



Asia-Europe Meeting

**ASEM Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)  
Hanoi, 19/20 January 2009**

***in Preparation of the ASEM Conference of Ministers Responsible for Education  
in Hanoi, 14/15 May 2009***

1. At invitation of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, the Senior Officials of ASEM countries met in Hanoi on 19/20 January, 2009, in order to prepare for the second ASEM Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Hanoi on 14/15 May, 2009. At the meeting in Hanoi some 58 representatives from 32 ASEM countries and the European Commission were present.

In his welcome address, Dr. Banh Tien Long, the Standing Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, stressed the importance of educational cooperation between Asia and Europe as free trade agreements are under negotiation between the regions and among the regions' member countries. Education should lead the way and help remove bottlenecks for cultural, education and economic cooperation among countries in ASEM. He also expressed his expectation for more concrete actions to start dialogues on quality assurance, recognition and on human resource development in order to improve the employability by strengthening education business relations to increase mobility among ASEM countries.

2. The Vietnamese SOM chair, Mr. Tran Ba Viet Dung, the General Director of the International Cooperation Department from the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam welcomed the ASEM delegations and stressed that the Hanoi conference in may 2009 should build on the results of discussion and recommendations from the first ASEM Conference in Berlin and prepare for the ASEM summit in Brussels in 2010 and give valuable input to the third ministerial conference on education in 2010.

On behalf of the SOM chair, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Hung, Deputy General Director of ICD, MOET Vietnam, outlined the number of issues relating to the preparation for the forthcoming second ASEM Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Hanoi and presented the draft conference program (see attachment).

With regard to topics of the Hanoi conference, Mr Hung informed that at the first ministerial conference in Berlin, Vietnam sent survey questionnaires to all delegations asking for the selection of topics for the second ministerial conference in Hanoi. Subsequently, the following two topics received most attention from

delegations and have been chosen as two main topics (including a number of sub-topics) for this year conference in Hanoi:

- a. Quality assurance, Credit Recognition and Transfer in ASEM;**
- b. Sustainable Human Resource Development for ASEM Future Needs**

3. At the SOM meeting, Mrs. Susanne Burger, from the German Federal Ministry of Education and the Research, summarized the main activities and work done during the term of the first ministerial conference as well as the recommendations to the second conference in Hanoi and asked the delegations for comments.

The meeting was followed by a breakout session with two groups focusing their discussions on the above two topics. The presentations and discussion showed that in general all delegations agreed on the two main topics proposed by the Vietnamese chair. It was also agreed to discuss a number of sub-topics in the plenary sessions of the Hanoi conference such as : (a) Starting Asia – Europe dialogue on the Bologna Process and a Parallel Process for Asian countries by implementing three pilot groups of experts on the following topics: Credits and Learning Outcomes, Quality Assurance and Qualification Frameworks; (b) Increasing the number Joint study programs between Asian and European higher education institutions by using bilateral and multilateral funding schemes; (c) Employability regarding industrial needs and international skill demands; (d) Sharing information and data on skills forecast by set up links among national skills forecasting centers to improve information on new skills for new jobs; and (f) Promoting vocational education and training by improving the attractiveness of VET through training of trainers and curriculum innovation.

In addition, the Chair suggested the implementation of an ASEM Secretariat in order to make the ASEM education process more stable and efficient and to facilitate the dialogue, projects and further activities including the preparation of Ministerial conferences.

4. During the ASEM SOM meeting, the SOM chair also invited the delegations to discuss possible key messages to the ministerial conference in Hanoi. It was suggested that Ministers could:

- Acknowledge the results of the ASEM Rector s Conference in Berlin and of the Frankfurt working group on removing obstacles for mobility.
- Initiate a structured dialogue and a regular exchange of experiences and practice on issues related to the two main topics of the conference.

- Form a voluntary group of countries in Asia to begin the dialogue on the Bologna Process to identify existing challenges and possible solutions for further mobility between Asia and Europe.
- Suggest to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of higher education systems and institutions of both regions by providing more and better information and offering high-quality education.
- Acknowledge the importance of higher education and vocational training for the development of competitive knowledge-based societies and underline the pivotal role of education-industry cooperation and lifelong learning for employability.
- Invite higher education institutions and industry to set up dialogue platforms, to establish partnerships and to intensify cooperation (e.g. developing of curricula, joint research projects, recognition of prior learning).
- Set up a network of national Skill Forecast Centers among ASEM member countries

5. At the end of the Senior Officials Meeting the SOM chair summarized important dates and tasks relevant for the preparation of the ministerial conference in Hanoi:

- 15 February 2009: Sending out Invitation and Tentative Program for the Ministerial conference in Hanoi.

- 18 March 2009: Sending out of SOM minutes to the ASEM delegations by SOM chair.

- 3 April 2009: Submission of country reports by ASEM delegations based on issues raised in the SOM meeting including examples of good practice or suggested actions related to the conference topics.

- 14 April 2009: Sending out of draft chair conclusions to the ASEM delegations by the Vietnamese Chair.

- 13 May 2009: ASEM SOM meeting in Hanoi for Discussion of the draft Chair's Conclusions.