

**The First ASEM Universities and Business/Industry Forum
Bangkok, 25-26 March 2010**

Record of Discussion

The First ASEM Universities and Business/Industry Forum was held in Bangkok on 25-26 March 2010. The meeting was hosted by the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand and supported and co-sponsored by the ASEM Education Secretariat at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

The meeting congratulated Thailand on taking an initiative to organise the First ASEM Universities and Business/Industry Forum. The meeting underlined the importance of a continued and productive dialogue, thus supporting the role of business/industry sector in education provision.

The discussion on the first day focused on models and good practices of universities and business/industry cooperation and the inter-regional mobility of staff and students between universities and business/industry sector. On the second day the exchange of views concentrated on research and development enhancement and enhancing students' employability.

In relation to models of university-industry cooperation in Asia and Europe, the meeting noted that the important factors for successful university-industry cooperation include employers' commitment contributing to quality education and manpower, and political backup.

With regard to the mobility of staff and students, an imbalance of the transcontinental exchange needs to be addressed. Ways and means to increase the number of exchange students from Europe to Asia are to be identified.

A number of limitations that hinder increased mobility of staff and students between universities and industry were raised i.e. lack of funding and relevant information, discontinuation of support from relevant bodies, and immigration procedures. The meeting proposed ways to encourage closer university-industry cooperation for this kind of exchange, for instance, home university's endorsement of the activities, networking with the industry including providing an opportunity for enterprises' staff to undertake an exchange activity at a university, developing joint programmes, launching new programmes, using the national qualifications framework to facilitate recognition of students' credits earned abroad, and encouraging flexibility of universities' curriculum to allow students to spend time abroad.

The meeting was of the view that a win-win situation needs to be nurtured to enhance the mobility of students between universities and industry. A training agreement and quality assurance aspect are of great importance for a productive internship.

Specifically, recruitment of graduates with an internship experience is another crucial aspect of this exchange.

To enhance university-industry research and development collaboration, compilation of existing programmes and projects carried out by both sides is needed to help facilitate collaboration on this area, and enterprises should be encouraged to join the activities. Inadequate funding support is among the factors that limit research collaboration between Asia and Europe, thus, cost sharing between the two partners might enable joint research activity to become possible.

With regard to the discussion on enhancing employability of students, it was suggested that students in the fields of social sciences and humanities should be provided an opportunity to undertake an internship. To allow this to happen, universities and enterprises might need to negotiate and make necessary arrangements.

To strengthen the ASEM university-business/industry cooperation, the meeting recommended the following;

1. Establishing permanent ASEM University-Business/Industry Dialogue Forum involving stakeholders from education and business/industry sectors to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between education and industry in both Asia and Europe;
2. Interconnecting ASEM University-Business/Industry Forum with the European University-Business Forum and the ASEM Business Forum
3. Organising seminars on specific university-business/industry cooperation topics including exchange of examples of good practices, mobility of staff and students at least once every two years;
4. Promoting university-business/industry mobility of staff and students between Asia and Europe by setting up mobility schemes/expanding existing schemes such as ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, Erasmus Mundus Programme, and UMAP; fostering more balanced staff and student mobility between Asia and Europe by taking short-term and flexible mobility measures, for instance, summer courses; and removing obstacles such as language and inter-cultural barriers, and visa and administrative barriers;
5. Improving information on ASEM university-business/industry cooperation and on funding opportunities in both regions;
6. Strengthening communication between universities and industry by offering new formats of meetings and encounters (luncheon, dinner talk, sectoral meeting, etc.), and promoting/utilising intermediary institutions such as University-Business Foundation, Technology Transfer Office, and their roles in university-business/industry cooperation;
7. Identifying areas of mutual interests on university-industry research and development and innovation in both Asia and Europe; and

The meeting welcomed the ASEM Education Secretariat's offer to table out the results of the meeting to the ASEM Senior Officials Meeting in Denmark for further discussion, and to coordinate the follow-up of the meeting in Europe. The meeting also took note that Thailand will convey the meeting's recommendations to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs to push forward the deliberation to the ASEM Summit.