



**MINUTES OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> EXPERT MEETING OF  
ASEM WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME  
28 AUGUST 2017  
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

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### **Introduction**

1. The 5<sup>th</sup> Expert Meeting of ASEM Work Placement Programme was held on 28 August 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. Its aims were to follow up the results of the 4<sup>th</sup> Expert Meeting of ASEM Work Placement Programme and serve as a platform for discussion of further steps. The meeting was chaired by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bundit Thipakorn, Deputy Secretary-General for Higher Education Commission, Thailand. The participants consisted of representatives from five ASEM member countries: Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Indonesia, and Thailand. The list of participants appears in [Annex 1](#).
2. The meeting commenced with the Chair's greetings and expression of appreciation to participants for their contributions to the ASEM Work Placement Programme. He informed the meeting of the increasing opportunities of internships for students and expressed his hope to see more students participating in the programme.

### **Country reports**

3. The representatives from five participating countries presented reports on the implementation and progress of the ASEM Work Placement Programme in their countries as follows:
  - a. **Brunei Darussalam**

Dr. Sabrina Daud, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD), informed the meeting of UBD's requirements for all third-year students to participate in an internship or incubation programme, either in Brunei Darussalam or abroad. For students doing internship or taking part in exchange programmes abroad, UBD and overseas partners will co-fund their expenditure. At present, there is one UBD student participating in the programme in Europe, while there is none from European side joining the programme in Brunei Darussalam. Dr. Sabrina Daud's presentation appears in [Annex 2](#).
  - b. **Belgium**

Ms. Magalie Soenen, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, informed the meeting of the appointment of the University of Ghent to serve as the national UBN (University Business Network) of the programme in the pilot phase. As a result, the programme has exclusively opened for University of Ghent students. Most students looked for internship opportunities at international organisations or business establishments with diverse environment. Their preferred internship period is in summer (July – August) when they do not have courseworks. Belgium encourages both European and Asian students to find workplaces and coordinate with contact persons directly. To help students gain access to necessary information, University of Ghent has developed an online database, which serves



as a tool to help alleviate difficulty for interested students. Despite the existence of the said online database, it is crucial to take into account UBN's commitment to identify the right contact persons for students and make the programme more structured to ensure its efficiency.

c. **Germany**

Prof. Dr. Alexandra Angress, Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences, informed the meeting of the designation of Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) as the National UBN of Germany. In 2016, a KUAS representative paid a visit to Indonesia and Thailand to promote the programme and, additionally, provide support and advice for students concerning the preparation of required documents for the internship application and work permit exemption. Prof. Angress noted that one of the challenges for KUAS is its limited ability to facilitate the internship in the field of languages or other fields of study due to the university's main focus on the area of engineering. Hence, Germany encourages students from both sides to find workplaces through the "Jobwall", a job portal provided on the German UBN's website. It is expected that the programme will become concrete and structured after the pilot period.

d. **Indonesia**

Prof. Dr. Aris Junaidi, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (MoRTHE), informed the meeting of the current status of the programme in Indonesia. Currently there are nine participating universities where the University of Indonesia has been appointed as the National UBN of Indonesia. The webpage of the Indonesian UBN contains information of the programme and a list of participating universities linking to their contact points. Although students can access information and assistance provided by the German UBN, their participation in the programme has proven to be challenging. The major obstacles include 1) lack of interest in the internship / lack of standard in credit earned, 2) high cost of living, 3) language barrier, 4) complicated administrative process, and 5) inability to find workplaces. Prof. Dr. Aris Junaidi's presentation appears in [Annex 3](#).

e. **Thailand**

Ms. Siriporn Wiriyaokradaecha, Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) informed the meeting that Thailand had sent two students for internship in Germany and hosted four students from Europe, two from Belgium and two from Germany. Thai students were accepted into the workplaces with an assistance of their home universities. One Belgian student was arranged to the workplace by the host university in Thailand while the others directly contacted their workplaces. The OHEC as the National UBN provided each Thai student with financial support amounting to 50,000 baht. The related documents of Thai students are kept at the OHEC for a future use. However, it is crucial to discuss and finalise the document templates of the programme with a consent of participating countries. Furthermore, Thailand encouraged the European side to facilitate Asian students with finding suitable workplaces and visa issuance. Ms. Siriporn Wiriyaokradaecha's presentation appears in [Annex 4](#).



## **Discussion on Implementation, Promotion and Sustainability of the Programme**

4. The meeting discussed existing challenges in the implementation of the programme, which include language barrier, students' inability to find workplaces, complication of visa issuance, and inadequate financial support. The meeting also proposed an implementation of an online system and the future plan of the programme.
5. The meeting agreed that language barrier is the most notable challenge. Most business establishments in Europe require that their interns possess both English and local language competencies since the knowledge of local language is useful for a daily life in Europe. The requirement on local language hinders Asian students' opportunities in participating in an internship programme in Europe. The meeting suggested that students might circumvent this challenge by approaching multinational corporations.
6. In order to enhance the opportunity of Asian students in finding workplaces, representatives from Belgium and Germany suggested the use of intermediate organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the European expat community, etc. Those organisations may provide coordinators or contact persons of their partners. Such an approach would help support the interns in various fields of study.
7. The Thai representative informed the meeting that Thai students in the field of Aesthetic Health and Spa who got their internships at a hotel in Germany had their visa applications rejected from the German Embassy in Bangkok. It was probable that the Embassy had no acknowledgement of the programme. The meeting agreed that it was crucial to publicise the programme by distributing flyers/brochures/pamphlets to the stakeholders.
8. The Indonesian representative sought financial support from the European side due to the high cost of living in Europe. The Belgian and German representatives explained that the remuneration or other support from the host organisations/companies could not be guaranteed; however, some may offer travelling cost from the local accommodation to the workplace.
9. Seeing no necessity as of yet, all participating countries agreed to postpone the implementation of the SOP online system proposed by a German representative in the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Belgian representative, in this connection, introduced "Reconfirm", an online system used among Belgian (Flemish) Higher Education Institutions to support the internship procedure. The Belgian representative proposed to find out the possibility of the usage of "Reconfirm" in the ASEM Work Placement Programme in the future. For more information, please visit <http://www.reconfirm.eu/en/home>.
10. The meeting agreed that the implementation of the ASEM Work Placement Programme should continue after the ending of its 3-year pilot period (2015 - 2017) in December 2017. In the next phase, a permanent support structure should be created to make the programme more concrete, systematic and harmonious. Belgium (Flemish) and Thailand shall coordinate the ASEM WPP Secretariat for the period of three years. Later on, both countries, as co-secretariats, discussed related tasks at hand as appears in Annex 5.



11. The meeting proposed Brunei Darussalam to host the 6th Expert Meeting of ASEM Work Placement Programme in 2018.
12. The Chair of the Meeting expressed his appreciation to all participants for their valuable contribution to the meeting. It was agreed that all participating countries would continue their support to ensure that the programme would benefit the students and boost the cooperation in higher education of both regions.