

ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM)

2nd Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2)

preparing the 9th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9)

“Leaving no one behind”

Location: Grand Hotel Excelsior, Great Siege Road, Floriana FRN 1810, Malta

Date: 24 January 2024

Draft Minutes

#	Delegation	First Name	Last Name
1	Austria	Reinhard	Nöbauer
2	Bangladesh	Md. Rais Hasan	Sarower
3	Belgium – Flemish Community	Saskia	Elst
4	Belgium – French Community	Caroline	Hollela
5	Cambodia	Bunlay	Nith
6	Cambodia	Chankoulika	Bo
7	Finland	Jonna	Korhonen
8	France	Manuel	Bouard
9	Germany	Rainer	Grulich
10	Germany	David	Akrami Flores
11	Germany	Stefan	Schneider
12	Indonesia	Nizam	Nizam
13	Indonesia	Sri Suning	Kusumawardani
14	Indonesia	Ardi	Marwan
15	Indonesia	Cecep	Somantri
16	Ireland	John	Murphy
17	Italy	Chiara	Finocchietti
18	Japan	Toshiaki	Mizuno
19	Kazakhstan	Talgat	Yeshenkulov
20	Kazakhstan	Asset	Darimbek
21	Latvia	Anita	Vahere-Abražune
22	Lithuania	Jurga	Strumskienė
23	Lithuania	Simona	Dzikauskaitė
24	Malaysia	Mohammad Shatar	Sabran
25	Malaysia	Noorazah	Omar
26	Malaysia	Khairul Salleh	Mohamed Sahari
27	Malta	Rose Anne	Cuschieri
28	Malta	Natasha	Buhagiar
29	Malta	Sergio	Carbonaro
30	Malta	Jana	Kazarjan
31	Malta	Hannah	Cassar

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32	Malta	Jessica	Sammut
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34	Malta	Pierre	Barbara
35	Netherlands	Gonneke	de Ridder
36	Romania	Madalina	Matei
37	Singapore	Siew Lee	Lim
38	Switzerland	Marco	Scruzzi
39	Thailand	Hongfah	Veeranopparat
40	Thailand	Pasit	Lorterapong
41	Thailand	Pornsith	Pibulnakarintr
42	Thailand	Nongnuch	Chunbandhit
43	ASEF	Reka	Tozsa
44	ASEF	Cleo Angeline	Cachapero
45	ASEF	Toru	Morikawa
46	ASEM-DUO Secretariat	Keuk Je	Sung
47	ASEM-DUO Secretariat	Ahra	Lee
48	ASEM-DUO Secretariat	Seulki	Lee
49	ASEM LLL Hub	Séamus	Ó Tuama
50	ASEM LLL Hub	Rhiannon	Carey Bates
51	Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)	Azirah	Hashim
52	European Students' Union (ESU)	Arno	Schrooyen
53	EQAR	Magalie	Soenen
54	SEAMEO RIHED	Romyen	Kosaikanont
55	UNESCO-UNEVOC	Kenny	Muscat
56	ASEM EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility (Italy, Co-chair)	Marina	Malgina
57	ASEM Education Secretariat	Luca	Lantero
58	ASEM Education Secretariat	Vera	Lucke
59	ASEM Education Secretariat	Sibeles	Chiari
60	ASEM Education Secretariat	Teresa	Morales de la Fuente
61	ASEM Education Secretariat	Letizia	Brambilla Pisoni

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Welcome by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)

Dr. Rose Anne Cuschieri, Chief Executive Officer at MFHEA, warmly greeted all participants emphasizing the significance of fostering collaboration between Asia and Europe. She highlighted the immense opportunity for the younger generation to cultivate essential skills for navigating the increasingly interconnected global landscape when united. Higher education institutions, according to Dr. Cuschieri, play a pivotal role in shaping the future of society and the economy, preparing students with the skills necessary in an ever-evolving world. Underscoring the importance of sharing knowledge in the rapidly advancing technological environment, she placed a strong emphasis on fostering a culture of innovation at the core of every society. In conclusion, Dr. Cuschieri emphasized the imperative to collaborate and work collectively to create a world where education and sustainability seamlessly coexist.

1.2 Welcome by the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)

Mr. Luca Lantero, the Head of the Italian AES, expressed gratitude to Malta for hosting the meeting and highlighted the significance of such events in fostering international cooperation in education. He emphasized the importance of the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting in preparation for the Ministerial Conference and reiterated the supportive role of the ASEM Education Secretariat in facilitating both, multilateral and bilateral dialogues. Encouraging active engagement, he urged partners and stakeholders to participate actively by expressing their views whenever they wish. He underscored that the ASEM Education Process can only progress through the active and inclusive involvement of attendees.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification.

Attachment:

[SOM2_Malta_Agenda.pdf](#)

3. Adoption of the minutes from the SOM1 2023

The minutes were adopted without modification.

Attachment:

[ASEM_SOM1_Minutes.pdf](#)

4. Presentation of the Stocktaking Report from Bangkok to Valletta

Ms. Vera Lucke from the ASEM Education Secretariat presented the Stocktaking Report 2024. After providing a brief overview of the report's characteristics and historical significance within the ASEM Education Process, she outlined the structure of the Stocktaking Report 2022-2024 and updated the participants on the Secretariat's activities since Italy assumed the mandate, including online meetings with the Standing Working Group, meetings with key stakeholders, and dialogues with the European Higher Education Area. The Secretariat is fostering communication on ASEM Education activities and encouraged the participants to follow the social media profiles and to contribute to the Compendium on the website and to the update of other pages. Finally, she highlighted the four main conclusions to the attendees. She underscored the significance of input and active participation from countries and stakeholders in the drafting process of the Stocktaking Report, expressing gratitude to all contributors for their valuable contributions to this version. All countries and stakeholders were asked to frequently report on their activities and let the ASEM Education Secretariat know when there is news that could be relevant for the community.

Attachments:

[STOCKTAKING REPORT 2024.pdf](#)

[SOM2 Stocktaking Report presentation 2024.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

5. Updates from the ASEM Expert Groups (EGs)

5.1 EG1 on Sustainable Development Goals and Education

Mr. Adam Liwak, the Maltese Co-chair of this group, provided updates from the Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals and Education (EG1). Initially, he offered an overview of the background, highlighting the purposes and intended outcomes specified in the Terms of Reference. Subsequently, he summarized the discussions held during the first and second online meetings on 20 February 2023, and 28 March 2023, respectively. Emphasizing the significance of fostering dialogue on SDGs in education, promoting peer learning, and strengthening collaboration in SDGs, Mr. Liwak emphasized the identification, sharing, and promotion of best practices at national, regional, and interregional levels. Drawing from the input provided in the templates, the Expert Group aims to identify common areas for potential collaboration or coordination to expedite the achievement of the SDGs and address any gaps or shortcomings. Mr. Adam Liwak delineated the EG1's role in contributing to the outcome documents of the 9th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9) to advance the implementation of the SDGs in Asia and Europe, fostering further integration of the SDGs into education systems. He expressed gratitude to Co-chair Ms. Duriya Amatavivat (Thailand) who could unfortunately not be present and to all the group members.

5.2 EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility

After expressing gratitude to her Co-chair, Dr. Pankaj Mittal (India), Ms. Marina Malgina (Italy) provided a brief update on the progress achieved by the group since its kick-off meeting in February 2023. With 22 countries and 8 stakeholders as members, the diversity poses a challenge that necessitates the establishment of a common vocabulary. Noting the differing directions in the field of recognition, she highlighted the opportunity to undertake activities with relevance for both, stakeholders and countries, within this Expert Group. Reviewing the group's objectives, Ms. Malgina informed about the activities conducted since its inception, including five online meetings and one in-person meeting in New Delhi, India. The establishment of a pool of experts focusing on recognition within the ASEM context, along with peer learning activities and the sharing of good practices, are on the agenda. Regarding the ASEM Compendium, she reported on the group's efforts to build on past work by updating guidelines for contributors, templates, and the webpage. Expressing satisfaction with the considerable number of updated profiles, she encouraged participants to check if their countries' information is accurate on the ASEM Compendium, available online on the ASEM Education website, and to notify the ASEM Education Secretariat if corrections are needed. In conclusion, Ms. Malgina thanked all the members and expressed her enthusiasm to continue the work that will lead to the ASEMME10 in 2026.

5.3 EG3 on Lifelong Learning and TVET

Mr. Séamus Ó Tuama (ASEM LLL Hub), Chair of the Expert Group on Lifelong Learning and TVET, briefed attendees on the activities of this group since its kick-off meeting in February 2023. The group convened on 15 September 2023, during which members agreed on the terms of references, on the identification of best practice of Lifelong Learning and TVET in their regions and on the proposal to collate information and create a forum to share information. Efforts are underway to augment membership in the upcoming months. There is a steadfast commitment within the group to facilitate peer learning among Asian and European partners and stakeholders, specifically focusing on lifelong learning, including TVET. A current initiative involves the group's examination of exemplary

practices in lifelong learning and TVET within their respective regions, with plans to compile this information for sharing on a dedicated platform. On 27 September 2023, Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama hosted a webinar titled 'Five Capitals of Learning,' which centred on the role of TVET in cultivating human, social, natural, economic, and cultural capitals, featuring case studies from around the world. Scheduled for 2024 are four online meetings, supplemented by the aspiration for an in-person meeting in Cork in May. The group envisions hosting four webinars each quarter in 2024. The next webinar, led by Dr. Usha Titus, will delve into the "A Model of Best Practice: Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP), State of Kerala, India." Following that, Dr. Ai Songheang will lead a webinar on "Skills and Technical Education Challenges in Southeast Asia," with Dr. Geraldine Carroll as the respondent.

5.4 EG4 on Digitalisation

Considering that digitalisation is a transversal theme of the ASEM Education Process, Mr. David Akrami Flores (Germany) remarked how much digitalisation creates opportunities to support connectivity and collaboration between Asia and Europe. This Expert Group was established in 2019, and since then it has been coordinated by Germany. Nowadays it consists of 41 members. He drew attention to the objectives of this group by stressing the dialogue on the potential of digitalisation in (higher) education with specific regard to the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process as well as the Sustainable Development Goals through peer-learning activities, as well as the need to strengthen the collaboration and connectivity by identifying, sharing and promoting good practices of digitally enhanced cooperation. He also emphasized the group's role as a platform for dialogue and exchange on digital transformation in the ASEM Education Process, ensuring that the dialogue between the two regions addresses current and future innovations and transformations in education. Then, he outlined that meetings of the current working period follow a peer-learning approach with topics on micro-credentials; digitally enhanced learning and teaching; and the impact of Artificial Intelligence on learning and teaching. Moreover, he briefed participants on the Public Online Seminar on "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Learning and Teaching" that took place in November 2023 featuring insights from Higher Education Institutions, student bodies, and business representatives. The event gathered participation from over 170 individuals from 32 countries. The key takeaways from the seminar encompassed several aspects. Firstly, discussions highlighted the opportunities presented by AI, such as improved accessibility to information, the encouragement of independent learning patterns, and increased effectiveness and efficiency in educational processes. Conversely, the seminar also underscored the risks and challenges associated with AI in education. These concerns included the potential for bias in the data and models that fuel AI systems, the risk of misconduct, intricate ethical considerations, and the crucial need to ensure that individuals possess sufficient competencies to navigate the complexities of AI applications in an educational context. Looking ahead, the seminar emphasized the future needs for a successful interplay of AI and education. This involves addressing the identified opportunities, mitigating risks, and ensuring that ethical considerations and the necessary competencies for managing AI in education are adequately addressed and developed.

Mr. Luca Lantero reminded participants of the opportunity to join these groups, emphasizing that membership remains open and will continue to be so for those interested in participating in the Expert Groups' initiatives.

Attachment:

[ITEM5_ASEM_SOM2_Updates_ASEM_EGs.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

6. Updates from ASEM partners and stakeholders on ongoing and future activities and initiatives

ASEM partners and stakeholders were invited to quickly present relevant projects, initiatives and activities.

1. **Austria** proposed the idea of an ASEM study visit program to stimulate the dialogue between Asia and Europe on certain topics of interest. The concept involves countries, such as Austria, inviting 2 to 3 nations from Asia, along with 1 to 2 experts, to visit and engage in discussions. The suggestion would be to start focusing on vocational education and training at the upper secondary level. Each participating country could share insights into their respective systems, fostering an exchange of experiences. Additionally, visits to schools, training institutions might be arranged by engaging with stakeholders, ministries, and social partners. Ideally, this could lay the ground for future collaborations. The program should target experts and administrators, primarily from ministries influencing the training system. Austria could host the inaugural event, possibly in the second half of this year. However, the concept remains flexible, allowing any country, university, or economic chamber to host a study visit. A catalogue of offerings or selective invitation of experts based on interest could be also compiled. Regarding funding, the basic idea would be for countries and experts to cover their travel and accommodation expenses. Austria may extend financial assistance to the least developed countries. It is a preliminary concept, open to debate on financing and participation and this initiative aims to stimulate dialogue, and the study visits could potentially pave the way for extended cooperation among the institutions, schools, and training centres involved. The Austrian proposal was well received by the participants and Mr. Luca Lantero proposed the following steps: Austria submits a written proposal which will be distributed by the Secretariat to the ASEM countries asking for input and feedback. Countries will be encouraged to suggest topics and involve relevant institutions and organizations as hosts. Funding for these initiatives will be a crucial aspect to discuss. One idea could be to schedule the study visits to coincide with other events where countries are already participating, turning them into side events or incorporating them into existing travel plans. As the four Expert Groups are also planning to have peer learning, the Secretariat will communicate with the Co-chairs to make sure that initiatives are not doubled and synergies can be found.
2. **Ireland** reported on the recent launch of Ireland's new international Talent and Innovation Strategy "[Global Citizens 2030](#)". It aims to embed excellence in talent and innovation globally. It is based on 6 pillars and encompasses tertiary education, research, and innovation, building on Ireland's past achievements. Two work programmes will guide implementation of the strategy. The strategy document contains the first work programme, which will last until 2026. The strategy aims at positioning Ireland as a premier destination for international talent and a thought leader in education, research, innovation, and science policy. Minister Simon Harris T.D. officially launched the strategy on 15 January 2024.
3. **Italy** reported on the project [MicroCASA](#) that focuses on micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability in Southeast Asian Universities. Its main goals include sharing European experiences and building capacities in Southeast Asia for developing, promoting, and delivering short competence-oriented educational units leading to micro-credentials. The project engages eleven partners, including Higher Education Institutions in Europe and Southeast Asia, as well as experts in qualification recognition and international project implementation in research and education. The completed, ongoing, and upcoming activities were reported. The participants were also informed about [ARDI](#) which is an automatic recognition database. ARDI catalogues more than academic and upper secondary school qualifications from 55 countries under the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Its main aim is to offer a comparative assessment of these qualifications against Italian. The project includes

specific evaluation notes for each qualification, facilitating academic recognition by higher education institutions. ARDI serves as a valuable tool for those involved in recognizing foreign qualifications in Italy, providing a systematic approach to evaluating and comparing qualifications from various countries.

4. **Malaysia** quoted the government's vision to establish the country as a world-class higher education hub. In this regard, the Ministry of Higher Education is actively working towards making Malaysia a premier destination for further studies. This endeavour is being realized through the introduction of the Malaysian mobility program, an educational tourism initiative. Termed as "editor tourism", it involves individuals visiting Malaysia with a primary focus on engaging in educational and learning experiences within the higher education institutions. The primary objectives of this program are to bolster the enrolment of international students and position Malaysian's higher education institutions as integral components of Malaysia's tourism landscape. An invitation to actively participate in the Malaysian editor tourism program was extended to all Asian partners, starting from the year 2024 onwards. The ASEM community can foster greater collaboration in the realm of education and contribute to Malaysia's standing as a global educational destination.
5. **Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)** presented the AEI-ASEM Summer School as an ongoing initiative aimed at fostering balanced mobility among students, researchers, and academics between Asia and Europe. Stemming from a decision at ASEMME4 in May 2013, Kuala Lumpur, the program prioritizes interdisciplinary learning, intercultural exchanges, and cultural immersion. It integrates lecture modules with various activities and field trips, offering practical experiences. The curriculum, featuring speakers from academia and practitioners, ensures a holistic approach to the selected theme each year. Highlights and feedback on the AEI-ASEM Summers school 2023 were shared and the key theme of the next edition 2024 "Global Citizenship" was announced: embracing diversity and fostering sustainability. Moreover, the AEI reported on the Asia-Europe Programs by focusing on the Ambassador Lecture Series 2023 for which distinguished foreign Ambassadors in Malaysia were invited to facilitate a dynamic exchange of ideas, fostering a deeper understanding of diverse diplomatic approaches on topics ranged from geopolitical challenges to cultural diplomacy. Finally, the attention was drawn to the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism Universiti Malaya (CARUM) that seeks to strategically build networks and partnerships and advance collaborations with researchers on the topic of ASEAN Regionalism within ASEAN and other regions.
6. **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** recalled its educational mission that involves intellectual exchange for understanding and learning best practices, as well as people-to-people exchange for fostering collaborations and networks. Updates on four projects were shared, providing information on the 5th ASEF Young Leaders Summit, Leadership in Society 5.0, the 9th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education "Asia-Europe Higher Education Mapping: Working Towards the SDGs," the 3rd and 4th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory "Universities' Role in AI Innovation Ecosystems," and the 16th ASEF Classroom Network "Leading Change: Digital Transformation of Education in the Era of AI." The ASEF Education Impact since ASEMME8 was presented, comprising over 20 hybrid and interdisciplinary activities aimed at boosting ASEM Education connectivity. Around 19,000 individuals engaged directly or indirectly, including the audience. Significant outcomes from these initiatives include: 94% of participants gained improved insights into intercultural communication and collaboration; 77% of participants have maintained contact with each other even after 2 years; and 37% of ASEFEdu alumni from education projects established new collaborations. Finally, the upcoming projects 2024 were announced, regarding the ASEFYLS Young Leaders Capacity Building Programmes, the Asia-Europe Science and

Technology Diplomacy Initiatives for Young Leaders, the 10th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education, the 5th ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory and the 17th ASEF Classroom Network.

7. **ASEM-DUO Secretariat** introduced the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme as an initiative designed for university students, teachers and professors' exchange in a balanced manner between Asia and Europe in ASEM countries participating. Initiated in 2000, the program focuses on fostering well-balanced exchanges of students, teachers, and professors between these two regions. ASEM-DUO aligns with the broader ASEM goals of promoting people-to-people connectivity, a commitment endorsed at the highest political level by all ASEM partners. The program is particularly attractive to small and medium-sized members, and the pairing system helps them attract more participants in a balanced manner. However, the imbalance in the contribution to ASEM-DUO was outlined, with 76% of the total contributions coming from Asian members since 2008. It was stressed that, addressing this disparity requires a more substantial contribution from European partners, emphasizing the need for increased involvement to rectify the current imbalance. The key to sustaining international programs like ASEM-DUO lies in attracting more contributing members, underscoring the critical role they play in ensuring the program's continuation. In this regard, several Asian and European members have expressed interest in joining as contributing members in recent years, recognizing the program's effectiveness.
8. **ASEM LLL HUB** focused on expansion of engagement in 2023. Key achievements include establishing a new research network RN7 on Non-Formal, Informal Learning & Civil Society that addresses the following cross-cutting issues: Education and learning for girls and women; AI and Super Intelligence and Climate Challenges. Other important achievements were the increase in membership across all networks, the resumption of in-person seminars, workshops, and conferences, and the continuation of the Chair's mission in Southeast and South Asia. The Chair's Mission to Southeast Asia consisted of strengthening links with SEAMEO on micro-credentials in LLL, Learning cities, LLL and community development and LLL in Technical Education. Moreover, the Chair's Mission to Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and Nepal were presented. General information about the ASEM LLL Hub was provided, such as the fact that the Hub has 227 members, of which 57% are from Europe and 36% are from Asia for a total of 44 countries, and members have published more than 100 publications, involving 138 universities and institutions. Moreover, the keynote speakers of the next Global LLL Week to be held on 27-31 May 2024 in Cork were announced, and the 4 panels of this conference were explained.
9. **UNESCO-UNEVOC** presented Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BUILT) as a peer learning platform for TVET providers in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe. The BUILT focus areas are entrepreneurship, greening, digitalization, migration and new qualifications and competencies. Moreover, UNESCO launched the Medium-Term Strategy 2024–2026, in alignment with the UNESCO Strategy for TVET. The BILT Project encompasses various initiatives, both in Europe and Africa. An Expert Group will be established with a specific focus on building and construction, emphasizing greening, digitalization, and migration and a dedicated webinar series on clean energy topics will be launched. The strategy foresees the implementation of Learning Labs, exploring Innovative and Learning Practices.
10. **SEAMEO RIHED** recalled two main projects included in the Stocktaking Report 2024. The first is a project called "Strengthening Leadership with Gender, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (GEDI) in Higher Education Institutions in Southeast Asia" (2022 – 2025) that is coordinated by the British Council and SEAMEO RIHED collaborates with 35 universities from 11 countries of the Southeast Asian Region and 5 universities from the United Kingdom

since 2022 to enhance GEDI in institutional management of universities, to provide more inclusive learning experiences, as well as to create a sustainable university network on GEDI. The second project is called “Horizon Southeast Asia: Pushing the Frontiers of Research and Sustainability” (2022-2025) and aims to support sustainable research ecosystems in higher education institutions in the Greater Mekong Subregion and Timor-Leste to generate relevant impact by strengthening the research governance structures of the higher education institution and curating research programmes and projects towards contributions for sustainable development in Southeast Asia.

Attachment:

[ITEM6_ASEM_SOM2_Updates_Partners_Stakeholders.pdf](#) (*presentation during meeting*)

7. Chair’s Conclusions

The printed Chair’s Conclusions were handed out and Mr. Luca Lantero (AES) reminded participants of the format change, emphasizing its concise nature. The Chair’s Conclusions should be considered as a policy document through which Ministers can transmit their political visions and influence the ASEM Education Process. Mr. Lantero thanked for the ASEM countries and stakeholders for their contribution and feedback and informed them on the possibility to send further comments by the end of the day. The final version will be endorsed during the Ministerial Conference on Friday. Finally, he extended his gratitude to Thailand for its commitment to host the next Intermediate Senior Officials’ Meeting (ISOM) in late 2024, Romania for its commitment to host the next 1st Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM1) in late 2025 and India for its commitment to host the next SOM2 and 10th ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting (ASEMME10) in 2026.

8. Summary of the day and closing remarks

Dr. Rose Anne Cuschieri thanked the ASEM Education Secretariat, all participants and her Maltese team for their work and expressed her pleasure to have hosted this meeting. She closed the 2nd Senior Officials’ Meeting looking forward to the Ministerial Meeting (ASEMME9) on the following day.

Minutes drafted by the ASEM Education Secretariat

Last update: 03/04/2024