



## SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES



### **Francesca Helm (Researcher, University of Padova)**

Francesca Helm is a researcher at the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies at the University of Padova. She is also chair of the Education Innovation working group of the Coimbra Group, a European network of universities, and co-coordinator of the Italian section of Scholars at Risk. Her research over the last 10 years has focused on intercultural dialogue, virtual exchange and internationalisation of higher education, including English-medium education. From 2018-2020 she has been leading the monitoring and evaluation of the European Commission's Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange pilot project.



### **Manuela Prina (Head of the Skills Identification and Development Unit, European Training Foundation)**

Manuela is Head of the Skills Identification and Development Unit, within the Knowledge Hub department of the European Training Foundation (ETF), the EU Agencies supporting countries outside the European Union (EU) in the area of human capital development, life-long learning policies and skills identification and development. As Head of Unit, Manuela is responsible for steering ETF's work in the area of skills relevance and anticipation, development of skills and validation, leading the knowledge co-creation and sharing across ETF partner countries, with the EU and the international community. Manuela joined ETF in 2008 and in her career at the ETF covered several assignments, including being responsible for the area of governance, the implementation of several projects in the area of monitoring and assessment of VET systems and human capital development policies, and leading in 2018-19 the development of the ETF's strategy 2027. Prior to working at the ETF, Manuela served as social sector specialist at the Asian Development Bank, and as a Junior Professional at the World Bank. Manuela holds a PHD in International Political Economy – and two Master degrees, in Economics and international relations, and in Educational sciences. She is an alumni of the Indian Institute of Management (IIMC) of Calcutta (2000), and a graduate of the executive course on Foresight and vision building of the University of Manchester (2017) and of the Business Coaching Academy of Business Coaching Italia (2020).



## **Prof. Azirah Hashim (Executive Director, Asia-Europe Institute)**

Azirah Hashim is Professor at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and the Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya. She was former Executive Director, Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) and Founding Director of the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism at the university. Currently, she is a FRIAS Senior Fellow and Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), University of Freiburg. Her research interests include Language Contact in Southeast Asia, English in ASEAN and Higher Education in ASEAN. Her recent publications include *English in Southeast Asia and ASEAN: Transformation of Language Habitats*, Routledge co-authored with Gerhard Leitner (2020) and *Malaysian Perspectives on ASEAN Regionalism*, University of Malaya edited with Anthony Milner (2019). She is project leader of an Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project, 'Building research capacity in higher education institutions in Malaysia and Laos' (2017-2021). Also heading the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence project on ASEAN and EU in Dialogue (2017-2021) at AEI, she is very much involved in ASEAN-EU research, seminars and outreach activities. Azirah is Vice-President of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA).



## **Brikena Xhomaqi (Director, Lifelong Learning Platform)**

Brikena Xhomaqi is the current Director of the Lifelong Learning Platform – European Civil Society for Education (former EUCIS-LLL) and Co-chair of the European Economic and Social Committee Liaison Group of Civil Society. The LLL Platform represents over 40 European wide civil society networks in the field of education from early childhood to adult education, including formal, non-formal and informal learning providers and learners. She is a member of the Civil Society Europe Steering Committee since 2017 and the Advisory Board member of Association Hub Belgium. She is the former Head of Office of the European Students' Union (ESU) and Director of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). She was active in civil society from early ages as an elected representative of different school and university student bodies. In 2010 she joined the civil society at European level initially as elected representative of the European Students' Union in charge of social affairs, later on, she specialised on student mobility issues in particular inclusiveness of mobility programmes but also issues related to social inclusion and labour market integration of young people as well as their participation.

## **Prof Lee Wing On (Executive Director, Institute for Adult Learning Singapore (IAL))**



Wing On helms IAL as its Executive Director and concurrently serves as a Professor at the Singapore University of Social Sciences. Before that, he was Distinguished Professor and Director of the International and Comparative Education Research Centre and the Central Plains Education Research Centre at Zhengzhou University. Besides having served as Vice President and Chair Professor of Comparative Education at the Open University of Hong Kong and Dean of Education Research at Singapore's National Institute of Education, Wing On has held senior management positions in internationally renowned higher education institutions over a span of two decades. In the late 1990s to 2010, he assumed positions at the Education University of Hong Kong (formerly HKIEd) as Vice President (Academic) & Deputy to President, Acting President and Chair Professor of Comparative Education, Founding Dean of the School of Foundations in Education, as well as heading two Departments and the Centre for Citizenship Education. During this tenure, he was invited by the University of Sydney to be Professor of Education and Director (International) for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. He has also contributed actively as the Associate Dean of Education and Founding Director of Comparative Education Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong. From 2010 to 2013, he took over as the President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and has served as Honorary Professor in many esteemed universities, including the University of Hong Kong, University of Sydney and Beijing Normal University. Besides having an illustrious academic career, Wing On has contributed his expertise through many strategic committees in his public services in Singapore and Hong Kong. For example, in Singapore, he was the Chairman of the National Healthcare Group's Research Ethics Committee on Community Health and had been a member of the Conference Ambassador Programme under Singapore Tourism Board's Exhibition and Convention Bureau. In Hong Kong, he was active in driving education development under the belt of Education Commission, Curriculum Development Council, Quality Education Fund and the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation and Vocational Qualifications. In 2003, Wing On was awarded Medal of Honour by the Hong Kong Government for his distinguished service. Wing On is world-renowned in the fields of comparative education and citizenship education. Till date, he has published 34 books, 188 journal articles and book chapters, and was editor of three book series published by Routledge and Springer Publishing.

## **Denis Barrett (Cork Learning City Co-coordinator; Coordinator ASEM Research Network 6 "Learning cities & regions")**



Denis Barrett is Cork Learning City Co-ordinator with Cork City Council, a partnership including Cork Education and Training Board, Cork Institute of Technology, UCC and other statutory and non-statutory partners promoting learning of all kinds, for people of all ages interests and abilities. A founder member of Cork Lifelong Learning Festival in 2003, of EcCoWeLL Cork in 2012 and of Growing Lifelong Learning in Cork (GLiC) in 2014, A key member of the team that partnered with UNESCO in hosting the 3rd International Conference on Learning Cities in 2017, Denis has presented on Cork Learning City at global conferences. He has previously held many roles across Formal, Non-formal and Informal Education including in Third Level, Further Education, Second Level, Primary Level and Youthwork Services.