



**ASEM Education SOM1,
14-15 September 2021
Meeting minutes**

Virtually, hosted by Germany

Day 1, 14 September 2021, 9:30 - 13:00 CEST

Remark: This protocol does not recount welcome statements and other presentations for which presentation slides are available, but only those parts of the meeting that entailed an open discussion or should otherwise be documented.

Welcome/Introduction

Ms Susanne Burger (BMBF), Dr. Rainer Gruhlich (KMK) and Nadia Reynders and Emilie Degueldre (ASEM Education Secretariat) welcomed the participants from Asia and Europe to the Senior Officials Meeting – the first SOM to be held since the ASEM Ministerial Meeting of 2019.

Keynote

In her keynote, Stefania Giannini addresses both the setbacks caused by the pandemic and also the pandemic-induced changes for higher education. Touching upon various issues and challenges within (higher) education, her speech is setting the scene for the meeting and the AEP's joint Strategy 2030 that is to be adopted at the next Ministerial Meeting.

The topics that Ms Giannini specifically highlighted are:

- Inclusiveness and equitable access to education (SDG4, equal access to affordable education)
- Quality Assurance capacities
- Importance of balanced mobility
- Openness and the nexus of research and societies
- Lifelong learning, not least to increase individual employment perspectives
- The ethical dimension of the use of technologies, esp. AI
- sustainable financing for (higher) education

ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and Action Plan

Nadia Reynders (AES) presents the ASEM Education Strategy 2030, incl.

- timeline of drafting process,
- strategic foundations (Global Challenges/Trends, Agenda 2030/SDG, ASEM Education Themes),

- vision and mission,
- the strategic objectives and
 - the instruments for implementing the strategy.

[Link to the presentation of the Strategy Paper 2030](#)

All speakers that take the floor (EU, France, ASEF, Austria, Romania, Thailand, Malaysia) declare their support for this approach and the way it has been formulated. In addition, the following issues and questions are being raised:

- France would like to see a stronger emphasis on academic values in the strategy
- The representatives of Thailand and ASEF advocate for more participation and engagement of partners in different ASEM activities
- Romania would like to see more specifics regarding the post-pandemic recovery and enhanced quality of education and training as a result of the contribution of ASEM cooperation, and has further minor comments regarding the platforms for exchange and communication as well as on reporting.
- The Austrian representative asks about the next steps for finalising the strategy. Nadia Reynders explains that a final version will soon be circulated with no major changes to the strategy expected for the adoption at ASEMME8

After the presentation of the strategy, Emilie Degueudre (AES) presents the corresponding action plan with

- strategic objective and sub-goals,
- existing and new ASEM Education projects, activities, initiatives,
- structure/organisation of AEP,
- planning/monitoring of action plan and
- wider ecosystem

[Link to the presentation of the Action Plan 2030](#)

Four speakers take the floor for a statement:

- ASEM-DUO Secretariat: KJ Sung generally reconfirms the actions taken within the ASEM-DUO programme, as it has been cited as an example in the action plan presentation.
- Belgium-Wallonia/Brussels: The representative from Belgium (French Community) highlights the importance of continued cooperation and points to the urgency of a new ASEM Education Secretariat to be nominated.

- China confirms it will positively promote ASEM projects; it will focus on capacity building for Quality Assurance (esp. QA network) and work closely with the ASEM LLL Hub to design new research projects
- Belgium-Flanders: Magalie Soenen directs the attention towards the action plan's strategic objectives and sub-goals and suggests observing more closely if the formulated objectives really translate into actions. She cited the example of inclusiveness for which she misses concrete actions in the plan. Referring to actions taken by Flanders on inclusive mobility, she declares the willingness to share experiences and is open for cooperation on the topic of inclusion.

In this context, Emilie Degueldre points to the ASEF national equity report to be presented on the second day of the SOM.

Future of ASEM Education Secretariat

Emilie Degueldre brings up the unsolved issue of which country will host the future ASEM Education Secretariat. The Belgian mandate ends with the calendar year 2021 and according to the hitherto practised rotation system, it would now again be an Asian country's turn to host the secretariat, after Germany, Indonesia and Belgium have previously fulfilled this task. Despite a general call to all Asian countries and additional bilateral negotiations, no country has so far signalled its intent to host the secretariat from 2022 onwards.

A promotional video is being shown that explains the general tasks of the secretariat. It also underlines the freedoms countries have in setting up a secretariat's organizational structure that could consist of ministry representatives, seconded staff or additional experts.

Emilie Degueldre highlights the urgency and brings up the additional question, if the secretariat could also be hosted by a European country, if no Asian country is willing to step up and continue the rotation system. There have been no immediate reactions to this question other than the representative of Thailand asking for confirmation that the secretariat can be hosted by an Asian country. Ms Degueldre confirms that this would indeed be the preferred outcome as it would mean continuity of the rotation system between Asia and Europe.

Pitches

After the break the programme continues with the following presentations:

- ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub: Updates on Research Network 4 ([Prof. Michael Osborne](#)) and Research Network 6 ([Suwithida Charungkattikul](#))

- Expert Group Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems and the ASEM Work Placement Programme ([Magalie Soenen](#))
- Expert Group Digitalisation ([Nina Knops](#))
- ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme ([Prof. Dr. Keuk-Je Sung](#).)
- Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) ([Leonie Nagarajan](#))
- Asia-Europe Institute – ASEM Summer School ([Dr. Nurliana Binti Kamaruddin](#))

Day 2, 15 September 2021, 9:30 - 12:30 CEST, online

Remark: Since there are slides available for all the presentations held, details on the different pitches will not be recounted here. Only those parts of the meeting that entailed an open discussion/statement are being documented here.

Stocktaking Report

After a short welcome and overview of the agenda by Ms Susanne Burger (BMBF), Emilie Degueldre (ASEM Education Secretariat) briefly presents the ongoing drafting process for the stocktaking report. It is intended to have a shorter and more reader-friendly report than compared to the previous editions. Contributors have been (and will be) contacted and are asked to deliver content as soon as possible

[Click here for the link to the presentation](#)

New initiatives (see respective slides)

- European Training Foundation (ETF): Network for Excellence in VET & Skills Lab Project ([Michael Graham](#))
- UNESCO-UNEVOC: Bridging innovation and learning in TVET – opportunities to share experience and build partnerships between Europe and Asia (BILT project) ([Sarah Elson-Rogers](#))
- SEAMEO-RIHED/SHARE: Towards a Programme on SEA-EU Mobility for Sustainable Development Kickoff Workshop on "Youth Learners' Mobility in an Agile World" ([Asst. Prof. Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont and Darren McDermott](#))
- International Association of Universities (IAU): World Higher Education Database (WHED) ([Hillegje Van 't Land](#))
- ASEM COIL – A Pilot Project Initiative to foster student online collaboration across cultures ([Prof. Dr. Alexandra Angress and Dr. Nurliana Binti Kamaruddin](#))
- Institute for Adult Learning Singapore (IAL): Global Lifelong Learning Summit ([Dr. Renée Tan](#))

- Erasmus Student Network (ESN): ARISE 2.0 - Opportunities of establishing an Asian counterpart to ESN ([Olivia Parczyk](#))

Chair's Conclusions

Nadia Reynders (ASEM Education Secretariat) briefly explains the purpose of the chair's conclusions. A reminder for input will go to all initiatives that are to be included.

[Link to the presentation on the Chair's Conclusions](#)

Presentations (see respective slides/recording)

- ARC8 Outlook Report on Inclusive & Diverse Higher Education ([Irina Ferencz](#) and [Assoc. Prof. Nopraenu Sajjarax Dhirathiti](#))
- National Equity Policy in Higher Education Study ([Dr. Graeme Atherton](#))
Remark by Belgium/French Community drawing attention to the EHEA Rome Ministerial Communiqué Annex II (Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA) and suggestion to explore if a progress report on inclusiveness/equity can be included in stocktaking report or chair's conclusions on a regular basis in the future.
- ASEMME8 Thailand: Statement from [Dr. Suphat Champatong](#), Permanent-Secretary of the Ministry of Education Thailand: Thailand as host of next ministerial meeting (pre-recorded video)
- ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub ([Dr. Séamus Ó Tuama](#))

Any other business (AOB)

Emily Degueldre (AES) reiterates the urgent need for a future host of the ASEM Education Secretariat from 2022 onwards and suggests to maybe hold a separate meeting on this issue. The delegations refrain from taking the floor on this issue.

Adrian Veale (European Commission) underlines the importance of shared ownership of the ASEM Education Process and, hence, the need for an Asian country to take over the tasks of the AES. He suggests having a transition period in which a new Asian host of the AES is being supported by European partners.

In addition, Adrian Veale suggests exploring ways to give more visibility to the ASEM Education initiatives on the wider ASEM stage, to amplify the outcome of this meeting. Nadia Reynders proposes to include a presentation of the strategy in the ASEM summit (Cambodia, 25 - 26 November 2021) or the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Leonie Nagarajan (ASEF) points out that such initiatives have to come from the ministries, and she encourages the partner countries to act accordingly.

Closing

Nadia Reynders briefly presents the timeline for finalising the relevant documents (Strategy, Action Plan, Stocktaking Report) until SOM 2 and ASEMME8. She thanks the SOM hosts and all involved partners and stakeholders and announced her early departure from the AES due to a new job offer.

Evelina Santa-Kahle (BMBF) extends her gratitude to the AES and all SOM participants and closes the meeting.