

**Follow-up Meeting of
the 2nd ASEM Ministers Meeting on Education**

ASEM Lifelong Learning Conference
“Increasing Opportunities and Removing Obstacles for Lifelong Learning”
29-30 October 2009, Nha Trang City, Vietnam

Key Statements and Action Plan

The recent ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM EMM2) in Hanoi, May 2009 acknowledged that lifelong learning provides a solid framework for sustainable human resource development, which generates economic growth, social welfare and enables individuals to pursue stimulating learning opportunities at all stages of their lives. Therefore, it deserves specific attention for intensified cooperation among the ASEM countries. Consequently, two ASEM conferences on lifelong learning, hosted by the Thai Government and the Vietnamese Government with support from the Danish Government and in cooperation with the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning, were well received by ASEM member countries. Whereas the Bangkok Conference in July 2009 focused on ‘eLearning and Workplace Learning’, the theme of Nha Trang conference in October centred on ‘Increasing Opportunities and Removing Obstacles for Lifelong Learning’. The two day conference brought together 120 experts from 22 ASEM countries and 8 international organisations with 14 presentations concerning various aspects and defining issues of lifelong learning in the two continents. Not only have these events realised the ASEM EMM2 conclusions, but also demonstrated strong commitment and interest of ASEM countries to learn from one another and to make lifelong learning a reality for their peoples.

The conference discussed the following key issues:

- the development of the lifelong learning concept in the globalised knowledge economy
- the differences in understanding of LLL and the complexities of LLL in East Asia and West Europe
- the similar challenges and different obstacles in the development of LLL in the two regions
- the role of the state in developing and implementing LLL policies
- the national qualification system as a policy tool for promoting LLL
- the significance of adult educator training
- the benefits of bilateral, regional and inter-regional cooperation in LLL within and between Asia and Europe.

The conference has drawn key statements:

- 1- The conference has successfully met its 4 objectives.
 - a. to share understandings, research findings and good practices;
 - b. to identify various obstacles to lifelong learning;
 - c. to strengthen interface between research and education policy making;
 - d. to explore bilateral, regional and inter-regional cooperation.
- 2- The conference brought about shared understandings of concepts of lifelong learning, which include all learning of people of all ages at all levels of education in formal, non-formal and informal settings. The conference synthesised global debates, policy statements made by EU, UNESCO and OECD and reaffirmed that the aims of lifelong learning include employability, citizenship, social inclusion and personal development and fulfilment. While acknowledging the pre-eminence of economic aim of lifelong learning, the conference also highlighted well-being and happiness of individuals and adopted humanistic aims of lifelong learning and postulated five pillars of learning – to know, to do, to be, to live together and to care for the planet.
- 3- At the two workshops during the conference, ASEM participants shared information on national lifelong learning policies and successful implementation to further these aims in national and regional contexts.
- 4- The conference identified major existing and potential economic, geo-political, legislative, socio-cultural, psychological obstacles to lifelong learning. The conference noted that although countries faced similar challenges caused by globalisation, it is important to examine these 5 sets of obstacles in national and regional contexts in order to identify country's priorities in the globalised knowledge economy.
- 5- The conference pointed out that lack of quantitative and qualitative research into various problems and complexities of lifelong learning at national and regional levels presents obstacles to successful policies and implementations. The problem is acute in the ASEAN region.

The Conference suggested that

- 6- State has a critical role in overcoming structural obstacles and reducing/eliminating personal obstacles, as well as creating opportunities for lifelong learning. Changing perceptions of learning, raising public awareness and engaging various stakeholders are important steps in introducing and promoting lifelong learning. This should also be embodied in national legislative framework.
- 7- Governments need to have an inter-departmental approach to the implementation of effective and efficient lifelong learning policies.
- 8- It is necessary to have a national qualification framework for assessment, recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, which in turn promote lifelong learning.
- 9- Adult educator training, curriculum development need to be redesigned to meet the needs of learners and the demands of the knowledge economy.

- 10- ASEAN participants will convey the results of this conference to the leaders in concerned organisations in their countries and propose their Ministers to include lifelong learning as an indispensable item on the agenda at ASEAN summits and raise common interests and voices at regional level.
- 11- Building on the initiatives discussed at the Bangkok conference in July and the appointment of Asian Co-Chairman of ASEM LLL Hub Advisory Board, there are obvious benefits to establish a lifelong learning research centre in ASEAN region to create a networks of research institutes and experts, that will contribute to improvement of knowledge production, statistics collection and data analysis for policy making. The conference welcomed Vietnam's offer as the ASEAN presidency holder in 2010, to host such a centre and invited Asian ASEM countries to join the initiative and contribute financial and human resources to realise the initiative.
- 12- The coordinating role of the ASEM LLL Hub need to be further strengthened to facilitate cooperation between academic and political communities in the two regions in order to maximize knowledge and experience in all 43 ASEM member countries