of standards and guidelines in QA, student-centred learning, European Qualifications



Framework (EQF), Automatic Recognition). ESU drafts policy papers on the social dimension, as e.g. the [“Bologna with Students Eyes”](#) for every EHEA’s Ministerial Conference to show the students’ situation in the countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Until the next Ministerial Conference that will take place in Romania in 2027, ESU will co-chair the Thematic Peer Group D (TPG D) on the Social Dimension and ESU is involved in the working group who revises the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, ESU is in contact with the new *Committee* on Culture and Education of the European Parliament and has just organised the second ESU Conference of the Student Bodies from European Alliances.

### European University Association (EUA)

Dr. Thérèse Zhang Kai Ying, Deputy Director for Higher Education Policy at the European University Association, updated the participants on EUA’s work. EUA is a membership organisation with about 880 European universities from 49 EHEA countries as well as national university associations from 44 countries. In 2021 EUA launched a Global Universities Associations Forum (GUAF) and is in dialogue with 8 associations in other world regions, as there is a growing pressure to respond to issues in a global setting and to have a dialogue platform. GUAF has rotating annual chairmanship with one annual physical meeting + online meetings of all partners. A Comparative Report on Digitalisation, the GUAF topic of 2024, is forthcoming and in 2025 the topic of Artificial Intelligence will be discussed. EUA publishes every 3 to 5 years a Trends Report based on survey responses. The [Trends Report 2024 “European higher education institutions in times of transition”](#) is based on survey responses from almost 500 higher education institutions in 46 countries and is available online.

### Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre specialising in Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED)

Asst. Prof. Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont, Centre Director of SEAMEO RIHED, presented the updates from her organization, which is working in the ASEAN region on topics within higher education. The [SEAMEO-ASEAN Joint Declaration on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education](#) was officially adopted by the SEAMEO Member Countries and ASEAN Member States Education Ministers on 25 August 2024 in Thailand. The space shall be a voluntary process with a shared vision for the region and “an inclusive space for collective intelligence in higher education for sustainable living and learning in Southeast Asia” with the common principles Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).

SEAMEO RIHED would like to continue working closely with ASEF and the Expert Groups of the ASEM Education Process. Three areas to work on were identified with projects for the ASEM action plan in brackets:

1. Futuristic Leadership (Project “Strengthening leadership with gender equity, diversity and inclusivity” where SEAMEO RIHED would like to cooperate with the ASEM EG1 on SDGs and Education and ASEF on enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion; Project “Horizon Southeast Asia”: pushing the frontiers of research and sustainability, supporting 25 universities from 6 Southeast Asian countries).
2. Regional Collective Intelligence through Policy Dialogue and Knowledge Maximisation (Inter-Regional Research Symposium, the next one taking place on 20-22 November 2024 in Bangkok; RIHED-SHARE Online Knowledge Platform; Study on the State of Science Research and Innovation (ACMECS and Maritime Southeast Asian Countries), Research supported by UNESCO on Micro-

credentials comparing systems; Southeast Asian Higher Education Senior Officials Meeting (SEA-HiEd SOM), the region's dedicated policy platform for higher education).

3. Learning for Skills, Competences and Credentials through Mobility and Linkages (The Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme with nearly 7,000 alumni, including new thrusts in Research, USR, Regional Orientation, Alumni Network; Inter- and intra-regional networks).

SEAMEO RIHED would like to explore a new SEA-Europe Mobility Programme for Sustainable Development to reimagine learning mobility through a co-designing process, to link macro-regions and strengthen connectivity and sustainable development. SEAMEO RIHED is currently identifying partners and exploring collaboration, e.g. with the ASEM EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility.

### UNESCO Regional Office Bangkok

Dr. Wesley Teter thanked everyone for the work they are doing to connect the two regions not only concerning SDG 4, but also in the spirit of the Global Convention on Higher Education, which establishes universal principles for the recognition of qualifications and shall facilitate mobility through international cooperation. It is open to all UNESCO Member States to ratify. Four Member States in Asia-Pacific have ratified the Convention so far, in total 34 countries worldwide have joined this first-ever treaty on higher education. Now UNESCO is drafting the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the Global Convention and is also working on a recommendation on the relationship between the Global Convention and the regional conventions. UNESCO is cooperating with many countries in research and capacity building for National Information Centres and is happy to receive ideas for future research topics from e.g. the ISOM participants. UNESCO is promoting policy advocacy as the "Global Convention is a game-changing instrument benefitting students, researchers and job seekers who are looking for having their qualifications recognized in another country or region."

Dr. Teter invited the ISOM participants to participate in the next Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC) Plenary on 3-4 December 2024 and mentioned that the ASEAN Policy Forum on 11 November 2024 in Laos was discussing the future of the region and the co-creation of a Common Space for Southeast Asian higher education. The Joint Declaration on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education between SEAMEO RIHED and the ASEAN Secretariat is mostly focused on equity and inclusion, shall give strength to the Southeast Asian region, and promotes LLL throughout the region. UNESCO can contribute to this Common Space. The last event Dr. Teter mentioned was Asia's first Learning Cities Conference in October 2024, which celebrated new UNESCO Learning Cities in China, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam connecting SDG 4 and SDG 11.

The latest [Activity Report of the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok](#) is available online.

### **13. Looking towards SOM1, SOM2 and ASEMME10**

Vera Lucke from the ASEM Education Secretariat presented the next steps towards the next important meetings of the ASEM Education Process. The 1<sup>st</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM1) is to be held in late 2025 in Romania, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM2) and the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10) are to be held in late 2026 in an Asian country.

As mentioned in the Chair's Conclusions of the ASEMME9, the Action Plan accompanying the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 needs to be updated according to the ongoing activities and the ASEM Education Secretariat will be in contact with the ASEM countries and stakeholders to do this update.

The ASEM Education Secretariat will start the drafting process of the Stocktaking Report 2024-2026 and will be in contact with all the ASEM countries and stakeholders to contribute, and will present an update on the drafting process of the Report at the SOM1 in November 2025.

The ASEM Education Secretariat will continue to participate in conferences and meetings to disseminate the ASEM activities, continues to update the website ([www.asem-education.org](http://www.asem-education.org)) and to disseminate activities on social media.

#### Standing Working Group (SWG)

The Standing Working Group was established in 2019 to support the ASEM Education Secretariat in its strategic work and helps monitoring the adopted action plan. The Secretariat proposes for the period until the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEMME the following composition:

- Malta (as Co-chair EG1 and host of last ASEMME9)
- India (Co-chair EG2)
- Malaysia (Co-chair EG3)
- Germany (Chair EG4)
- Thailand (Host ISOM in 2024)
- Romania (Host SOM1 in 2025)
- Host of ASEMME10 in 2026
- ASEM Education Secretariat
- Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)
- ASEM-DUO Secretariat
- ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub

**In case other ASEM countries or stakeholders would like to join the Standing Working Group (SWG), they were asked to write an e-mail with their expression of interest to the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) by 31 January 2025.** The AES will contact the aforementioned countries and stakeholders to confirm the representatives' contacts and will organize an online meeting in early 2025 to agree on the next steps. The AES will also update the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the SWG according to the new composition.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)

Ms. Elmira Chengiali, Director at the Ministry of Education of Romania, announced that the next big ASEM Education meeting, the **1<sup>st</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM1), will be held in Bucharest**, the Romanian capital, in 2025. She gave two options of dates for the two-days meeting (18-19 November and 19-20 November 2025) and the ISOM participants decided to hold it on **18-19 November 2025**. The save-the-date will be sent out as soon as possible by the ASEM Education Secretariat.

Romania proposes the **theme "Connecting Education 2.0 in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals"** for the SOM1 to be held in Bucharest in 2025. The proposal is based on the theme of the ASEMME7 that was held in 2019 in Romania: "Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals"). Sub-themes could be: Strengthening mobility between the two regions; Recognition of higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education and of periods of study completed during mobility; Quality Assurance in education; Equity in education.

Belgium commented that the meeting should take due account of the outcomes of the UNESCO General Conference that will also take stock of the global implementation on SDG 4 and the

educational strand in the UN 2030 agenda. Duplication should be avoided by concentrating on the relevance for the interregional cooperation between Asia and Europe.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10) + SOM2

According to the schedule of the ASEM Education Process, the **2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM2) and the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10)** are planned to take place in **late 2026 in an Asian country** (one day for SOM2 + 2 days for ASEMME10, usually back-to-back with SOM2 being on the day before the ASEMME). Up till now no new host country has been confirmed.

**All Asian countries are asked to investigate with their Ministers if they can host the ASEMME10 and SOM2.** The ASEM Education Secretariat will be in contact with the interested countries, send them further information and give all the needed support.

*Presentations of item 13: [ASEM ISOM 2024 item13.pdf](#)*

#### **14. AOB**

No other business was raised.

#### **15. Closing Remarks**

Prof. Luca Lantero, Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat, thanked the participants for their active participation, their interesting updates and their contributions to the success of this meeting. He thanked the staff of the Thai Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation not only for the organization of this important meeting on the way to the next ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10), but also for the great hospitality and the cultural activities that allowed everybody to experience some beautiful Thai culture.

*Minutes drafted by the ASEM Education Secretariat*

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