

The second working group meeting on implementing ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration

Consensus

Riga, Latvia

November 11-12, 2014

Referring to Paragraph 16 of the “Conclusions by the Chair” of the 4th Asia-Europe Ministers meeting (ASEMME4) held on 13-14 May in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ministers welcomed establishment of working group to explore concrete steps to implement the Declaration on the Cooperation in Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in Asian and European Regions (“ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration”).

The working group is composed of the representatives from 12 ASEM countries (China, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and United Kingdom). The working group is led by China.

First meeting was organised by the China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Centre (CDGDC) and supported by the Ministry of Education of the Peoples Republic of China. The first meeting was held in China, Kunming on December 10-11, 2013. During the first meeting, the working group agreed on Terms of Reference of the working group and on the three action plans:

1. Building the website of Asian NIC-NARICs;
2. Drafting the Handbook of Guidelines, Principles and Good Practices on Recognition among ASEM NIC-NARICs; and
3. Establishing the Cross-border Quality Assurance Network.

The Academic Information Centre (AIC) with the support of Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia organised the second working group on implementing ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration in Riga, Latvia, on 11-12 November 2014. The second working group was chaired together by China and Latvia.

There were 30 participants in the working group meeting representing all the working group member countries and observers from ASEM secretariat, ASEAN university network, France, Japan and Thailand.

The second meeting focused on state of art of the implementation of three action plans. China presented the progress of the action plans, and, thereafter, the participants proceeded with active and fruitful discussions.

Consensus was reached on the following points:

1. All three action plans should be continued and concrete results should be achieved although member countries agreed that the implementation of these tools is a long and complicated process.
2. The activity of working group participants could be raised through regular e-mail list, which would also promote faster exchange of information and ideas.
3. The next meeting should be organised prior to ASEMME5 to prepare more thorough presentation of the action plans to the ASEMME5. Taking into account the parity principle, next meeting should be organised in Asia. Countries can express their interest to organise the third working group meeting. China expressed its interest to hold the meeting in China in spring 2015 if there are no other offers.
4. The countries agreed to elaborate the existing action plan:
 - Website of Asian NIC-NARICS – the countries agreed to continue the development of the website of Asian NIC-NARICS as a tool for mutual recognition of qualifications. China and Indonesia will respond to suggestions till the third working group and will prepare better version to present in ASEMME5. The 3rd working group will discuss possibilities to arrange an official launching ceremony of website during ASEMME5, and ways to link it to ENIC/NARIC website.
 - Handbook of Guidelines, Principles and Good Practices on Recognition – the meeting participants concluded that the Handbook is still in an early stage of development; therefore, there are no plans to present it to ASEMME 5 as a final document. The countries agreed to develop and improve the structure of report, taking into account the suggestions from discussions and present in ASEMME 5 the revised structure of Handbook.
 - Cross-border Quality Assurance Network – the countries discussed better positioning of CBQAN. To promote this activity, of the ASEM countries, especially represented in the working group, were invited to participate more actively in the establishment of the network. The ASEM secretariat is asked to send invitations to ASEM countries to join CBQAN network. China, Malaysia and UK will consider more channels how to disseminate information about the CBQAN.
5. The ToR need to be revised and adapted regarding the developments of working group activities probably in the 3rd working group meeting if necessary or after ASEMME 5.
6. There is a strong commitment from working group to look for the continuity and sustainability of working group activities after ASEMME5.
7. The countries agreed that working group should be opened for other countries and international organisations in order to ensure wider discussions and better visibility of the three action plans. Japan expressed interest to be part of the working group. Portugal expressed its interest to participate in the working group.