

**3<sup>rd</sup> ASIA-EUROPE INSTITUTE (AEI)-ASEM SUMMER SCHOOL,  
24<sup>th</sup> JULY– 11<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2017  
“Cultural Pluralism in Asia and Europe”**

Organised by the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya, the AEI-ASEM Summer School Programme has been running for three consecutive years since its inception in 2015. The past two summer schools were designed to offer a two-week “full time” programme showcasing different themes and has successfully attracted participants from the region of Asia and Europe. Thirty participants from Indonesia, Japan, Cambodia, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, Italy, United Kingdom and Singapore participated in this programme. This year, an additional segment was added for the Summer School where the participants were fortunate to spend one week of interactive lectures/seminars as well as field visits in Brussels, Belgium.

The Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya along with Maastricht University in Brussels, Belgium collaborated for the 3<sup>rd</sup> AEI-ASEM Summer School programme 2017 with the theme “Cultural Pluralism in Asia and Europe” which was successfully conducted from 24 July to 4 August 2017. Participants spent 2 weeks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and an additional 1 week, 7 -11 August 2017 (optional) in Brussels, Belgium. This programme was a joint effort with ASEM partner countries and the Jean Monnet Network on Challenges to Multiculturalism and Multilateralism, and was supported by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia along with the EU Centre in Singapore. Courses were drawn from across the two universities and were divided into broad subject areas namely Multiculturalism in Asia and Europe, Crisis Migration, Religious Pluralism, Cultural Diversity, Socio Cultural Issues, Identity, Politics, Ethnic Conflict, and EU-ASEAN Relations.

The first part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> AEI-ASEM Summer School featured a two week programme in Malaysia. This exciting two-week part was conducted full-time, consisting of 10 modules in total, including the Asia-Europe Conference as well as the planned field trip programmes. The diversity in the classroom made the 3<sup>rd</sup> AEI-ASEM Summer School 2017 a global and valuable experience, where

different perspectives interacted and this led to a vibrant and enriching discussion of issues that are relevant today on Asia and Europe. Common activities throughout the two-week programme allowed participants to work together as a group, learn together and exchange ideas and experiences related to the theme.

Within the two-week programme in Malaysia, participants were also taken on excursions and study trips including attending talks and discussions during the visit to the National Museum, the Parliament of Malaysia and Putrajaya (the administrative capital of Malaysia). Their experiences spanned from learning about the country's federal administrative centre to the exposure of cultural heritage as the participants visited Melaka, the birthplace of the Malayan Sultanate and a city that is rich in the history of Asian and European influences. During the trip to the Parliament of Malaysia, the students engaged in a dialogue with the Honorable Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Dato' Seri Azalina Othman. Hon. Dato Seri Azalina talked about bridging the gap between Asia and Europe. The dialogue turned out to be insightful and enjoyable for the participants.

Throughout the programme, participants were enthused about how they really enjoyed this two-week programme and gained many new experiences and perspectives about several aspects of Cultural Pluralism in Asia and Europe. This programme raised the participants' interests and knowledge to a whole new level. During the programme, the participants were divided into six groups and were given the opportunity to do their group presentations on different topics. The topics of the presentations were all based the lecture modules. Coming together from different cultural backgrounds and identities, all the participants had great exchanges with one another and presented their thoughts, ideas, and opinions as part of their group assignment showing that they had benefited from the summer school modules. Each presentation was followed by a question-and-answer (Q&A) session that was held to give the students a chance to further explain their concepts, express their opinions, and debate about the issues that were raised. As a organiser, AEI proudly to inform that, all the groups were also very creative with their presentations.

The Brussels summer school, organised by Maastricht University which was the second part of the summer school took place after the two weeks in Malaysia ended. The Brussels Summer School were divided into two components of interactive lectures and seminars as well as education and cultural excursions. The lectures and seminars were on issues related to multilateralism and multiculturalism in Europe and Asia, covering regional organisations and multilateral trade, EU-ASEAN security cooperation, relations between EU and ASEAN, human rights protection, Asian and European cooperation in higher education. As for the educational and cultural excursions, the participants visited the United Nations University, the Atomium, the historical city of Bruges and many other places. During this programme also, students were divided into groups based on the three main themes: Politics, Security and Economics. All of them were required to present on a chosen topic at the end of the programme. This provided valuable experience for understanding the process of debating an issue to find a solution, and also for the students to be able to present their thoughts, ideas, and opinions to others in a constructive and confident manner.

As mentioned earlier, the participants had excursions and were taken on a visit to the Atomium which is also known as the national monument in Belgium. The Atomium is a unique creation in the history of architecture. In addition, they also visited the House of European History and had the opportunity to discover the trans-European viewpoint of history that explored historical memories, diverse experiences and common ground of the people in Europe. The participants also toured the medieval city of Bruges. Besides that, participants also visited the European Union Parliamentarium and had the experience of being part of European politics. Each participants were assigned to a particular European Member of Parliament and participated in a model UN style of discussions and debates. These trips exposed the students not only to European integration but also to the bustling city life and culture of Brussels.

AEI has consistently shown its commitment in increasing the flow of foreign students, spurring balanced mobility, and it welcomes further ASEM collaboration for future ASEM Summer Schools and other initiatives. Each summer school programme has had a new cohort of students, who bring their unique blend of ideas, experiences, and perspectives to our summer school programmes. Participants' feedback on the summer school, their suggestions as well as perspectives will definitely help in improving the quality of AEI-ASEM Summer Schools in the future.

Testimony of participants:

*“There are experiences which happen once in a lifetime but they are so unique that they leave a lasting mark on you. The Summer school both in Kuala Lumpur and Brussels was one of them for me because of the incredible opportunity to meet passionate young people full of ideas from all over the world and to spend three unforgettable weeks with them exploring the peculiarities of the European and South-East Asian culture, historical heritage and, of course, delicious cuisine. Those were three rewarding and personally enriching weeks for me during which not only did I learn a lot thanks to the diverse academic lectures but also through peer-to-peer sharing and experiencing for myself the differences and similarities between the Malaysian and Belgium multicultural societies”. - **Yordanka Vasileva Dimcheva, Bulgaria-***

*“AEI-ASEM Summer School gives me opportunity not only to learn serious stuff such as regionalism and multiculturalism, but also gives me the opportunity to understand the people. The friendship that is created by this event would last a lifetime!” -**Ghifari Athallah Ramadhan, Indonesia-***

*“What an incredible two weeks! I have made some incredible friends and met some frankly fascinating people. Malaysia is a beautiful country that I luckily have not left quite yet. It has such a rich past and present that I am so fortunate to have had the chance to learn about and experience. So many insightful lectures, field trips, and of course the two day Asia Europe conference, have given me much food for thought (and perhaps some inspiration for my thesis!!!)”*  
**- Antonia Gough, British-**

*The AEI-ASEM Summer School was a great opportunity even for myself as a Malaysian to have an in depth knowledge about Malaysia especially in terms of history from different perspectives during the different modules. In addition to that, the summer school also allowed to widen my network as we had participants from various countries. It was great that I was able to dialogue and share inputs as well as different opinions with these participants. These networks also allowed me to widen my knowledge about the different countries that were represented during the summer school. It also definitely bridged the gap between Asia and Europe as we were able to learn a lot from each other. Furthermore, the program in Brussels too was enlightening as i was able to experience diversity in one of the EU countries and sort of compare it to the diversity in Malaysia. It was similar to a certain extend but there were definitely differences too. In all the summer school most importantly provided the participants with lifelong friendships as most of us almost spent three weeks learning and travelling together. The summer school will always be an unforgettable experience for me personally as it enabled me to meet many inspiring and passionate young people who would one day contribute to their respective countries. – Aaron Denison, Malaysia-*