



1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)

preparing the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10)

“Connecting Education. Fostering collaboration between Asia and Europe”

18-19 November 2025

Bucharest, Romania

[Link to Meeting's webpage with presentations and other material of the meeting](#)

Minutes

Participants list

Tuesday, 18 November 2025

1. Welcome and Introduction

Ms. Elmira Chengiali, Director for European Affairs within the Directorate General for International Relations and European Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania, welcomed the Senior Officials from Asia and Europe and the stakeholder representatives to this ASEM Education 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) and formally opened the meeting.

1.1 Welcome by the Romanian Authorities

◆ Ministry of Education and Research, Romania

Mr. Sorin-Ștefan Decă, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania, thanked the Erasmus+ National Agency for co-organising this meeting and welcomed the participants to Bucharest for the 1st ASEM Education Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1), held under the theme “Connecting Education: Fostering Collaboration between Asia and Europe.” The speech emphasized the opportunity to use this meeting to explore key topics of mutual interest and identify priorities that can guide the shared commitment of Asia and Europe in the years ahead to strengthening educational ties and mutual understanding. Key priorities of this meeting include skills development through lifelong learning, the growing role of flexible learning formats such as micro-credentials, and the continued importance of student and staff mobility, which has increased significantly over the past two decades, while acknowledging ongoing challenges related to inclusiveness, digitalisation, quality assurance, and recognition.

The speech also underscored education's vital role in safeguarding democracy by countering misinformation, intolerance, and pseudoscience. Education was presented as a cornerstone of democratic resilience, fostering critical thinking, respect for evidence, and civic responsibility. This vision, deeply rooted in Romania's educational policy and its engagement in the ASEM Education Process, calls for openness, curiosity, and shared purpose in dialogue and cooperation. The Deputy Secretary General highlighted the importance of regional cooperation frameworks such as the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) developed through the Bologna Process. Participants were invited to contribute to shaping future cooperation priorities, and an official invitation was extended to all countries to participate in the EHEA's next Global Policy Forum – a valuable platform for dialogue and joint action to advance

shared goals – to be held alongside the EHEA Ministerial Conference in May 2027, co-hosted by Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Decă concluded by encouraging participants to transform discussions into concrete actions that strengthen the Asia–Europe partnership, reinforce trust and knowledge exchange, and ensure education continues to empower citizens and future generations in this fast-changing world.

◆ **Romanian Erasmus+ National Agency**

Mr. Adrian Georgescu, Director of the Romanian Erasmus+ National Agency, welcomed the participants to Bucharest and Romania. The speech highlighted the evolution of Erasmus+ over nearly 40 years into a comprehensive lifelong learning programme covering education, training, youth, and sport. The Director underlined the strategic importance of the current moment, noting that the European Commission has recently presented plans for the 2028–2034 period, including a proposed budget increase of at least 50%, a stronger international dimension, and more flexible access to international cooperation for higher education institutions. It was also noted that the programme marks ten years since opening mobility opportunities beyond the EU, enabling participation of students and academic and administrative staff from EU and associated countries worldwide. The international dimension of Erasmus+ was emphasized as a key, cross-cutting element for learning, cooperation, and policy dialogue. The speech also addressed Erasmus+ priorities related to the green transition and sustainable development. The Director presented initiatives undertaken by the Romanian National Agency to align with environmental and climate objectives, including the use of sustainable promotional materials made from recycled resources. Examples included tote bags produced from repurposed event banners in collaboration with a social enterprise and notebooks made from recycled seed paper that can be planted. The welcome address concluded with thanks to all participants for attending and an expression of hope that the conference would be productive and inspiring for everyone.

1.2 Welcome by the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)

Prof. Luca Lantero, Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat, warmly welcomed the 56 participants from 11 Asian and 13 European ASEM partners, along with delegates from eight stakeholder organisations. In his opening remarks, he expressed sincere gratitude to the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research and the Romanian Erasmus+ National Agency for graciously hosting this 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) in preparation for the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10), scheduled to take place in the Philippines in 2026.

Prof. Lantero emphasised his firm belief in the power of innovation, collaboration, and inclusive dialogue as the driving forces behind progress in education. He highlighted the crucial importance of connecting different higher education areas and initiatives – such as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Central Asian Higher Education Area (CAHEA), and the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education – as well as fostering cooperation networks in key domains such as recognition, mobility, and quality assurance.

He underlined that the ASEM Education Process, as a unique interregional platform for exchange between Asia and Europe, provides an ideal setting to address shared challenges, exchange best practices, and develop forward-looking strategies. The discussions and outcomes of this meeting will feed into the policy documents that will be adopted at the forthcoming ASEMME10.

In conclusion, Prof. Lantero wished all participants a productive and inspiring meeting, encouraging everyone to engage actively in shaping a stronger, more connected Asia-Europe education community.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Attachment: https://asem-education.org/documentation/ASEM_SOM1_Agenda_Bucharest_2025.pdf

3. Adoption of the Minutes from the last meeting

The minutes from the [Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting \(ISOM\) held on 18-19 November 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand](#), were adopted.

4. Keynotes on Regional and Interregional Cooperation in Higher Education

- ◆ **“Quality Assurance to Foster Global Cooperation in Higher Education” by Prof. Daniela Cristina Ghițulică**, President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and former Vice-Chair of the European Higher Education Area (Romania)

Prof. Daniela Cristina Ghițulică opened her keynote by recalling that the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) and the Bologna Declaration (1999) marked the beginning of the Bologna Process and later European Higher Education Area that work on improving the compatibility and comparability of higher education systems. She outlined the core objectives of the Bologna Process: comparable and readable degrees, a three-cycle system, ECTS credits, mobility of students and staff, alignment with societal and labour market needs, and a strengthened European dimension in higher education. She stressed that reforms are agreed at regional level with stakeholder involvement and implemented nationally, within this voluntary cooperation framework based on shared values. The Bologna Follow-Up Group supports the implementation of the key commitments between Ministerial Conferences, and since 2009 a Global Policy Forum has almost always taken place back-to-back with the Ministerial Conference organised by a Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue.

The speaker then focused on quality assurance as a basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Connected quality assurance systems were presented as essential for building trust and to reinforce the attractiveness of the EHEA's offerings, facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe. She underlined the importance of peer review of national quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria. In this context, she recalled the role of ENQA and noted that quality assurance has been a key commitment of the Bologna Process since 2005, supported since 2018 by peer-learning mechanisms.

Prof. Ghițulică described the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), adopted in 2005 and revised in 2015, covering internal quality assurance, external quality assurance, and quality assurance of agencies. She emphasised their focus on learning and teaching, the learning environment, and links to research and innovation, as well as the four guiding principles: institutional responsibility for quality, respect for diversity, support for a quality culture, and responsiveness to the needs of students and society. She also referred to key policy areas such as programme design, student-centred learning, recognition, social dimension, and student support. The speaker concluded this part by noting that progress in quality assurance within the EHEA countries is monitored through the Bologna Process Implementation Report, that is prepared for each Ministerial Conference.

Finally, she addressed cooperation with other parts of the world, particularly Asia, highlighting the high level of alignment between the ESG and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework, while acknowledging differences in development contexts and implementation. She presented the ENQA–AQAN cooperation through projects such as SHARE and SCOPE-HE and recalled the Memorandum

of Understanding signed in October 2022, focusing on mutual understanding, information exchange, and staff development. In her conclusions, she reaffirmed that quality assurance is a prerequisite for international academic cooperation, a key driver in building a common higher education area, and a crucial tool for fostering trust, innovation, and cooperation between regions, particularly between Europe and other regions of the world.

Presentation: https://asem-education.org/documentation/4_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Keynote_Cristina_Ghitulica.pdf

- ◆ **“The Global Dimension of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)” by Elisa Petrucci**, Co-chair of the European Higher Education Area’s Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue and Head of International Cooperation and Policy Development Department at CIMEA, Italy

In her keynote, Ms. Elisa Petrucci outlined the development of the global dimension of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), recalling that its foundations were already present in the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) and the Bologna Declaration (1999), which emphasised the international recognition, attractiveness, and competitiveness of European higher education. She highlighted the Bergen Communiqué (2005) as a key milestone, where Ministers framed the EHEA as a partner to other regions of the world and called for dialogue, balanced mobility, and cooperation, leading to the mandate for the Bologna Follow-Up Group to develop a strategy on the external dimension of the EHEA.

She then described the adoption of the strategy “The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting” at the London Ministerial Conference in 2007 and the launch of structured global dialogue through the first Bologna Forum in 2009 connected to the Ministerial Conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve. This dialogue platform was designed to foster constructive debate and partnerships between countries of the Bologna Process and higher education systems worldwide and is since then prepared by a specific group on global policy dialogue. The speaker then referred to the current Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue for the period 2024–2027, tasked with ensuring dialogue, consolidating trust, identifying global themes, supporting mutual understanding of principles, and fostering SDG 4 “quality education” for all.

Ms. Petrucci presented the core priorities of EHEA’s global policy dialogue, which include the Bologna key commitments, with particular attention to recognition conventions and quality assurance, lifelong learning and micro-credentials, recognition of refugees’ qualifications with insufficient documentation, the right to education and the social dimension as an overarching framework, and digitalisation and artificial intelligence as transversal topics. She outlined some outcomes, such as topic-based meetings, consultations to draft the Global Policy Statement, and the organisation of the Global Policy Forum in Iași–Chișinău, in May 2027.

In addressing progress, she noted that EHEA’s Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue is looking at the Bologna Key commitments from a global perspective and is e.g. discussing the role of recognition networks in fostering transparent information; cooperation on quality assurance of transnational education; promotion of knowledge sharing and capacity development; advancement of digital transformation and data sharing; and the linkages between recognition and quality assurance. She concluded by situating these efforts within a transforming global landscape marked by economic, environmental, and societal changes and evolving higher education systems, and stressed that despite differing contexts, a shared priority remains the right to quality education supported by sustained and inclusive quality dialogue.

Presentation: https://asem-education.org/documentation/4_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Keynote_Elisa_Petrucci.pdf

◆ **“Fostering a Common Higher Education Area in Southeast Asia” by Christelle Mae Agustin**, Programme Officer at SEAMEO RIHED (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation – Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development)

In her keynote, Ms. Christelle Mae Agustin traced the development of a Common Higher Education Area in Southeast Asia from its initial conception to its current stage of implementation. She recalled that the idea of a common space was launched by the SEAMEO Council in 2008, laying the foundation for regional harmonisation of higher education. The speaker highlighted key initiatives that have supported this vision, including the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) and the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme. A major milestone was the Joint Declaration adopted by Education Ministers in August 2024 and noted by ASEAN Leaders at the ASEAN Summit in October 2024, which established a new ministerial directive for SEAMEO RIHED and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Ms. Agustin then outlined the planning phase following the Joint Declaration, under which RIHED and the ASEAN Secretariat were mandated to jointly oversee the implementation. She described the Joint Technical Workshop held in January 2025, where key strategic documents were drafted, including a roadmap and workplan for the Common Space and the terms of reference for a new Steering Committee. She explained that existing ASEAN and RIHED higher education platforms would be merged into a new annual Steering Committee Meeting, alongside a proposed biennial Ministerial Meeting on Higher Education. She noted that the strategic documents were reviewed at the 8th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Higher Education Mobility (AWGHEM) in April 2025 and endorsed in principle at the ASEAN Ministers’ Education and Higher Education Roundtables in Langkawi, Malaysia in June 2025.

She further reported on regional endorsements and governance developments, including the formal endorsement of the documents at the 20th ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM ED) in August 2025 and the dissolution of AWGHEM to create the Regional Initiative for Southeast Asian Higher Education (RISE) Steering Committee. She indicated that the process for formal ministerial adoption was underway and that Malaysia was selected by consensus to serve as the inaugural Chair for 2026–2027. She also outlined the next steps for establishing RISE, including the nomination of national representatives, the coordination of a joint secretariat functioning between ASEAN and RIHED, and the rotation of this secretariat’s leadership.

In concluding, Ms. Agustin identified key enablers for a Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education (SEA-HE Area), including academic mobility, quality assurance, lifelong learning, digital transformation, and comparable and compatible education systems. She emphasised that Annual Steering Committee Meetings and Biennial Ministerial Meetings will guide and monitor shared progress towards regional harmonisation. She highlighted RIHED’s role in driving this vision forward through the development of a new strategic framework, the *Bacolod Strategy*, and the *Da Nang Objectives* for the AIMS Programme, as well as through an updated Memorandum of Agreement with AQAN and the ASEAN University Network to strengthen collaboration on quality management, mutual recognition, and qualifications excellence. She also underscored a renewed emphasis on policy work and on driving evidence-based policymaking to support the development. She concluded by framing these efforts as the transition from planning to action in moving forward with a strong Common Higher Education Area in Southeast Asia.

Presentation: https://asem-education.org/documentation/4_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Keynote_Christelle_Agustin.pdf

◆ **“ASEAN-Malaysia 2025: Fostering a Common space in Southeast Asian Higher Education”** by Dato’ Dr Haji Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian, Deputy Secretary General (Policy), Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

In his keynote, Dato’ Dr Haji Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian presented Malaysia’s role as ASEAN Chair, noting that Malaysia last held the Presidency in 2015 and assumed it again in 2025, continuing its long-standing commitment to ASEAN under the theme “Inclusivity and Sustainability”. He highlighted that ASEAN–Malaysia 2025 is continuing to foster a common space in Southeast Asian higher education, aligned with ASEAN’s broader community visions.

Dato’ Dr Haji Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian outlined the main higher education programmes and activities scheduled in 2025 under the ASEAN–Malaysia Presidency, including regional conferences, exhibitions, working group meetings, ministerial roundtables, and policy dialogues hosted across Malaysia. These activities were designed to strengthen leadership, mobility, policy dialogue, and internationalisation in higher education, and to support closer regional cooperation.

The speaker gave particular emphasis to the ASEAN Higher Education Ministers’ Roundtable held in Langkawi in June 2025, attended by Ministers and senior representatives from ASEAN Member States, the SEAMEO Secretariat, and the ASEAN Secretariat. He explained that the objective of the Roundtable was to develop a long-term strategic direction for ASEAN higher education for the coming decades. Four outcome documents were produced: the Roadmap and Workplan on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education; the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee on the Common Space; the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Higher Education towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Prosperous ASEAN; and the Global Exchange for Mobility and Scholarship (ASEAN-GEMS) Platform.

He further recalled the ASEAN–SEAMEO Joint Declaration on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education adopted in August 2024, which reaffirmed the strong and lasting partnership between ASEAN and SEAMEO and provides the governance basis for the Common Space agenda.

A governance model for the Common Space underpins its implementation and oversight. At the political level, Ministers of Higher Education of the 11 Southeast Asian countries provide strategic direction through Biennial Ministerial Meetings. At the operational level, the RISE Steering Committee meets annually to guide, coordinate, and monitor progress on the Roadmap and Workplan, supported by dedicated working groups on key result areas. The governance framework is linked to existing regional structures, with coordination through the ASEAN Secretariat and SEAMEO RIHED, and regular reporting and alignment with the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) and the SEAMEO Heads of Organisation Meeting (HOM), both convened on an annual basis.

He highlighted Malaysia’s contribution to advancing this agenda, linking ASEAN–Malaysia 2015 to the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and ASEAN–Malaysia 2025 to the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, including leadership on the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Higher Education, which supports the development of the Common Space by a set of interconnected key areas, such as vision & leadership; equitable & inclusive access to higher education; learners experience, support & success; talent development; TVET as a viable education pathway; lifelong & life-wide learning opportunities; quality & excellence in higher education; research & knowledge creation; sustainability & planetary health; digital transformation & ecosystems; and enhancing ASEAN’s higher education diplomacy and internalisation within ASEAN.

Ultimately, Dato’ Dr Haji Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian noted Malaysia’s concrete contributions to regional mobility through the Global Exchange for Mobility and Scholarships, with a significant

share of scholarships offered by Malaysia. He also stated Malaysia's bid to chair and host the Regional Initiative for Southeast Asian Higher Education (RISE) for 2026–2027, working closely with the ASEAN Secretariat and SEAMEO to further foster a common space in Southeast Asian higher education.

Presentation: https://asem-education.org/documentation/4_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Keynote_Dato_Dr_Haji_Meqat_Sany.pdf

5. Presentation of the Concept for the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10) in 2026 in the Philippines

This 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) together with last year's Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) prepares the next Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME) to be held in late 2026. Prof. Lantero (Head of AES) thanked Malta for having organised the previous very successful 9th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9) in Valletta, Malta in January 2024 and handed over to the host of ASEMME10.

Dr. Michelle Aguilar Ong, Commissioner at the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines, announced that the **10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10) and the preceding 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) will be held in Palawan, the Philippines in late 2026**. The proposed **theme is “Sustainability and Solidarity: Navigating Our Future Together through Asia-Europe Higher Education Cooperation”**.

Commissioner Ong presented the Filipino archipelago's general data and the idea of this high-level conference building bridges in higher education between Asia and Europe by linking it to the Philippines' ASEAN Chairmanship in 2026 with its regional vision of an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous region focusing on lifelong and life-wide learning and on quality mobility. The Philippines, as host of ASEMME10 and SOM2, seek to convene ministers, senior officials, and stakeholders from across both regions to assess achievements, discuss future directions, and reaffirm shared commitments under the ASEM Education Strategy.

The proposed schedule* shows arrival of Senior Officials on Monday with a Welcome Dinner, on Tuesday the SOM2 and arrival of Ministers, on Wednesday a full day of ASEMME10 with a keynote, short statements of Ministers on three themes: 1. Blue Economy and Green and Digital Transitions, 2. Lifelong Learning and Inclusion, 3. Mobility and Mutual Recognition, bilateral meetings and a gala dinner in the evening. On Thursday half a day of ASEMME10 is planned with the adoption of the outcome documents *ASEMME10 Chair's Conclusions* and the *Palawan Declaration* reaffirming Asia-Europe commitment to sustainable and inclusive higher education cooperation. In the afternoon bilateral meetings can take place together with site visits, as well as on Friday.

The Palawan Island is around a one-hour domestic flight away from the capital city of Manila and is one of the Philippines' most pristine ecological treasures and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Palawan reflects the country's strong commitment to environmental stewardship, climate resilience, and sustainable development. By holding the meetings in a location where conservation and community-driven sustainability efforts thrive, the Philippines underscores that Asia-Europe higher education cooperation must not only advance academic excellence, but also strengthen the regions shared responsibility for a sustainable and resilient future.

A save-the-date for the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME10) + SOM2 will be sent via e-mail to all the ASEM partners and stakeholders as soon as possible.* Invitations to the Ministers will be sent via diplomatic channels by the Philippines in early 2026.

* [The concrete dates: **24 November 2026 for SOM2 and 25-26 November 2026 for ASEMME10**, with arrival on 23 November and departure on 27 November, were decided and announced a few weeks after the SOM1.]

Presentation of item 6: https://asem-education.org/documentation/5_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Hosting_ASEMME10-SOM2_Philippines.pdf

6. Handover of the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub's Chairmanship

The ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub), one of the main stakeholders of the ASEM Education Process, was at this SOM1 handed over from Ireland, where it was hosted at the University College Cork for the years 2020-2025, to Thailand, where it will be hosted for the next period from 18 November 2025 to 2030 at the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. The ASEM LLL Hub's Secretariat – from now on in Bangkok – works under the supervision of the hosting country (Thailand), in close cooperation with the ASEM Education Secretariat and is advised by the ASEM LLL Hub International Advisory Council (IAC).

The Irish outgoing ASEM LLL Chair, Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama, held a speech presenting key aspects of the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub, which are e.g. the facilitation of collaborative research, development of evidence-based knowledge and support policy, and capacity building by linking emerging and established researchers in Asia and Europe. Since its launch in 2005, the ASEM LLL Hub has become a very important network of higher education practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders and it is well linked to other regional and global networks and organisations in the field of lifelong learning. At the end of the Irish Chairmanship, the hub was coordinating seven Research Networks, two regional centres in South Asia and Southeast Asia and has established three National Liaison Offices in Japan, Mongolia and Lao PDR. In addition to the daily coordination tasks, the Irish ASEM LLL Hub's Chair has guided the network through the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic and successfully organised two Global Lifelong Learning Weeks in Cork, Ireland, one in 2022 and one in 2024, bringing together high-level keynote speakers, professors, researchers, stakeholders and other practitioners.

Dr. Ó Tuama thanked the founding chairman and inspirational leader of the ASEM LLL Hub, Arne Carlsen, who held the Chairmanship from 2005-2019 at the University Aarhus, Denmark, and who had handed over the Hub in 2019 to Ireland. He thanked the Irish government, especially the Department of Education & Skills and the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, for their financial support and trust, and he also thanked the Asia-Europe Foundation for its continuous support and dedication to the network and for introducing him to all the key actors of the ASEM Education Process. He furthermore acknowledged the previous Belgian (2017-2021) and the current ASEM Education Secretariat based in Rome, Italy (since 2022), and the ASEAN Secretariat for their precious and continuous support. Dr. Ó Tuama thanked the staff at the ACE (Adult Continuing Education) of the University College Cork, all the Research Network Coordinators and responsible of the regional centres for their hard work and excellent cooperation.

Dr. Ó Tuama, outgoing ASEM LLL Hub Chair (Ireland), then handed over the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) to the new Chair, Prof. Wilert Puriwat, President of the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) of the Kingdom of Thailand endorse and support Prof. Wilert Puriwat, President of the Chulalongkorn University to become the Chair of the ASEM LLL Hub 2025-2030 and the Chulalongkorn University will host the ASEM LLL Hub Secretariat.

Prof. Wilert Puriwat introduced the Chulalongkorn University and thanked Dr. Ó Tuama for chairing the ASEM LLL Hub in the last five years and for the handover and trust. Prof. Puriwat introduced his university and the 5-years vision for the ASEM LLL Hub Chairmanship as a leading driver of innovative sustainable lifelong learning initiatives with global connectivity based on digital lifelong learning ecosystems for sustainability. The Thai hosts identified three pillars on which the ASEM LLL Hub will be based: Pillar 1 focusses on Asia-Europe Dialogue and Global Connectivity building on prestigious partnerships, facilitating student and staff mobility, re- and upskilling, fostering global outreach and by involving youth. Pillar 2 fosters the impactful research network and Pillar 3 strengthens innovative sustainable lifelong learning by annual research calls, knowledge hub production and global connectivity. At the Chulalongkorn, the Secretariat of the ASEM LLL Hub will work closely with the Offices of Global Outreach, Lifelong Learning and Impactful Research Networks. Prof. Puriwat invited all the participant to participate at the next Chula-ASEM LLL AI Awards in early 2026 in Bangkok and showed a video with [information on the Chulalongkorn University](#).

Prof. Lantero (AES) thanked Dr. Ó Tuama and Prof. Puriwat for their speeches and congratulated to the new important commitment. He announced that an ASEM LLL Hub Regional Centre for Central Asia for Promoting Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Central Asia Centre) will now be established with an office at the Eurasian National University in Astana, Kazakhstan. This will foster geographical balance within ASEM and will give more visibility to Lifelong Learning in Central Asia. Mr. Alibek Madibekov, Director of the National Center for Higher Education Development of Kazakhstan, held a speech thanking for the involvement and opportunity highlighting Kazakhstan's dedication to research on Lifelong Learning, the intention to link the work on Lifelong Learning to the Central Asian Higher Education Area (CAHEA, a higher education area of 5 Central Asian nations) and therewith to establish a fruitful basis for further sustainable development of the entire Eurasian region.

Prof. Lantero (AES), announced that the ASEM LLL Hub International Advisory Council (IAC), involving at present around 25 national ministries and 5 international organizations, will be chaired by Mr. Duman Aitmagambetov, Vice-Rector for Strategic Development and Internationalization, Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, and co-chaired by Italy. In addition, a Liaison Office in Italy has recently been opened at the Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance, European Public Law Organization (EPLO) in Rome.

Since with this handover the geographical focus of the ASEM LLL Hub Secretariat and the various regional centres has shifted to Asia, Prof. Lantero proposed to open a ASEM LLL Hub Regional Centre for Promoting Lifelong Learning in Europe (ASEM LLL European Centre) headquartered in Rome, Italy, and to investigate the willingness of European countries to invest and participate in this. An e-mail with further details will be sent to European ASEM partners in early 2026.

Prof. Lantero (AES) thanked everyone for the successful handover, all the work that has been done and wished Prof. Puriwat all the best for the new phase of the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub and the close cooperation in these future years.

Cleo Cachapero, on behalf of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), thanked Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama for his dedication and work in the last five years chairing the ASEM LLL Hub and ensured the same support to the incoming ASEM LLL Hub's Chair, Prof. Wilert Puriwat, wishing him every success for the upcoming years.

Presentation of item 6: https://asem-education.org/documentation/6_ASEM-SOM1_2025_ASEMLLLHubHandover.pdf

Background Note: https://asem-education.org/documentation/6_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Background_Note_ASEMLLLHubChair_handover.pdf

7. Parallel workshops

The participants were invited to discuss in smaller groups on one of the three proposed topics.

Workshop A: Regional cooperation processes and their role in shaping and transforming higher education

The session explored the role of intergovernmental processes such as the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education and the European Higher Education Area/Bologna Process in shaping and transforming higher education, initiatives that have been developed within the processes, and how they support international cooperation in higher education, as well as ways to develop synergies between regional cooperation processes.

Speakers:

- Elisa Petrucci, Co-chair of the European Higher Education Area's Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue and Head of International Cooperation and Policy Development Department at CIMEA, Italy
- Christelle Mae Agustin, Programme Officer at SEAMEO RIHED (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation-Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development)
- Nilinthone Sacklokham, Academic Officer at the Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR

Moderated by Horia Oniță, Head of the European Higher Education Area Secretariat (Romania)

Rapporteur: Cleo Cachapero, Asia-Europe Foundation

Participants: Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Philippines, Romania, Viet Nam, ENQA, Erasmus Student Network

Presentation shown during Workshop A

Part 1 Presentations:

Horia Oniță provided an overview of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and its core values, mobility tools, and policy commitments, and highlighted ongoing efforts to build a more interconnected and coherent European space for higher education.

Elisa Petrucci shared the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue's (CG GPD) mandate to foster dialogue, build trust, and deepen mutual understanding across world regions. She emphasised the importance of identifying shared global themes, ensuring quality education for all, and using a topic-based, horizontal approach that enables more productive and flexible exchanges.

Representing the Southeast Asian context, Christelle Mae Agustin shared SEAMEO RIHED's experience as a bridge between vertical and horizontal dimensions of regional policy. She illustrated how its structured, topic-driven cooperation framework supports alignment and coordinated action across the region.

Nilinthone Sacklokham from Lao PDR offered a national lens, through which she described how regional engagement has supported the development of the country's young higher education system.

From these presentations, there were common threads that emphasise the importance of active stakeholder engagement, strong grassroots participation, and steady government support and commitment. The importance of regional frameworks and platforms were highlighted as key to structuring an ecosystem where higher education stakeholders are represented, national contexts are considered, and cooperation and dialogue are assured at all levels.

Part 2 Interactive Discussion: The speakers and participants discussed on the three following questions.

Question 1: How can we better develop synergies between subregional cooperation processes?

- Meaningful collaboration must operate at both, the policy and implementation levels, backed by concrete actions and strong political support.
- Although regional QA and qualifications frameworks may be conceptually compatible and many tools are in place, implementation gaps persist without strong national-level commitment.
- Strengthening collaborative agreements, policy dialogue, and information-sharing platforms were noted as essential to enhancing transparency, trust, and mobility across regions.
- Do MAGIC: Make Academia-Government-Industry Collaborate to tackle shared challenges.

Question 2: Which tools and practices are most important in enabling cooperation? Which are missing?

- Adequate funding and incentives, which act as the essential drivers, were mentioned as key enablers of cooperation.
- Capacity-building was identified as equally crucial to ensure that countries are empowered to participate in regional dialogues on equal footing.
- A major gap emphasised was the lack of promotion and visibility of ASEM-related opportunities within universities, and the participants expressed the need for more outreach efforts so that higher education stakeholders are aware of what is available within the ASEM framework.
- Participants also underscored the importance of strengthening motivation for deeper academic cooperation and improved data collection and sharing to foster trust.

Question 3: Which are the key actors that will contribute to strengthening synergies?

- Rather than identifying a list of actors, it would be better to identify which are the best-suited actors to join the conversation depending on the topic for a higher chance at finding meaningful synergies.
- It is important to have frameworks that empower stakeholders to join the conversation and the processes including providing resources, skills and knowledge, and facilitating travel and mobility.
- It is important to make stakeholders see the value of joining the conversation and making sure that their participation has impact.

Workshop B: Lifelong Learning with a focus on Micro-credentials (European and Asian experiences)

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.

Speakers:

- Nguyen Thao Huong, Principal Official, Higher Education Department at the Ministry of Education and Training, Viet Nam
- Prof. Ts. Dr. M. Iqbal Bin Saripan, Deputy CEO (Quality Assurance), Malaysian Qualifications Agency

Moderated and reported by Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama, Director of ACE (Centre for Adult Continuing Education) at the University College Cork, Ireland, and outgoing Chair of the ASEM LLL Hub (Ireland 2020-2025)

Participants: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Philippines, Thailand

Presentation shown during Workshop B

The participants discussed how three different countries, namely Ireland, Malaysia and Viet Nam apply micro-credentials as one instrument of lifelong learning.

In Ireland, all seven higher education institutions of the Irish Universities Association deliver nationally recognized micro-credentials (proof of learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience) positioned at levels 6-9 in the National Framework of Qualifications. These MicroCreds with a range of 1-30 ECTS are listed in the national portal for micro-credentials and are quality assured. Nationally over 20.000 learners are impacted and almost 500 courses have been created. Micro-credentials in Ireland are not only related to labour market needs, but are also used in community context, prisons, and all kinds of situations.

The next presentation highlighted Viet Nam's strong engagement in lifelong learning, with nearly 525,000 learners enrolled in continuing education programmes and five of the country's cities recognised as UNESCO Learning Cities. Lifelong learning is supported through open and distance learning, particularly via two Open Universities already established since the 1990s that provide flexible access to education. The Association for Promoting Education, established in 1996, plays a key role by encouraging learning, raising awareness of its importance, and supporting disadvantaged, vulnerable, and minority groups through scholarships and recognition initiatives.

The Erasmus+ CBHE project Micro4Asia was introduced as a major initiative to support Vietnamese universities in strengthening internationalisation through the design, implementation, and mutual recognition of micro-credentials. The project brings together European and Southeast Asian partners to promote flexible learning pathways, enhance student and staff mobility, and strengthen cooperation between higher education and the labour market. Its objectives include developing 36 labour-market-relevant micro-credentials, building capacity in curriculum development and digital delivery, fostering institutional cooperation, and enhancing employability and skills development.

The presentation also addressed the current situation and challenges of micro-credentials in Viet Nam. Micro-credentials are still very new and not yet included in national regulations, although some large universities have begun research in response to labour market demands. A key challenge is that non-formal and informal education are not recognised within the national qualifications framework. Several open questions were raised regarding implementation procedures, the role of micro-credentials in improving higher education quality versus widening access, the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, the need for regulation, and potential quality assurance concerns in higher education overall.

The next presentation gave an overview on the situation in Malaysia, where there are mainly two types of micro-credentials: unbundled from accredited programmes and stand-alone micro-credentials. There are over 27.000 micro-credential courses and over 1.750 programmes with reference to the MQF. Standalone Micro-credentials are quality assured through the Quality Verification Centre and available in the credit bank to which learners have access and can use for upskilling and reskilling as well as academic awards. Micro-credentials are also stackable for graduation and information on the qualifications is available in the MQA Micro-Credentials Portal. The participants agreed that the system in Malaysia is an advanced model to learn from, as it can respond and adapt quickly to new needs.

The participants from different parts of Asia and Europe discussed the situations in their countries and agreed that many are still in initial stages when it comes to micro-credentials and that learning from each other on this topic is important to develop this part of lifelong learning further to better respond to future challenges.

Workshop C: Mobility and internationalisation as instruments to build bridges between Asia and Europe

Drawing on the Erasmus+ Programme, the ASEM DUO Fellowship Programme and the ASEM Work Placement Programme, the session explores obstacles to mobility and ways to increase mobility, including by using new technologies.

Speakers:

- Nicoleta Popa, Deputy Director of the Erasmus+ National Agency, Romania
- Vladimir Tanasiev, Associate Professor, National University of Science and Technology Politehnica of Bucharest, Romania
- Prof. Dr. KJ Sung, Director General of the Secretariat for ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, Seoul, Korea
- Marie-Anne Persoons, Advisor International Policy at the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community of Belgium

Moderated by Adrian Georgescu, Director of the Erasmus+ National Agency, Romania

Rapporteur: Azirah Hashim, Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya

Participants: Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Thailand, ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, Asia-Europe Institute, Erasmus Student Network, European University Association

Presentation shown during Workshop C

The first presentation provided a comprehensive overview of the international dimension of Erasmus+, giving figures of 16.7 million people who have been involved in Erasmus+ since 1987 (and in 2024 alone 1.5 mil people were supported by Erasmus+). Ms. Nicoleta Popa from the Romanian Erasmus+ National Agency explained the distinction between centralised actions funded by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and decentralised actions managed by National Agencies. Her insights demonstrated how Erasmus+ has remained a powerful driver of international cooperation and mobility – both, within Europe and increasingly with Asia – opening doors, creating pathways, and strengthening academic relationships. A study show that 68% of supported participants say that Erasmus+ gave them better career opportunities, 80% improved their foreign language abilities through Erasmus+ and 78% report to have gained skills that help in their current job or studies. The speaker explained the different Erasmus+ programmes that are available for interregional cooperation between Asia and Europe and added useful links and contacts.

This was followed by a presentation by Dr. Vladimir Tanasiev, from the National University of Science and Technology Politehnica of Bucharest, giving valuable insights from the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) SOHO Project aiming to modernize tourism education by integrating smart technologies, sustainability principles, and digital innovation into university curricula across Europe and Asia. He illustrated how well-structured academic mobility and successful cross-border cooperation had functioned as a genuine bridge between Europe and Asia and highlighted several best practices and lessons learnt that had contributed to the project's

success. In terms of partnership building, the project had placed strong emphasis on establishing clear and shared objectives from the outset, ensuring that both European and Asian partners understood their complementary roles. Regular communication, transparency in expectations, and early alignment on academic standards and mobility procedures were identified as essential elements for building trust. Regarding implementation, Dr. Tanasiev noted that careful planning and phased activities had allowed the project to progress smoothly. Joint workshops, consistent monitoring, and proactive problem-solving mechanisms had ensured that activities were well supported. The integration of digital collaboration tools also helped maintain continuity and engagement between partners throughout the project's lifecycle. Among the lessons learned, the project demonstrated the importance of flexibility, especially when adapting to different administrative systems or academic cultures. Together, these reflections showed how Erasmus+ initiatives had the power to become transformative experiences for students, staff, and institutions alike, when supported by thoughtful partnership building, robust implementation, and continuous learning.

The workshop participants then heard from Prof. Dr. KJ Sung, Director General of the Secretariat for the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, about the progress and growing impact of ASEM-DUO in promoting balanced people-to-people connectivity between Asia and Europe. He described how pairing partners are found, how exchanges are financed, and how institutions and individuals benefit from ASEM-DUO. The programme's broad recognition and the unanimous support for its continuation during ASEM Education meetings confirm its status as one of ASEM's most valued and successful instruments for deepening interregional cooperation.

Finally, Ms. Marie-Anne Persoons from the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community of Belgium, presented the experience of the ASEM Work Placement Programme (ASEM WPP) in Flanders and began with the asymmetric mobility between Asia and Flanders. She highlighted the rising importance of internships within students' academic pathways and noted that around 60 Flemish students each year are completing work placements in Asia with ASEM-WPP support. These experiences contribute significantly to students' personal and professional development – broadening their global outlook, strengthening intercultural understanding, and enhancing their independence and adaptability. The speaker suggests some ways forward including aligning with other scholarship schemes, notably in Asia, and widening the countries of destination.

Following these four presentations, the participants discussed other successful bilateral initiatives and how Erasmus+, ASEM DUO, and national programmes could be considered complementary. They shared examples from their own countries, highlighting the diversity and creativity of Asia-Europe cooperation and the potential to build on what already exists.

A key message raised by the moderator concerned the vital importance of national higher education authorities. Participants' contributions confirmed that these authorities have already played an essential role in promoting the opportunities offered by Erasmus+, ASEM DUO, and other international schemes. Nevertheless, the discussions also suggested that even more could be achieved with sustained commitment, through wider awareness, promotion, more active encouragement of institutional participation, and ensuring that opportunities reached a broader and more diverse range of learners and staff.

8. Updates from the ASEM partners

ASEM partners were invited to present their current relevant activities, projects, and initiatives carried out and implemented since the 9th ASEM Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9, January 2024). ASEM Partners were also encouraged to present their future initiatives and ideas for cooperation between Asia and Europe.

◆ Belgium Flemish Community

Ms. Marie-Anne Persoons reported on the increasing number of incoming students from Asia in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Most students come from China, India and Iran, and there is a rising number of refugees coming to Belgium as well. The number of students from ASEAN is also slightly increasing, as well as the number of students coming from Central Asia. Exchanges between Belgium and Japan and Korea are popular and stable.

◆ Cambodia

HE. Dr. Bo Chankoulika explained Cambodia's demographic context followed by the country's education landscape. Cambodia's school-aged population is projected to remain stable through 2030, facilitating progress toward universal basic education, while the growing adult population will drive increased demand for lifelong learning and higher education. The speaker compared the education achievements between 1995 and 2025, where enrolment of the population and gender parity at all levels of education have increased significantly and drop-out has decreased. 21 TVET institutions have been established as well as different opportunities for lifelong and adult learning. Digital learning and teacher training have been integrated nationwide, and the learning quality has improved. Cambodia's education vision is "A strong and regionally competitive education system that contributes to achieve Cambodia's status of an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050 and to transform the country into a knowledge-based, peaceful and democratic society with increased regional and international competitiveness." The Education Strategic Plan 2024-2028 outlines eight priorities grouped in three pillars of actions with dedicated priority programmes to ensure that all Cambodians have access to quality, equitable, and inclusive education enriched with knowledge, skills, discipline, ethics, good behaviour, health, fitness, and lifelong learning. The speaker gave examples of cooperation projects, like Erasmus+ CBHE projects, in which Cambodia is currently involved. At the end of her presentation, Dr. Bo proposes two main areas for future collaboration with Europe: 1. Expand Flexible Learning Pathways and conducive learning environment, and 2. Develop a Future-Ready Workforce and invites all the European countries for cooperation.

◆ Cyprus

Mr. Yiannis Kasoulides presented Cyprus' activities that are relevant for the ASEM Education Process. Cyprus has updated the ASEM Education Compendium in July 2025 and circulates the ASEM DUO Korea call yearly. The country has agreements on the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications with Russia and China and a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of higher education with China and Japan. The Cyprus's universities have several bilateral agreements with universities in China, India, Japan, Korea, Thailand and established the Confucius Institute for the development of stronger educational, cultural and commercial links between Cyprus and China by offering a large spectrum of programmes, events and other activities in Chinese language, culture, arts and business. The 2025 Summer School of the Confucius Institute with 90 students from the Hangzhou Dianzi University has taken place for three weeks at the Cyprus University of Technology. A Chair of Indian Studies at the University of Nicosia has been established in June 2025 and the first graduation ceremony of the European University Cyprus has been held in July 2025 in China.

◆ European Union

Mr. Bogdan Barla explained the Erasmus+ programme and some statistics of the Erasmus+ cooperation between Asia and Europe, with 5200 people moving with international credit mobility in 2024 and with more than 3700 Erasmus Mundus scholarships for Asia-Europe exchange, which is 1/3 of all scholarships worldwide. The countries with most participation in Capacity Building (CBHE) projects are in this order Vietnam (with 22 projects), Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines and China (with 3 projects). Two examples of projects were mentioned, the [MICRO4ASIA](#) and the [AIDeEdu](#) projects.

◆ France

Mr. David Itier stated that France continues to promote international student mobility and is the seventh most popular country for incoming students with a growth rate of 21% over the last 5 years. Half of world's mobile students come from Asia and Oceania. France has the ambitious goal to attract the best scientists and 500.000 international students by 2027 and is on track even if the times are challenging due to discussion on limitation to immigration and due to other global challenges. Academic freedom is an asset to attract students to France and Europe. The speaker mentioned two initiatives: The first initiative mentioned was the "[Bienvenue en France](#)" label that was created to allow institutions to highlight their ability to accommodate new international students. It attests the quality of the institutions and their facilities, to support international students and to promote higher education in France. The second mentioned initiative was the "[Choose France](#)" initiative which should attract the best minds to the country giving information on how to move to France, and how to study, work and live in France. Mr. Itier closed his update by saying that international cooperation based on exchange, diplomacy, peace and fostering prosperity stays important for France and for people in Asia and Europe.

◆ India

Mr. Sitesh Kumar presented the "Study in India" programme that was launched in 2018 to attract students from all over the world. The [Study in India Portal](#) was launched in August 2023 for admission, visa and ID processing, and registration is mandatory since 2023-2024. Mr. Kumar presented also the [Global Initiative of Academic Networks \(GIAN\)](#), which taps a global pool of scientists and entrepreneurs and facilitates engagement with India Higher Educations Institutions and the Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC), which enhances India's research ecosystem and promotes academic and research collaborations with selected foreign countries. When it concerns institutional collaboration between Indian and foreign universities, the recent regulations of the University Grants Commission (UGC) enable Twinning, Joint and Dual Degree programmes and foreign universities to set up campuses in India. The Foreign Higher Educational Institution Registration portal (FHEI) opened in November 2023. The last point raised by Mr. Kumar was the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), which is an international financial services and technology hub, which allows the 500 top universities of the QS ranking to open campuses and to provide courses on financial management, FinTech and STEM fields.

◆ Indonesia

Mr. Togar Mangihut Simatupang presented the Indonesian system of higher education and its national and global impact. Indonesia has a total of 4,670 higher education institutions with close to 10,000,000 students, which makes it one of the largest in the world. Indonesia's higher education

system is moving from a system of “knowledge transfer and down streaming research” to “innovation, economy, growth and community development”. A huge challenge is the link between quality higher education and economic development becoming a powerhouse in regional and national innovation with global impact. The national strategy includes 5 principles to strengthen impactful higher education, science and technology. The country works on building a science ecosystem, where economic development can be achieved through impactful and excellence research, developing science talent and transformative science learning. The global shift concerning digitalization, labour market transformation, cross-border collaboration and sustainable development call for stronger partnership that transforms knowledge in real impact. Mr. Simatupang proposes to strengthen research collaboration networks between Asia and Europe, to further create joint and dual degrees, to strengthen university-industry partnerships and to support regional networks.

◆ Italy

Ms. Elisa Petrucci presented two recent EU funded projects connecting Asia and Europe: the [Fraud-Act project](#) which combats fraud by supporting the prevention, prosecution and monitoring of the phenomenon through a holistic approach based on international cooperation and innovation. The partners of this project are Italy (coordinator), Armenia, France Ireland, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, ENQA and the Council of Europe. The second project presented was the [TPG-LRC+ project](#), which supports the implementation of the Bologna Process focusing on the key commitment 2 on national legislation and procedures compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention in the countries being part of the Thematic Peer Group B (TPG B), in line with the 2024 Tirana Communiqué. In addition to these projects, Italy cooperates with Kazakhstan, Japan and New Zealand in the ASEM-DUO fellowship programme and held the Italy-China Rectors Forum “Integration, Innovation and Governance. China-Italy Higher Education Cooperation for the Future” in November 2025 in Beijing. The forum works on advancing interdisciplinary integration and development to jointly address global challenges, further integrate industry academia and research and cultivate talents for global governance. Finally, Ms. Petrucci mentioned that Italy has recently opened the Centre for Preventing and Countering Education Fraud with the objective to have a shared operational mechanism for all Council of Europe member States, addressing a wide range of fraudulent practices, including diploma mills, forged qualifications, and academic misconduct. The founders are the Council of Europe and CIMEA, acting under the mandate of the Italian Ministry for Universities. Partners are ETINED, the Institute for Higher Education, Law & Governance (IHELG), the MNU University Kazakhstan. Other organisations or institutions operating in this sector or dealing with issues related to transparency, integrity, and ethics in education are invited to join.

◆ Japan

Mr. Ichiro Takahashi presented examples of inter-university collaboration and student exchanges between Japan and Asia and Europe. The Inter-University Exchange Project was launched in 2011 and has since then supported 28,000 Japanese students who have been sent abroad, and 26,000 international students have been accepted for study in Japan. 200 Japanese universities and 1,000 partner institutions overseas have participated. The programme seeks to transcend differences in regional higher education systems and provide quality-assured education based on the mutual recognition of credits, uniform grade management, and degree awarding. Every year the programme selects regions, and support is provided for period of 5 years. Japan collaborates with China, South Korea, and ASEAN through the CAMPUS Asia project, which exists since 2011. The Inter-University Exchange Project is also developing a leading model for international educational collaboration in advanced fields like AI, quantum technology, semiconductors, and bioengineering with Europe.

Examples of science and technology and researcher exchanges between Japan and other countries in Asia and Europe include the JSPS Fellowships (International Fellowships for Research in Japan with 3,600 researchers and Overseas Research Fellowships for Japanese with 790 researchers in the past 5 years) and NEXUS (Networked Exchange, United Strength for Stronger Partnerships between Japan and ASEAN) launched in 2023, which implements international joint research in common priority challenges, promotes mutual exchanges of young researchers and talent development and set up a program office to support activities and to enhance sustainable research partnerships. The “European Interest Group (EIG) CONCERT Japan” started in 2015 and is an international joint initiative to support and enhance science, technology and innovation (STI) cooperation between the European region and Japan and includes multilateral research collaboration with 14 institutions in 12 European countries. The initiative opens a joint call every year, this year’s theme is “Oceans: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation”. Japan takes measure for research integrity and security for international joint research based on national policy directives and international declarations like G7 principles and guidelines.

◆ **Kazakhstan**

Mr. Madibekov explained that huge progress in higher education reform has been made since Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process in 2010 aligning its education system to European standards, e.g. using ECTS, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and adopting a National Qualifications Framework in 2020. This year Kazakhstan hosts 21,000 foreign students and the country aims for 100,000 international students in 2030. To strengthen regional cooperation Kazakhstan initiated the creation of the Central Asian Higher Education Area (CAHEA) in 2020, uniting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Through CAHEA, the country is working towards building a common higher education space in Central Asia, jointly developing mechanisms for accreditation, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, and academic mobility. By the end of this year Kazakhstan will ratify the Tokyo Convention that will further strengthen the cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region. Kazakhstan is opening the ASEM LLL Hub Regional Centre for Central Asia for Promoting Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Central Asia Centre) with an office at the Eurasian National University in Astana, Kazakhstan, to further advance the promotion and research community of Lifelong Learning in Central Asia and to further strengthen the ASEM Education Process.

◆ **Lao PDR**

Ms. Nilinthone Sacklokham updated the participants on Lao PDR’s development concerning higher education. Lao PDR is continuing to strengthen engagement in interregional higher education processes and is actively engaging in the priority areas of student mobility, quality assurance, and sustainable development. Lao PDR participates in the ASEM Expert Groups, Policy Dialogues and Capacity Building initiatives which are continuing to support national reforms. Within the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education Lao PDR is discussing on qualifications, recognition and credit transfer. During the Lao’s presidency of ASEAN in 2024 the country hosted an ASEAN Policy Forum on higher education where higher education leaders, policy makers, faculty members and students shared insights, discussed and learned on connectivity, employability, sustainability, digital transformation and intra- and interregional mobility and cooperation. Lao’s universities participate in mobility schemes supported by the European Union with strong impact on institutional capacity, staff development and opportunities for students. Lao PDR continues to strengthen international Quality Assurance mechanisms aligning with regional frameworks, such as the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, to increase transparency and

comparability with the EHEA. Concerning student mobility two national regulations e.g. on credit transfer were recently published. Lao PDR is revising national curriculum standards to improve quality and promote international linkage. Lao PDR is in favour of stronger cooperation between Asia and Europe, especially on QA, digital recognition tools and comparable Qualifications Frameworks. Lao PDR is ready to join more international initiatives and to expand academic partnership and participation in Erasmus+ projects especially in STEM, teacher education, agriculture and employability. The country would like to increase the number of international programmes in foreign languages to attract more foreign students and welcomes opportunities for cooperation and participation in joint programmes. The speaker concluded by saying that the ASEM Education platform is essential for development of HE systems.

◆ Lithuania

Ms. Simona Dzikauskaitė informed that the Benelux-Baltic agreement on automatic diploma recognition signed in 2021 entered into force in 2024. The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and the Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) now mutually and automatically recognise the qualifications of their higher education institutions, and this gives a good example of transnational cooperation simplifying academic mobility. Ireland and Poland have shown interest to join the agreement. Lithuania would like to further engage in discussions on digital recognition tools and micro-credentials and is looking forward to further cooperation with all ASEM countries.

◆ Malta

Mr. Philip Vella informed that Malta is very active in the ASEM Education Process, is co-chairing the ASEM Expert Group 1 on SDGs and Education, is a member of Expert Group 2 on Recognition & Balanced Mobility and hosted the 9th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9) in Malta in January 2024. The country is promoting inclusive, sustainable, and lifelong learning within ASEM and remains active in facilitating Europe-Asia cooperation on education and SDG 4. The national Education Strategy 2024-2030 is built on three pillars: wellbeing, growth & empowerment, equity & inclusion aligned with UN SDG 4 "Quality Education". This framework is guiding Malta's input to ASEM's goals on inclusive and future-ready learning. The National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education is built on seven pillars: Governance, QA/transparency, Internationalisation & Mobility, Attainment/Retention, Relevance of Teaching & Research, Widening Participation & Adult Learning, and Emerging Opportunities. Within ASEM, Malta is supporting exchange of national practices on access, inclusion & teacher education; engaging in lifelong learning and digitalisation discussions within ASEM; and promotes ASEMME9 outcomes and does post-meeting follow-up. Malta's STEM and STEAM Initiatives are the National STEM Community Fund, supporting local, community STEM projects, and the L-STEAM Erasmus+ project (2024–2027), blending arts and science for inclusive learning. Malta is further encouraging innovation and creativity in education and sharing national good practices with ASEM partners. The speaker concluded by confirming Malta's continued engagement in the ASEM Education Process activities, the country's commitment to lifelong learning and digital education priorities and its focus on inclusive and sustainable education pathways.

◆ Malaysia

Ms. Datin Noorazah Omar shared updates on Malaysia's Higher Education Plan 2026-2035 developed through a collaborative process with more than 8000 stakeholders and individuals. The plan focuses on digital transformation, inclusivity, employability, research excellence, and

institutional autonomy and will be launched in 2026. The higher education action plan focusses on internationalisation policy with the commitment to advance global engagement and academic excellence to strengthen Malaysia's position as a premier higher education hub, providing attractive higher education, and fostering cutting-edge research and innovation. Malaysia is further developing its quality framework to create a better Research and Development ecosystem for international students and staff, aligning curricula with contemporary needs. Malaysia has currently 140,000 international students from all over the world, and aims for 250,000 international students in 2030. The Ministry of Higher Education fosters joint research programmes between the universities and organised cooperation events during Malaysia's 2025 ASEAN Chairmanship, like the Ministerial Roundtable, which produced a document on higher education that was adopted at the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur. Last but not least, the speaker informed about Malaysia's Graduate Pass for international students who have successfully completed their studies and who would like to remain in Malaysia and apply for jobs. Malaysia is continuing to invest in inclusive and flexible education pathways broadening access to higher education and has a programme for recognition of prior learning since 2021. Malaysia is open for cooperation with other ASEM countries on these themes.

◆ Thailand

Dr. Luksmon Smansin started by saying that last year's ASEM Education Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) that was held in Bangkok under the theme "Navigating the Digital Age: Lifelong Learning and Future Skills" was a key event discussing the promotion of digital transformation in education, the development of reskilling frameworks and support for flexible learning pathways with other ASEM countries. The speaker listed the following initiatives as examples where Thailand is engaging business and industry in education: the Entrepreneurial Universities Reform (PMU-C led), a partnership with the University of Strathclyde (UK), and the Innovarice Thai Project with Spain's CDTI (2024–2026), which foster innovation ecosystems in universities, joint biotech research on high-value rice, and advanced research skills for young scientists. Concerning Quality Assurance & Recognition, Thailand is preparing for the ratification of the UNESCO Tokyo Convention and the UNESCO Global Convention and reviewed its national mechanism with the goal to promote mobility and trust through transparent, quality-assured education. Thailand continues to foster balanced mobility and research collaboration, e.g. through the Franco-Thai PHC SIAM Mobility Programme with 220+ bilateral projects since 2001 based on two-year joint research mobility, and the Young Talent Fellowship Programme, which are 2-6-months postdoctoral research stays with a focus on AI, Quantum Tech and Sustainable Development. These programmes strengthen institutional excellence, enhance knowledge exchange and deepen academic trust. The speaker concluded by confirming that Thailand continues to be committed to institutional transformation, innovation-driven education, quality assurance and balanced mobility in this connected, innovative, and inclusive Asia-Europe education community.

◆ Viet Nam

Ms. Nguyen Thao Huong started by informing that Viet Nam is aligned with ASEM's action plan and gave some examples for the promotion of mobility and interregional cooperation. 10 universities of Vietnam joint the ASEAN International Mobility for Students programme. Vietnam is well represented in Erasmus+ CBHE projects. The country made primary and lower secondary school education compulsory in the whole country and some cities and provinces of Vietnam made even the upper secondary school compulsory. Vietnam is represented in Jean Monnet higher education projects and promotes and supports interregional workplace learning. The country provides a digital competency

framework for learners since January 2025 and regulations to permit universities transfer 30% of teaching programs to online mode. Clear regulations on credit transfer from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to higher education were introduced, allowing TVET graduates to gain credit exemptions and shorten their overall university study time. The Referencing Report on Vietnam Qualifications Framework to ASEAN qualifications reference framework was endorsed in October 2025 by the AQR Committee. Vietnam provides regulations on distance learning for bachelor's degrees and across the country, there are around 176 programs provided in distance mode. The Ministry encourages universities to build their own MOOCs programs and to join the Asian Association of Open Universities to offer online courses. There are new regulations on opening a new teaching program which ask universities to sign contracts with industries and businesses in the fields they provide learning programs, so that students have a place to practice and universities must invite businesses to assess and revise the new teaching program to ensure they are appropriate for the demand of the labor market.

9. Closing of the 1st meeting day

Ms. Elmira Chengiali thanked everyone for the insightful updates and contributions and invited the participants to join the cultural programme and dinner in the evening at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest.

Wednesday, 19 November 2025

10. Opening of the 2nd meeting day with welcoming words

Ms. Mădălina Matei, Adviser on European Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania welcomed all the participants to the second day of the Senior Officials' Meeting and wished everyone a successful meeting.

Ms. Vera Lucke, Deputy Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat, thanked the hosts for the beautiful evening, which provided an excellent opportunity for participants to network and get to know one another better. She highlighted the engaging cultural programme – including traditional dance, local food and wine, and music – which vividly showcased both the similarities and differences between Asian and European cultures, and reflected the best of their shared spirit and traditions.

11. Updates from the ASEM Expert Groups (EGs)

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

◆ EG1 on Sustainable Development Goals & Education

Expert Group 1 on Sustainable Development Goals and Education, currently co-chaired by Mr. Adam Liwak from Malta, Ms. Duriya Amatavivat from Thailand and Ms. Réka Tózsá from the Asia-Europe Foundation, brings together policy makers, academics, practitioners and international organisations to share knowledge and best practices on SDGs implementation. The group was set up in November 2022 at the ISOM in Malta. The mandate and objectives are to strengthen collaboration in SDGs among Member States, to address issues of Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, and Belonging in education, to support values, skills, and learning related to GCED, to foster dialogue on SDGs in education and to promote peer learning.

The Expert Group had an online meeting in March 2025 with Mr Nyi Nyi Thaung from UNESCO Bangkok as keynote speaker, followed by an online meeting in May 2025 on “Rethinking Educational Equality: From Access to Real Inclusion” and a joint online session together with the Expert Group in Lifelong Learning and TVET in September 2025 on “Lifelong Learning & Upskilling for a Sustainable World”. A hybrid Expert Group meeting will take place on 20 November 2025 in Bucharest on “Reimagining SDGs and Education Post-2030” with high-level keynotes.

An Expert Group meeting on “Global Citizenship Education (GCED) & Civic Engagement in a Changing World” is planned for February 2026, another one on “Digital Transformation and the Future of Learning” possibly together with EG4 on Digitalisation & AI in May 2026 and another meeting is planned to be held before ASEMME10.

The Co-chairs showed a list of current members and invited the missing countries to join the group by writing and e-mail to the ASEM Education Secretariat.

Presentation of item 11 EG1: https://asem-education.org/documentation/11_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Updates_from_EGs_EG1_SDGEducation.pdf

◆ **EG2 on Recognition & 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 25 countries and 9 stakeholders from Asia and Europe. 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 eight online meetings and one in-person meeting in New Delhi, India. It continues to work 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 member 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 ASEM Education Secretariat.** Countries which don't have a country profile yet are encouraged to create one using the “[Guide for contributors](#)”.

The group recently held an online meeting on Balanced Mobility, with contributions from ASEM DUO, ASEM WPP and the Asia-Europe Institute. Another online meeting was held on Automatic Recognition with the presentation of Automatic Recognition tools from Ireland, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Germany and Latvia. The Expert Group is planning to hold the next meeting on Artificial Intelligence and Recognition, possibly together with the Expert Group on Digitalisation & AI. Mr. Guglielmi encouraged the participants to contact him in case they have ideas for speakers or would like to contribute to this planned meeting.

Presentation of item 11 EG2: https://asem-education.org/documentation/11_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Updates_from_EGs_EG2_RecognitionBM.pdf

◆ EG3 on Lifelong Learning & TVET

The update from the Expert Group 3 on Lifelong Learning and TVET was presented by Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama, outgoing Chair of the ASEM LLL Hub (University College Cork, Ireland). The Expert Group is currently composed by 12 countries and 6 stakeholders and is open for new membership and chairmanship. The discussions within this group aim to foster dialogue and promote mutual understanding, transparency and cooperation between Asian and European counterparts through systematic exchange of information and closer cooperation as one of the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process. The group promotes peer learning among Asian and European partners and stakeholders on LLL, including TVET and strengthens collaboration and connectivity by identifying, sharing and promoting good practices and tools in the field of LLL, and TVET between Asia and Europe.

The group had four successful online meetings where updates from members on LLL policy and initiatives were shared. The latest meeting was held together with Expert Group 1 on SDGs & Education on the theme “Learning Cities of the Future: Building Inclusive and Equitable Learning Ecosystems”.

Presentation of item 11 EG3: https://asem-education.org/documentation/11_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Updates_from_EGs_E3_LLL.pdf

◆ EG4 on Digitalisation & Artificial Intelligence

Expert Group 4 on Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is chaired by Mr. David Akrami Flores from Germany. He explained that the group was established in 2019, currently had 53 members and focuses on the main objectives that are firstly to foster dialogue on the potential of digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence 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 and secondly to strengthen collaboration and connectivity by identifying, sharing and promoting good practices of digitally enhanced cooperation. The meetings of this working period follow a peer-learning approach, with topics on e.g. micro-credentials, digitally enhanced learning and teaching and digital transformation and gender imbalance in AI.

In May 2025, the group held a virtual peer learning exercise on “Digital education and the mental wellbeing of students and teachers in Higher Education” and “AI literacy in Higher Education: good practice examples”. A hybrid meeting is planned to be held in December 2025 at the Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia. The experts will also participate in the ASEFINnoLab6 on-site event in the following days.

In mid-September 2025 the Expert Group held its third Public Online Seminar on [“AI Skills: Are Universities Preparing Graduates for Labour Market Needs?”](#) with a keynote from the Asian Development Bank, speakers from Asian and European business and academia and 200 participants from Asia, Europe and other parts of the world. The recordings of this and the previous two online seminars are available on the website.

Mr. Akrami Flores concluded by thanking the ASEM Education Secretariat for its support and reaffirmed Germany’s commitment to continuing its engagement with the group, which facilitates ongoing dialogue between the two regions on digital developments in higher education. He welcomed suggestions for the group’s future work and **encouraged all members to actively participate**.

Presentation of item 11 EG4: https://asem-education.org/documentation/11_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Updates_from_EGs_EG4_Digitalisation-AI.pdf

12. Updates from the ASEM Stakeholders

The ASEM Stakeholders were invited to present their current relevant activities, projects, and initiatives carried out and implemented since the 9th ASEM Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME9, January 2024). Stakeholders were also encouraged to present their future initiatives and ideas for cooperation between Asia and Europe.

Presentation of item 12: https://asem-education.org/documentation/12_ASEM-SOM1_2025_Updates_stakeholders.pdf

◆ Asia-Europe Foundation

Ms. Cleo Cachapero started by explaining that the target groups of ASEF's education projects, based on people-to-people exchange and intellectual exchange are teachers and teacher trainers, policymakers, university and student leaders and young leaders, and listed the current project and initiatives.

The [6th ASEF Young Leaders Summit](#) under the theme "Leadership in Society 5.0" took place from July to October 2025, with a meeting in October in Osaka, Japan, in conjunction with the World Expo bringing together 100 Young Leaders from 50 ASEM Countries. ASEF Young Leaders trainings on "Anticipatory Leadership" are planned for August 2026 in Norway in conjunction with the European Youth Capital and September 2026 in the Philippines under the ASEAN Chairmanship. The participation of 80 Young Leaders from 50 ASEM Countries is expected.

[ASEF's Science & Technology Diplomacy Initiative for Young Leaders](#) held Capacity Building Training online and will hold a Youth Summit in December 2025 in Copenhagen, Denmark, in conjunction with the 2nd European Science Diplomacy Conference. 100 early-career diplomats and science managers from 43 ASEM countries participate. For 2026, online Capacity Building Training is planned and a Youth Summit in late 2026 in Jakarta, Indonesia in conjunction with the World Science Forum. Over 100 early-career diplomats and science managers from 50 ASEM countries are expected to participate.

The [10th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education](#) under the theme "[Un]debated Ways of Rethinking Higher Education", is having a Policy Dialogue on 20-21 November in Bucharest in conjunction with this SOM1 bringing together 20 policymakers, university and student leaders from 15 countries. For 2026 Policy Dialogues under the theme "Generations AHEAD: Inclusive and Sustainable Education in Asia & Europe" are planned to be held online and in late 2026 in conjunction with ASEMME10. The participation of 30 policymakers, university and student leaders is expected.

The [ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory \(ASEFInnoLab\)](#) is in its 6th round and has held meeting weeks on "Universities' Role in Building Skills for an AI Powered Future" in October 2025 in Shanghai, China, in November in Manila, the Philippines and in December, in conjunction with the ASEM EG on Digitalisation & AI in Košice, Slovakia. For 2026, the ASEFInnoLab7 will have the theme "Universities' Role in steering AI for the Common Good". One meeting is planned to be held in China in April 2026 in conjunction with the Shanghai Forum and one in October 2026 in Nottingham, United Kingdom. Within the 7th round, 50 academics and experts will be working on whitepapers.

The [18th ASEF Classroom Network](#) (#ASEFClassNet18) under the theme "Effective, Inclusive and Ethical AI in Education Design" has met with over 100 secondary school teachers from over 40 ASEM countries in October 2025 in Slovenia and is meeting in November 2025 in China. The ASEF NextEd 2026 under the theme "Re-thinking Intelligence: The Future of Teacher Education" is planned for

October 2026 in China in conjunction with the China Education Innovation EXPO and the ASEFCClassNet19 taking place in 2026 under the theme “Future-Ready Teaching: Human Agency in the Age of AI” is planned for October 2026 in Europe in conjunction with the UNESCO IRCAI OE4BW Conference.

The [Education Team of the Asia-Europe Foundation](#) thanks the ASEM partners for their cooperation in all these initiatives and for promoting the calls for participation.

◆ **ASEM-DUO Secretariat**

Prof. Keuk Je Sung explained the progress made by ASEM-DUO, a fellowship programme strengthening balanced people-to-people connectivity between Asia and Europe. ASEM-DUO was proposed by Korea, France and Singapore at ASEM3 in 2000, starting with first exchanges in 2001. At the ASEMME9 in Malta in 2024, the programme was extended for the 6th phase (2026-2030).

The situation of imbalanced mobility between the regions is still a challenge and ASEM DUO tackles this by organising balanced exchange between institutions through pairing with financial assistance. The benefits of the programmes are that it supports only one-to-one paired exchange, ensuring balanced mobility between Asia and Europe and it contributes to building regular, structured, and sustainable exchange programs between Asian and European tertiary institutions through MoUs and institutional cooperation.

Six ASEM countries (Korea, Sweden, Singapore, Belgium/Wallonia, Thailand and CIMEA/Italy) are currently acting as contributors in the ASEM-DUO and the programme has supported close to 5,000 university students and academics by 2025.

Prof. Keuk Je Sung explained how countries can join ASEM-DUO and remains available to give information to interested colleagues. More information can be found on the [presentation](#) and the [website](#).

◆ **Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)**

Prof. Azirah Hashim from the [Asia-Europe Institute \(AEI\)](#) located at Universiti Malaya reported on the AEI-ASEM Summer School 2025 that has taken place in August 2025 under the theme “Environmental and Social Governance (ESG): Towards Sustainable Development in Asia and Europe” with 22 participants from Japan, Indonesia, France, Pakistan and the United Kingdom). The participants explored key dimensions of sustainability, governance, and social equity in relation to international relations in the context of Asian and European studies and were encouraged to do research and get insights into collaborative solutions, bridging policy frameworks, cultural perspectives, and grassroots initiatives. The Summer School had a focus on the nexus between environmental challenges and social governance and inspired the young scholars to contribute meaningfully to global discourses on sustainable development and international relations.

The AEI-ASEM Summer School in July/August 2026 will have the theme “Smart Diplomacy and Sustainable Futures: Artificial Intelligence in Asia-Europe Relations”. This interdisciplinary summer school explores the intersections of artificial intelligence, diplomacy, and sustainable development, emphasizing how technological innovation is transforming governance, cooperation, and global citizenship between Asia and Europe. Participants will engage in lectures, workshops, and a two-day Student Symposium, where they will present preliminary research papers related to AI, diplomacy, or the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the end of her update, Prof. Hashim added information on the two AEI Masters Programmes [Master in ASEAN Studies](#) and [Master in European Studies](#).

◆ **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**

Prof. Daniela Cristina Ghițulică introduced key information on ENQA, which is a membership association of QA agencies with 62 members in 33 countries and 42 affiliates in 26 countries. ENQA is a consultative member to the Bologna Follow-Up Group and represents the interests of its members, in addition to providing services and driving development of external QA and collaboration with other regional networks. ENQA is currently member of four EHEA working groups and continues to strengthen dialogue with the European Commission and other EHEA consultative members. Prof. Ghițulică mentioned some recent publications and explained that ENQA is involved in the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) that will result in the ESG 2027. Public consultations with stakeholders are currently ongoing. Within the [INQAAHE publication on Global Trends in Tertiary Education QA](#), authors from ENQA have contributed to the chapter on Western Europe. ENQA participates in several projects within the EHEA and with other regions, and has a Leadership Development Programme. Participants are welcome to subscribe to [ENQA's newsletter](#) and can find detailed information on the [presentation](#).

◆ **Erasmus Student Network (ESN)**

Mr. Claudiu Ștefan introduced the Erasmus Student Network, which is present in 45 countries, also some in Asia, with 15,000 volunteers, 500+ local sections, more than 1,000 higher education institutions and more than 235,000 international students. The ESN gives guidance and support, promotes mobility opportunities and skills development through volunteering. The ESN provides policy advocacy, especially at national and international level (e.g., publications, work with institutions) and supports the reintegration of international students upon returning to their home country. The ESN's website gives information on countries, student life, grants and supports with bureaucracy, etc. The ESN contributes to building bridges between regions, strengthens collaboration between European and Asian countries through university partnerships and student mobility and enables the circulation of knowledge to address shared challenges. More information on the ESN's publications and work can be found on the [presentation](#) and [website](#).

◆ **European University Association (EUA)**

Ms. Thérèse Zhang gave informed the participants on the [Global Universities Association Forum \(GUAF\)](#), which brings together the following eight associations from different parts of the world: Association of African Universities (AAU), Association of Arab Universities (AArU), China Association of Higher Education (CAHE), European University Association (EUA), Association of Indian Universities (AIU), Latin American & The Caribbean Space for Higher Education (ENLACES), American Council on Education (ACE) & Universities Canada (UC), and the ASEAN University Network (AUN). It was Initiated by the EUA in 2021 because of the growing pressure to respond to issues in a global setting and to enhance links with sister organisations around the globe to work on joint impact-oriented actions under a regional approach. GUAF has rotating annual chairmanship with one annual physical meeting + online meetings of all partners. Physical meetings have taken place in Barcelona in 2022, Bangkok in 2023, Beijing in 2024 and New Delhi in 2025. GUAF is developing dialogue and concrete action on topics of global interest, such as in 2023 Recognition (Joint Statement supporting the Global Convention); in 2024 Digital Transformation (forthcoming comparative report); and in 2025 Artificial Intelligence. In 2025 the GUAF has published a joint report and 8 regional reports on [“Similarities and Differences in the Digital Transformation of Higher Education”](#). While for example the speed and cautiousness of AI integration in education or the role of industry engagement might differ between Asia and Europe, all regions mentioned a need for capacity building, in particular training, access and inclusion. The work in the GUAF network has

shown that learning about each other's organisation and activities is an opportunity to work on specific themes of common interest.

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

Ms. Christelle Mae Agustin explained that SEAMEO RIHED's Director has changed last year and that the strategy has been updated. SEAMEO RIHED aims to advance higher education development that supports Southeast Asia's sustainable growth and development through driving high-impact programmes that strengthen institutional capacity, foster talent, and enhance higher education's socio-economic contributions. The primary objectives are to strengthen enablers (building systems and conditions that enhance quality, accessibility, and resilience in higher education), to advance outcomes (focusing on thematic areas where higher education drives socio-economic development) and to facilitate a policy community (providing platforms and services that enable evidence-based policymaking and foster regional cooperation). SEAMEO RIHED focuses on Higher Education Policy (facilitating regional policy), Leadership (strengthening institutional and leadership capacity), Regional Harmonisation (mobility, quality assurance and recognition) and Learning & Knowledge Exchange (promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange) by strengthening strategic alliances, prioritising high-impact programmes and by strengthening connectivity. Key enablers for a harmonised Common Space in Higher Education / SEA Higher Education Area are Mobility ([SEAMEO RIHED's Asian International Mobility for Students \(AIMS\) Programme](#)), Quality ([IQAdvance: AUN-QA Internal Quality Assurance Management Training](#)), Recognition ([AUN-QEx: Strengthening Qualifications Frameworks and Management](#)), Lifelong Learning (Inter-centre collaboration) and Digitalisation (Inter-agency partnerships to the ASEAN region and East Asia (China and South Korea)). All these initiatives are contributing the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education and further information on SEAMEO RIHED's work can be found on the [website](#).

13. ASEM Education Process and way to the ASEMME10

Ms. Vera Lucke, Deputy Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat presented the drafting process for the Stocktaking Report 2024-2026 and the ASEMME10 Chair's Conclusions together with the next steps towards the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting and the 10th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME10), planned to be held in late 2026 in the Philippines.

Presentation of item 13: https://asem-education.org/documentation/13_ASEM-SOM1_2025_AEP_Way_to_ASEMME10.pdf

◆ **Drafting Process of the Stocktaking Report**

The Stocktaking Report "From Valletta to Palawan 2024-2026" is the main background document for the 10th ASEM Education Ministerial Meeting (ASEMME10) and will be prepared by the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES). The Stocktaking Report 2026 will collect the outcomes, projects, initiatives and progress of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) between ASEMME9, Valletta, Malta 2024, and ASEMME10, Palawan, Philippines 2026. It is the result of a process of writing by AES and reviewing by the ASEM partners and stakeholders, and the main instrument for monitoring the implementation of the ASEM Education Strategy. Senior Officials, partners and stakeholders are expected to actively contribute to this report by providing regular updates on their on-going activities to the AES. The following proposed draft basic structure was agreed with the participants of SOM1:

1. Background

2. ASEM Education Secretariat and Expert Groups
3. Ongoing and Future ASEM Education Initiatives and Projects
 - ASEM Partners
 - ASEM Stakeholders
 - International Projects
4. Conclusions and Outlook

Concerning the schedule for the drafting process, the structure and template will be ready right after this SOM1 and will be sent to all ASEM partners and stakeholders in February 2026. Information by the ASEM partners and stakeholders will be collected between February and June. The first draft of the Stocktaking Report should be ready by 15 June with the possibility for feedback and integrations by 31 August. The second draft will be sent out by 15 September and feedback will be received until one month before ASEMME10. The Final Stocktaking Report will be ready two weeks prior to ASEMME10 and will be presented at SOM2 and ASEMME10 in November 2026. The SOM1 participants agreed with the general structure and the proposed schedule.

◆ **First ideas for the Chair's Conclusions**

The Chair's Conclusions 2026 are the main outcomes document of the ASEMME10 that will be adopted by the Ministers during the Ministerial Conference. It acknowledges and appreciates initiatives and activities of the cycle since ASEMME9 and underlines important themes and topics for Asia-Europe cooperation. The Ministers give appreciation for projects, initiatives and activities planned for the coming 2 years until the next ASEMME. Input and feedback are needed from all project or initiative coordinators and the first draft will start after SOM1. The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) drafts the Chair's Conclusions in close collaboration with the host of the ASEMME10 (Philippines), based on the countries' and stakeholders' feedback submitted during the drafting process of the Stocktaking Report, the discussions held during the ISOM and SOM1 in preparation of the ASEMME, and new activities and initiatives proposed by members. In conclusion, the ASEMME10 Chair's Conclusions 2026 are the result of a collaborative drafting process between the AES, the ASEMME10 host and the ASEM partners and stakeholders who review the drafts.

Concerning the schedule for the drafting process, the first draft of the Chair's Conclusions will be sent to the ASEM partners and stakeholders by 15 June, while the first round of feedback will have the deadline of 30 August. The second draft will be sent by 15 September to which feedback can be sent by 30 September. The third draft will be sent on 15 October, with possible feedback by 31 October. The last Draft Chair's Conclusions will be discussed at the SOM2, with hopefully only minor changes for the adoption the day after at the ASEMME10. The SOM1 participants agreed with this schedule.

The SOM1 participants quickly discussed topics to not be missed in the Chair's Conclusions, such as Micro-credentials, enhanced balanced mobility, digitalisation, influence of Artificial Intelligence on education, how the two regions can be influential on global decision making processes in this rapidly changing world, further progress concerning recognition of qualifications with less bureaucracy, and how multilateral processes are affecting lifelong learning. The visibility of the ASEM Education Process should be further enforced, and cooperation with other processes should be strengthened.

◆ **Next steps towards the ASEMME10**

The four ASEM Expert Groups continue to meet regularly and to work on their specific themes. **Countries are still welcome to nominate experts for these groups** by sending an e-mail to the ASEM Education Secretariat.

ASEM partners are encouraged to organise webinars, conferences and meetings raising awareness of the ASEM Education Process. The ASEM Education Secretariat can support the organisation and dissemination.

During 2026 all the ASEM partners and stakeholders will be asked for their contributions to the Stocktaking Report, the Chair's Conclusions and the Palawan Declaration.

At the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) planned to take place on 24 November 2026 in Palawan, the Philippines (1 day before ASEMME10) the Stocktaking Report "From Valletta to Palawan 2024-2026" will be presented, the last discussions on the draft Chair's Conclusions and Palawan Declaration will take place and the ASEM Partners and Stakeholders will give the latest updates on their activities.

The 10th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME 10) will take place on 25-26 November in Palawan, the Philippines, under the theme "Sustainability and Solidarity: Navigating Our Future Together through Asia-Europe Higher Education Cooperation". This Ministerial Meeting will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Republic of the Philippines, there will be a Ministers' Roundtable (short speech of every Minister) on one of the proposed topics (Blue Economy and Green and Digital Transitions / Lifelong Learning and Inclusion / Mobility and Recognition), there will be a presentation and the adoption of the ASEMME 10 Chair's Conclusions and the Palawan Declaration. Further cultural activities are planned for Monday and Friday before and after the Conference.

The save-the-date for SOM2 and ASEMME10 taking place in the Philippines in late 2026 will be sent out as soon as possible. Also, the invitations will be sent out via diplomatic channels as soon as this is possible.

14. Any Other Business (AOB)

The Call to host the next ASEM Education Secretariat for the four-years period after the end of the Italian mandate will be sent out to all Asian ASEM partner countries in early 2026, in line with the customary rotation principle. Italy remains available to cover any transitory period.

Italy proposed an idea for an exchange programme based on discussions that have taken place at previous Senior Officials' Meetings and ASEM Education activities. The peer-to-peer support programme "ASEMConnect" could bring Asia and Europe together for dialogue on education policy and practice. Ministries of (Higher) Education, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Recognition Centres, Quality Assurance Agencies, Higher Education Research Centres and other stakeholders working in education could be encouraged to participate, learn from each other and have dialogue on policy and good practices. Topics for dialogue would include the priorities of the ASEM Education Process (Quality Assurance and Recognition, Engaging Business and Industry in Education Balanced Mobility, Lifelong Learning including TVET) and the Transversal Themes (Digitalisation and Sustainable Development). Study visits and staff mobility could be organised between ASEM countries, and during the visits, the hosting and visiting participants could share expertise and discuss (higher) education policy and implementation practices. National stakeholders working in education could be involved in the visits. The ASEMConnect Secretariat (CIMEA, Italy) could help with the matchmaking on the basis of a questionnaire on which countries declare their strength and fields in which they would like to learn from other countries (e.g. Lifelong Learning Policy, implementation of SDGs, enhanced academic recognition, Quality Assurance, academic and research disciplines, etc.). The participants commented that in general this peer-to-peer learning proposal is a good idea and that exchange between Asia and Europe should be strengthened, but the funding for the study visits and mobility should be clearer to be a sustainable initiative. Others commented that those kinds of exchanges are already taking place between countries, mainly

organised by Ministries of Foreign Affairs and doubling efforts could be difficult. SEAMEO RIHED is having a similar programme and is currently organising a visit between Australia and Japan with university executives and Ministry representative. The initiatives could synergise. Italy thanked for the comments, which will be taken into consideration and is going to work on a more detailed proposal that will be sent via e-mail.

15. Closing Remarks

Ms. Vera Lucke (AES) thanked the participants for coming to this meeting and for being so active in contributing and networking. She thanked the Romanian hosts, all the staff involved from the Ministry of Education and Research and the Erasmus+ National Agency for their amazing job in hosting this important event on the way to the next Ministerial Conference and for letting the participants feel Romanian culture and hospitality.

Ms. Mădălina Matei and Ms. Elmira Chengiali thanked everybody for their active participation, constructive contributions, and commitment to strengthening cooperation between Asia and Europe and closed the meeting.

Minutes drafted by the ASEM Education Secretariat

Last update 06/02/2026

Participants List

#	ASEM Partner	First Name	Last Name	Ministry or Organisation
1	Belgium	Marie-Anne	Persoons	Flemish Department of Education and Training
2	Brunei Darussalam	Muhammad Sufi	Hasmi	Ministry of Education
3	Brunei Darussalam	Haji Mohd Fadzillah	Haji Abdullah	Ministry of Education
4	Cambodia	Chankoulika	Bo	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
5	Cambodia	Phearoun	Phel	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
6	Cyprus	Yiannis	Kasoulides	Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
7	European Commission	Bogdan	Barla	European Commission Representation in Romania
8	France	David	Itier	Ministry for Research and Higher Education
9	Germany	Rainer	Gruhlich	Hessen State Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Arts and Culture
10	Germany	David	Akrami Flores	German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
11	Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni	Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports
12	India	Sitesh	Kumar	Embassy of India, Bucharest
13	Indonesia	Togar Mangihut	Simatupang	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology
14	Indonesia	Zulfiyah	Pramudyandari	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology
15	Indonesia	Rizki	Zakiyah	Indonesian Embassy in Bucharest
16	Indonesia	Saras Setya	Wijayanti	Indonesian Embassy in Bucharest
17	Italy	Giannandrea	Guglielmi	CIMEA-NARIC Italia

#	ASEM Partner	First Name	Last Name	Ministry or Organisation
18	Italy	Elisa	Petrucci	CIMEA-NARIC Italia
19	Japan	Ichiro	Takahashi	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
20	Kazakhstan	Alibek	Madibekov	Higher Education National Development Center
21	Lao PDR	Nilinthone	Sacklokham	Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports
22	Latvia	Anita	Vahere-Abražune	Ministry of Education and Science
23	Lithuania	Simona	Dzikauskaitė	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
24	Lithuania	Diana	Saruolienė	Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education
25	Malaysia	Dato' Dr. Haji Megat Sany	Megat Ahmad Supian	Ministry of Higher Education
26	Malaysia	Datin Noorazah	Omar	Ministry of Higher Education
27	Malaysia	Akmal	Fahmi	Ministry of Higher Education
28	Malaysia	M. Iqbal	Saripan	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
29	Malaysia	Muhammad Hasfarizal	Kamaludin	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
30	Malaysia	Hooi Shin	Lim	Embassy of Malaysia, Romania
31	Malta	Philip	Vella	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
32	Malta	Etienne Berenger	Bourgeois	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
33	Philippines	Michelle	Ong	Commission on Higher Education
34	Philippines	Jesusa Rocel	Estanislao	Commission on Higher Education
35	Poland	Małgorzata	Piątek	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
36	Romania	Elmira	Chengiali	Ministry of Education and Research
37	Romania	Mădălina	Matei	Ministry of Education and Research
38	Romania	Cristina Liana	Olteanu	Ministry of Education and Research
39	Romania	Irina	Vlangu	Ministry of Education and Research
40	Romania	Ioana Alexandra	Toabesi	Ministry of Education and Research
41	Romania	Cristina	Brânzoi Tanik	Ministry of Education and Research
42	Romania	Antonela	Toma	Ministry of Education and Research
43	Romania	Daniel	Tomoni	Ministry of Education and Research
44	Romania	Cosma	Cătălin	Ministry of Education and Research
45	Romania	Sorin	Decă	Ministry of Education and Research
46	Romania	Luminița	Matei	Ministry of Education and Research
47	Romania	Adrian	Georgescu	Romanian ERASMUS+ National Agency

#	ASEM Partner	First Name	Last Name	Ministry or Organisation
48	Romania	Nicoleta	Popa	Romanian ERASMUS+ National Agency
49	Romania	Nicușor	Ciobanu	Romanian ERASMUS+ National Agency
50	Romania	Vladimir	Tanasiev	National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest
51	Switzerland	Marco	Scruzzi	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI
52	Thailand	Duriya	Amatavivat	Ministry of Education
53	Thailand	Siriporn	Wiriyaokradecha	Ministry of Education
54	Thailand	Luksmon	Smansin	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
55	Thailand	Nongnuch	Chunbandhit	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
56	Viet Nam	Nguyen	Thao Huong	Ministry of Education and Training
57	ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)	Luca	Lantero	CIMEA-NARIC Italia
58	ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)	Vera	Lucke	CIMEA-NARIC Italia

#	Stakeholder	First Name	Last Name	Organisation
59	ASEM-DUO	Keuk Je	Sung	ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme Secretariat
60	ASEM-DUO	Seulki	Lee	ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme Secretariat
61	ASEF	Cleo	Cachapero	Asia-Europe Foundation
62	AEI	Azirah	Hashim	Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya
63	AEI	Kevin	Fernandez	Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya
64	ASEM LLL Hub (outgoing)	Séamus	Ó Tuama	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & University College Cork, Ireland
65	ASEM LLL Hub (incoming)	Wilert	Puriwat	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
66	ASEM LLL Hub (incoming)	Palanee	Ammaranond	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
67	ASEM LLL Hub (incoming)	Jaitip	Na-songkhla	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
68	ASEM LLL Hub (incoming)	Siridej	Sujiva	ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub & Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
69	EHEA Secretariat	Horia Serban	Onița	EHEA Secretariat (Romania)
70	ENQA	Daniela Cristina	Ghițulică	ARACIS
71	ESN	Claudiu	Ștefan	Erasmus Student Network (Romania)
72	ESN	Szidonia	Schneider	Erasmus Student Network (Romania)

#	Stakeholder	First Name	Last Name	Organisation
73	EUA	Thérèse Kai Ying	Zhang	European University Association
74	SEAMEO RIHED	Christelle Mae	Agustin	SEAMEO RIHED