

## The 5<sup>th</sup> ASEM Meeting of Education Ministers (ASEMME5)

### “ASEM Education Collaboration for Results”

#### Plenary Session I on 27 April 2015

15:00 – 16:30

### “Cooperation on four ASEM Education priority areas - investing in skill development for better employability”

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

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In the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM10) held in Milan, Italy on 16-17 October 2014 “leaders recalled that education is a key enabling factor in promoting sustainable and inclusive development, innovation and poverty reduction. Adequate resources are required to support education opportunities in ASEM countries. They acknowledged the role of education, in particular higher education, lifelong learning and vocational education and training, for human resource development. **Recognising the problem of youth unemployment, leaders committed to strengthen apprenticeships and training programs that improve employability and facilitate school-to-work transition.**” (Chair’s Statement of the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM10), 2014:9).

Youth employability issues and the question of how to ensure that young people acquire skills necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce are the concerns of the majority of the ASEM family. Consequently, **the aim of the session will be to bring forward the results achieved by various ASEM working groups and forums of the ASEM Education Process as well as agreeing to proposals on how to promote skill development for better employability**, using both national and the ASEM education cooperation opportunities.

Three keynote speakers will give their view at the beginning of the plenary session on the achievements to date of the ASEM Education Process, particularly those activities which have resulted encouraging skills development and employability as well as giving their opinion on how to invest in skill development for greater employability.

#### Keynote speakers:

- Dr Georg Schütte, State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany
- Mr Muhammad Nasir, Minister for Research, Technology, and Higher Education, Indonesia
- Professor Yonghua Song, Executive Vice President of Zhejiang University, China - host of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forum

The following **guiding questions** have been prepared to facilitate discussion:

1. *What policies and strategies need to be developed to ensure innovative, practice oriented and motivating environment for acquiring inter-disciplinary and transferrable skills? What should be carried out in the ASEM Education Process in this context?*

2. *Which of the recommendations made by the rectors and students at the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forum do you see as priorities for the next two years at a national level and for ASEM education collaboration?*

Participants of the discussion are invited to express opinion both from a national and inter-regional (ASEM cooperation) perspective. To give all participants an opportunity to contribute, as well as to foster more interactive discussion, the first interventions should not exceed two minutes to express initial views. Consequently, participants will have the option of intervening more than once. The length of the plenary session: 1 hour 30 minutes (90 minutes).

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The results of Early Consultation which was carried out by Latvia in 2014 with ASEM members and stakeholders to identify their initial views on future collaboration under the ASEM Education Process assure that **countries support efforts to promote the development of the basic, transferable and professional skills of individuals to facilitate their integration in the labour market and welcome further exploration of joint activities that could support this objective.** According to the results of the Early Consultation, work placements or apprenticeship opportunities/programmes in ASEM member countries for students from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education would promote their hands-on or industrial skills and so increase their employability. Specialized seminars/forums could be held on this topic as an exchange of information and best-practice are always welcome. Joint degree study programmes could also be devised and implemented in some common areas of studies. The implementation of the ASEM Joint Curriculum Development Pilot Scheme and the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme, adopted by Ministers during the Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME4), also needs to be monitored. ASEM education collaboration could be built on the work projects already underway in Asia and Europe.

#### **ASEM initiatives for increased students employability**

ASEM education collaboration within the four priority areas contributes to improve the quality and attractiveness of education systems. Similarly, it helps to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for life and employment. The improvement of student skills for individual development and placement in the labour market is one of the overarching aims of the ASEM education collaboration. **Engaging Business and Industry in Education as well as Lifelong Learning (LLL) Including TVET are two priority areas of the ASEM Education Process aimed at promoting students employability.** However, the collaboration of ASEM members and stakeholders on Balanced Mobility and Quality Assurance and Recognition are also contributory factors to skill development for students.

**The employability issue has been high on the agenda of ASEM countries for several years. It should be mentioned that many of the existing and new ASEM education initiatives focus on enhancing student and graduate employability.** ASEM education activities have emphasised the importance of involving companies in curriculum design, providing quality work placements, increasing the role of higher education to give students an intellectual foundation - being critical, analytical and empathetic – to enable them to hold jobs in the future, create innovative strategies and develop innovation etc. Similarly, some of the recently proposed ASEM education new initiatives are aimed at fostering entrepreneurship in higher education, engaging business in education, learning how employability can be enhanced and assessing the key components of an employability strategy. Another strand is how institutions and academics can be supported to embed employability in the curriculum, what the role and responsibilities of higher education institutions and of employers are etc.

#### **The ASEMME Programme for improving innovative and entrepreneurial skills and competences in school education**

The majority of ASEM member states are struggling with high levels of youth un-employment; consequently **it is a joint challenge for ASEM countries to create new learning and education strategies for actively engaging children and youth in work and business life.** There is a significant mismatch in most ASEM countries between the number of jobs available for the broader segments of youth and the expansion of the labour force (The ASEMME Working Group, 2015:6).

The rationale of the ASEMME programme for improving innovative and entrepreneurial skills and competences in school education has been laid down based on the exploration of **how the**

education system from primary, secondary and vocational school and adult education is able to combat this challenge by creating innovative strategies and measures – to support and encourage students at all levels to become entrepreneurs in a very broad sense. *From fostering the idea and future aspiration to creating own companies and jobs, and to the active involvement in community programs and social innovation within own local community* (The ASEMME Working Group, 2015:6).

**Educational drivers (learning driver) are the key factors needed to comprise a teaching and learning environment for developing innovative and entrepreneurial competences where students, teachers and social partners can work together.** For example, collaborative learning could be a genuine joint theme for the drivers that influence the educational process to work. These included collaborative learning between school and companies in the neighbourhood and the local community. This could also include exchange programmes and joint projects with a focus on creating real life activities and learning situations. A key driver in educational aspects is also the possibility to invite the students into innovative, practice-oriented and motivating environments (The ASEMME Working Group, 2015:20).

#### **The Fourth ASEM Conference of Rectors (ARC4) and Student Forum on 26-27 March 2015 at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China**

The Fourth ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4) and Students' Forum had a theme of "**University-Business Partnerships: Asia and Europe Seeking 21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions**" and was organized to review the trends and challenges related to university and business collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from Asian and European Perspectives. Participants discussed three main issues, including University and Business Partnerships for Employability Skills.

The participants of the ARC4 and Students' Forum developed **Policy Recommendations on how universities and the business sector could collaborate more effectively to equip students with employability skills, cultivate entrepreneurship and innovate learning environments through information and communication technologies** (The 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4), China, 2015:1; The ARC4 Students' Forum, China, 2015:1).

The Policy Recommendations were handed to the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, Ms Mārīte Seile, at the Closing Ceremony as a contribution to the deliberations of ASEMME5 on 27-28 April 2015 in Riga, Latvia. Rectors and students invited Education Ministers to strengthen cooperation and take further action.

#### **University-Business Partnerships for Employability Skills**

##### *ARC4 Recommendations*

The participants at the ARC4 identified **University-Business Partnerships for Employability Skills** as one of the priorities for ASEM policy-making regarding to university-business collaboration. They committed themselves to promoting 21<sup>st</sup> century-oriented university-business partnerships and to seeking solutions to the possible challenges to cooperation. They called on ASEM members to engage them and themselves in working towards delivering tangible outcomes for the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEM Meeting of Education Ministers (ASEM ME6) (The 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4), China, 2015:1).

##### *ARC4 Students' Forum's recommendations*

The participants of the ARC4 Students' Forum identified **University-Business Partnerships for Employability Skills** as one of the priorities and committed themselves to promote and find ways of applying them. They called on ASEM members to engage them and themselves in working towards delivering tangible outcomes for the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEM Meeting of Education Ministers (ASEM ME6) (The ARC4 Students' Forum, China, 2015:1).

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#### **References and background documents**

ASEM Education Secretariat (Indonesia). Stocktaking Report "FROM KUALA LUMPUR TO RIGA", 5<sup>th</sup> Asia Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME5), 27 – 28 April 2015, Riga, Latvia

ASEM University-Business Seminar. Report, Brussels, 4 March 2015, Ministry of Education and Training.

Chair's Statement of the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM10) held in Milan, Italy on 16-17 October 2014, p.9, available at [http://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/2014 -  
\\_ASEM10 - Chair Statement.pdf](http://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/2014_-_ASEM10_-_Chair_Statement.pdf)

The 4<sup>th</sup> ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4) (China, 2015), Policy Recommendations for the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME5) 27-28 April 2015, Riga, Latvia, p.1.

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The ASEMME Working Group (2015). Innovative Competences and Entrepreneurship Education, Challenges for the primary, secondary and vocational education sector, Recommendations, findings and Case studies. Report. Copenhagen, p.6.-20.