



STOCKTAKING REPORT 2021

FROM BUCHAREST TO BANGKOK



Asia-Europe Meeting

ASEM Education



PREFACE

The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) Belgium is proud to present its final Stocktaking Report 'From Bucharest to Bangkok', which lays out the outcomes and progress of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) between the seventh ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7), which was held in May 2019 in Bucharest, and the eighth Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME8), organised virtually by Thailand in December 2021.

This Stocktaking Report also marks the end of the four-year Belgian mandate. As a reminder, the ASEM Education Secretariat was handed over by Indonesia to Belgium during ASEMME6 in 2017 in Seoul. The Belgian Secretariat had a unique structure compared to its predecessors as it was composed of two different Ministries of Education: the Ministry of the French Community and the Ministry of the Flemish Community. This proved once again that the ASEM Education Secretariat can take many forms, but will always be at the heart of the ASEM Education Process, coordinating political and expert groups' meetings, ensuring coherence between the various projects and initiatives and representing the AEP during various international events.

The ASEM Education Process entered its second decade with the ambition to offer a more effective and sustainable platform for dialogue and cooperation in education between Europe and Asia. After a decade of fruitful exchanges, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders agreed that the process was ready for its next phase. During the sixth ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME6) in Seoul, the Ministers mandated, the Belgian Secretariat to develop a more result-oriented stocktaking process with a redesigned Stocktaking Report. A temporary dedicated task force was created in order to discuss the objectives and structure of a renewed Stocktaking Report. This task force agreed that the report should become an instrument to support the ASEM Education Process in identifying synergies and promoting coherence between initiatives in order to further build on results and make better use of existing resources.

This edition of the Stocktaking Report goes even a step further as efforts were made to make it more reader-friendly and visually attractive so that it can easily be shared not only within the ASEM Education community, but also in other networks in order to raise awareness about ASEM Education activities, initiatives and projects.

About the Structure of the Report

This report is structured as follows. The first chapter is dedicated to the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and accompanying Action Plan and provides some useful background information, as well as an overview of the drafting process. The second chapter covers ongoing ASEM Education activities and projects, while the third presents new and future initiatives. The fourth chapter is composed of analytical articles from some of our active members of the ASEM Education community, which agreed to share their views and expertise to reflect upon the challenges faced in the past two years. The final chapter formulates conclusions and possible recommendations for the further development of the ASEM Education Process.

This Stocktaking Report should be considered as a working instrument to further develop existing initiatives and plan future initiatives and projects. Experts' reflections should serve as basis for and discussion on how the ASEM Education Process itself could be further developed in the future. Hyperlinks have been embedded throughout this report to allow the interested reader to get access to more comprehensive information and relevant documents or websites.

Acknowledgments

The ASEM Education Secretariat would like to warmly thank all ASEM Education partners and stakeholders who have contributed to this report. We also wish to express our special thanks to our experts Prof. Dr. Alexandra Angress, Dr. Anamika, Prof.(Hon) Dr.h.c.mult. Arne Carlsen, Dhr. Frederik De Decker, Dr. M.Miandy Munusamy, Dr Que Anh Dang for their dedication, constructive feedback and pleasant collaboration. This Stocktaking Report reflects the pleasant collaboration we have had throughout the years with and illustrate what we can achieve through dedication and people-to-people connectivity.

The Secretariat wishes you an interesting reading and hopes that the conclusions and recommendations will inspire you to further develop and strengthen Asia-Europe collaboration in education in the upcoming years.



The ASEM Education Secretariat Belgium
Emilie DEGUELDRE & Nadia REYNDERS,

with the precious assistance of
Magalie SOENEN and Mariëlle VAN HEUMEN



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEI	Asia-Europe Institute
AEP	ASEM Education Process
AES	ASEM Education Secretariat
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
APGC	ASEM Pathfinder Group on Connectivity
ARC	ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEFClassNet	ASEF Classroom Network Conference
ASEFInnoLabs	ASEF Innovation Laboratories
ASEFSU	ASEF Summer University
ASEFYLS	ASEF Young Leaders Summit
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEM WPP	ASEM Work Placement Programme
ASEMME	ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting
AUN	ASEAN University Network
CC	Chair's Conclusions
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
DG	Directorate-General
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESN	Erasmus Student Network
ESU	European Students' Union
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU SHARE	European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region
EUA	European University Association
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISOM	Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QA	Quality Assurance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAMEO RIHED	South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization - Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting
SWG	Standing Working Group
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WG	Working Group

ASEM EDUCATION AND ACTION PLAN 2030

Background

During the seventh ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting in the framework of the ASEM Education Process (AEP), the Ministers decided to formulate an ASEM Education Strategy for 2030 in order to provide a framework for collaboration with common objectives to encourage international exchanges, share good practices, help partners cope with similar issues and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (ASEMME7 2019; Bucharest Statement).



In that meeting, it was decided that a Standing Working Group (SWG) would be set up to assist the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) in the development of a Strategy Document for the next decade. The SWG met for the first time in December 2019 in Berlin, Germany, to define aims, drafting modalities, as well as the general outline for the vision and mission statement. In their terms of reference, the SWG formulated the following aims for the Strategy 2030:

- *“To provide a common long-term strategy for the ASEM Education Process (AEP) for enhanced connectivity between Asia and Europe including relevant values, vision, mission and objectives in line with international and regional frameworks and strategies;*

- *To increase visibility and recognition for more commitment of ASEM Education partners and stakeholders;*
- *To provide a framework for developing and implementing result-oriented initiatives and projects (Chair’s Conclusions and/or action plan) and for analysis, monitoring and evaluation [of the results of these initiatives and projects] (Stocktaking Report)”.*

The ASEM Education Strategy 2030 builds on the four thematic priorities (Quality Assurance and Recognition, Engaging Business and Industry in Education, Balanced Mobility, Lifelong Learning including TVET) and two transversal themes (Digitalisation and Sustainable Development) identified in the framework of the ASEM Education Process.

Staying true to the key characteristics of the overall ASEM process, the Strategy Paper takes into account previously issued recommendations, in particular: the Seoul Declaration (ASEMME6), the Bucharest Statement (ASEMME7), the Stocktaking Report “From Seoul to Bucharest”, as well as the publication “Looking Back and Looking Ahead: The ASEM Education Process – History and Vision”. In addition, the ASEM Education Strategy builds on (other) international and regional processes and frameworks to create synergies and collaboration, pool expertise and resources.

The ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and its accompanying Action Plan aim to provide a framework for ASEM partners and stakeholders to develop, implement and monitor result-oriented initiatives and projects to be agreed upon by the ASEM Education Ministers in the Chair’s Conclusions of each two-yearly ministerial meeting. These projects and initiatives will be implemented through the interaction between competent ministries and ASEM Education stakeholders, with the support of the ASEM Education Secretariat, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) as the only permanent established institution under ASEM, the ASEM-DUO Secretariat and the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub Secretariat.

The ASEM Education Strategy Paper should not only be considered as a framework for the further development of the ASEM Education Process, but also as an important milestone encouraging renewed commitment towards a stronger dialogue and collaboration platform between Asia and Europe.

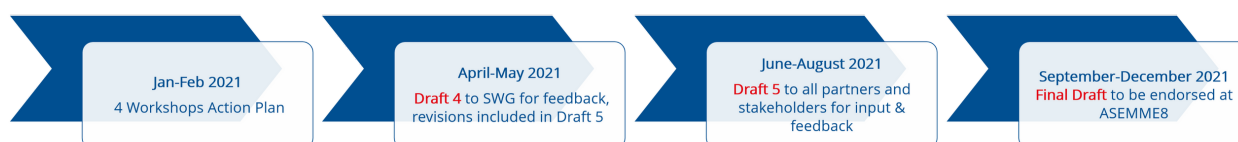
Overview of the Drafting Process



In February 2020, the first version of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 prepared by the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) and the Drafting Committee was circulated to the members of the Standing Working Group to allow them to provide input and share their feedback. In March-April 2020, the AES and Drafting Committee adapted this first draft in order to take into account the Standing Working Group’s comments and suggestions, thereby defining the first outline of the ASEM Education Process (AEP)’s strategic objectives and strategies for the next decade. In June 2020, this second draft was reviewed once again by the members of the Standing Working Group. Based on their input and comments, the AES and the Drafting Committee have amended the Strategy Document.

This version was then circulated at the end of October 2020 to all partners and stakeholders and presented by the Secretariat during a dedicated webinar.

Following this round of feedback, the Drafting Committee and AES updated the Strategy Paper to take into account all suggestions received. Over the course of January and February 2021, the ASEM Education Secretariat organised four participatory workshops: one on each of the four identified strategic objectives. These four workshops were open to all ASEM Education partners and stakeholders and were used to initiate the drafting of the 2030 Action Plan and collect ideas.



In the following months, both the Strategy Paper and Action Plan were further developed and completed by input provided by partners and stakeholders through several feedback rounds. Both documents were presented during the first Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) hosted by Germany in September 2021 and endorsed by Ministers during the eighth ASEM Education Meeting (ASEMME8) hosted by Thailand in December 2021.

Overview of the Content of the ASEM Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030

Vision and Mission Statement

By 2030, the ASEM Education Process (AEP) will contribute to a more prosperous, resilient and sustainable Asia-Europe education region, better prepared for current and forthcoming global challenges.

ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will reaffirm the AEP as an advanced transregional dialogue and cooperation platform. They aim to develop the AEP as a platform to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and training through equal and mutually beneficial Asia-Europe partnerships, leveraged by people-to-people connectivity.

Through partnerships, exchanges and collaboration, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will support the education sector to train individuals able to navigate through rapidly changing and increasingly complex societies and labour markets, while respecting national, regional and local education contexts and practices, as well as academic values.

partners and stakeholders aim to achieve through their collaborative projects and initiatives:



1) Enhancing Connectivity between Asia and Europe by Boosting Inclusive and Balanced Mobility and Exchanges



2) Promoting Lifelong Learning (LLL), Including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)



3) Fostering the Development of Skills and Competences



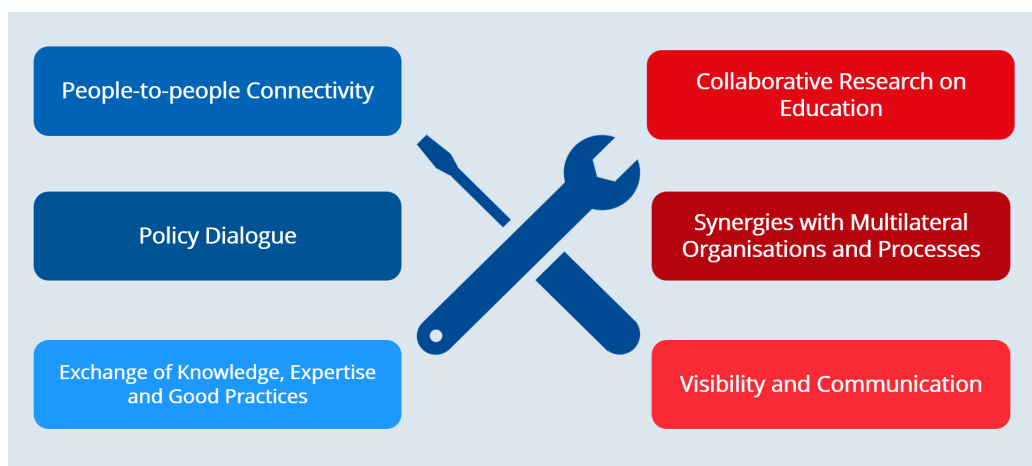
4) Creating More Transparency and Mutual Understanding on Recognition, Validation and Quality Assurance

Strategic Objectives for the Next Decade

The four following strategic objectives, identified by ASEM Education partners and stakeholders, will shape the thematic focus of the ASEM Education Process for the next decade by outlining what ASEM Education

Instruments and Working Methods

To implement the 2030 Strategy and realise their ambitions, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders can count on the support of the ASEM Education Secretariat, the Asia-Europe Foundation, the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub Secretariat, as well as the ASEM-DUO Secretariat. They have identified the following instruments and working methods to realise the ASEM Education vision for the next decade:



Implementation and Monitoring

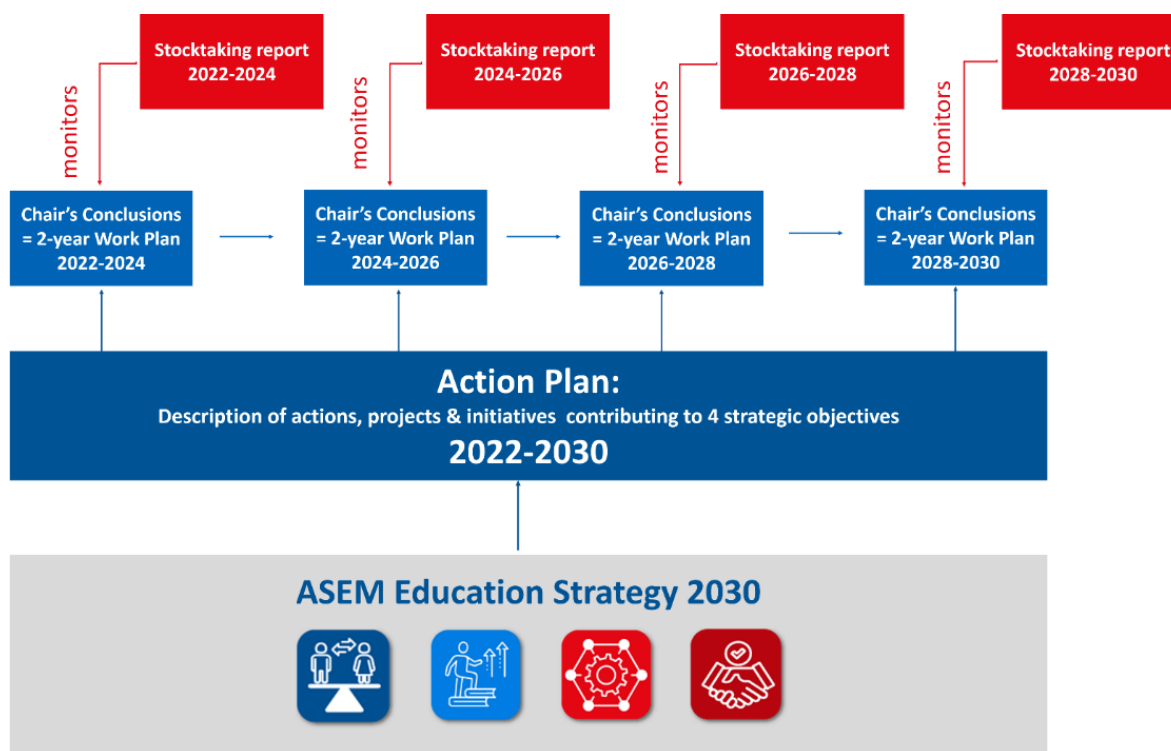
The accompanying Action Plan details the practical implementation of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and lists actions that ASEM Education partners and stakeholders are carrying out and are planning to carry out to realise the ambitions of the ASEM Education 2030 Strategy and to reach the four strategic objectives identified for the next decade.

The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES), in close interaction with the coordinators of the projects and initiatives and with the support of the Standing Working Group, will be in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan and assess to which extent activities and projects carried out have contributed to the four strategic objectives formulated in the ASEM Education Strategy 2030.

Every two years, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will update each other on their future plans through the Chair's Conclusions presented and endorsed during the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME).

The annex of the Chair's Conclusions will serve as a work plan for the next two years and will detail concrete plans for activities under each project or initiative. It will also specify expected outputs and results and explain how partners and stakeholders' activities contribute to the strategic objectives.





Finally, the Stocktaking Report, published every two years by the AES, will be the main instrument for monitoring the implementation of the ASEM Education Strategy and progress of activities listed in this Action Plan. Senior officials, partners and stakeholders are expected to actively contribute to this report by providing regular updates on their on-going activities to the AES.



Existing ASEM Education Initiatives, Projects and Activities

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ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION (ASEF)

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ASIA-EUROPE INSTITUTE (AEI)

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ASEM-DUO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

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ASEM EDUCATION AND RESEARCH HUB FOR
LIFELONG LEARNING (ASEM LLL HUB)

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ASEM EDUCATION COMPENDIUM FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION

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ASEM EDUCATION EXPERT GROUP
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**ASEM EDUCATION WORK PLACEMENT
PROGRAMME (WPP)**

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**ASEM EDUCATION WORKING GROUP ON THE
BRIDGING DECLARATION**

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION - ERASMUS+

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EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION (ETF)

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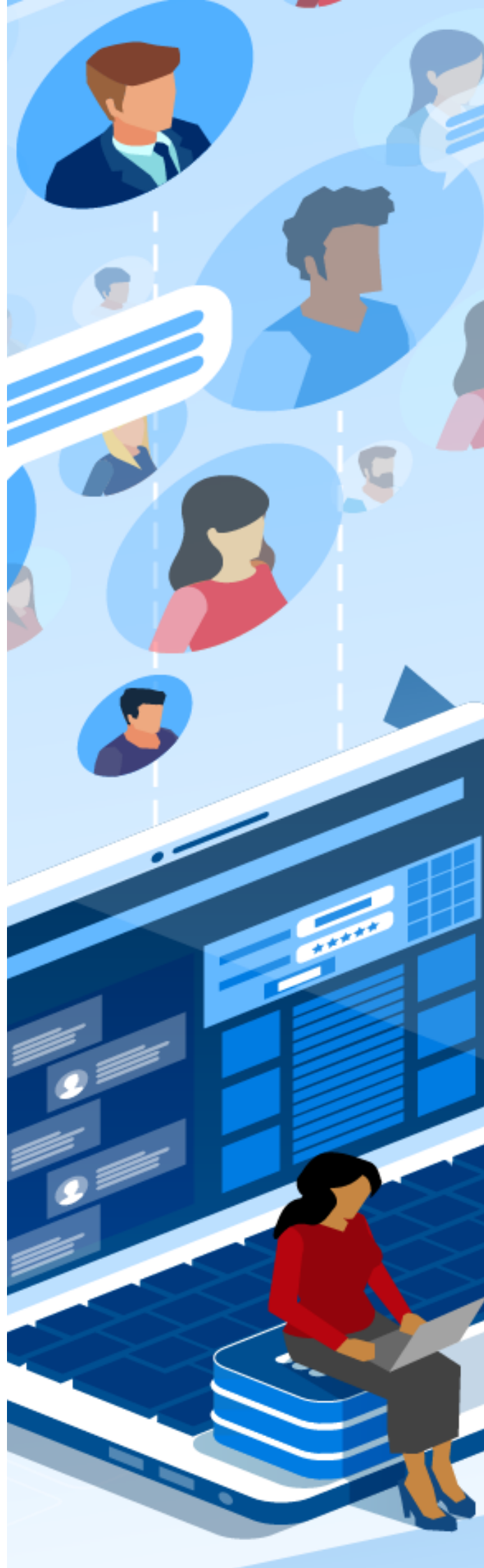
**EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORT TO HIGHER
EDUCATION IN THE ASEAN REGION (SHARE)
PROGRAMME**

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**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITIES (IAU)**

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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION (UNESCO)**



Established in 1997 as an intergovernmental, not-for profit organisation, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) remains ASEM's only permanent institution with the mission to connect institutions and individuals of Asia and Europe to address and collaborate on common global challenges. www.asef.org

Education is one of ASEF's key thematic areas. In this field, ASEF connects the youth, students, teachers & educators, higher education leaders & EdTech experts with policy makers across both regions. Through policy dialogues, capacity building and the creation of bi-regional networks, ASEF contributes to innovation in the formal and non-formal education sector and towards the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda2030. Aligned with the strategic priorities of the ASEM Education Process (AEP), ASEF's education projects promote inclusive & equitable access across all education sectors and engage civil society and government stakeholders in interdisciplinary, technology-driven and lifelong learning opportunities to enhance quality education.

Recognised as official events of ASEM Summits, ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meetings (ASEFMFMs) and ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEMMEs), ASEF's projects bring the voice of the youth into the ASEM Process and facilitate a structured dialogue between young people and the political leaders of both regions. The outcomes of ASEF's education projects also feed into the agenda of the ASEM meetings, in particular ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEMMEs).

Since the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7) in Romania in 2019, ASEF has been carrying out over 20 projects, activities and studies in secondary education, higher education & the youth sector.

These have directly/indirectly engaged over 19,000 participants from all 51 ASEM countries and provided diverse opportunities for experiential learning and capacity building as well as involvement in research & study collaborations. Projects had an equal gender balance and welcomed participants from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds and mixed abilities. ASEF contributed in particular to the AEP's strategic priorities #1 "Enhancing connectivity between Asia and Europe by boosting inclusive and balanced mobility and exchanges", and #3 "Fostering the development of skills and competences".

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, ASEF transformed its face-to-face activities to hybrid or fully virtual project formats. As most of ASEF's education projects already included online components, e.g., in the form of virtual knowledge building phases, the transition went smoothly. Through the engagement of Inclusion Advisors, ASEF also placed a strong emphasis on inclusive project management practices which supported equitable access and participation for all (e.g., note taking services; project materials available in screen-reader friendly versions, etc.).

The following projects & activities are highlights of ASEF's education portfolio since ASEMME7, covering the ASEF Young Leaders Programme, ASEF's Higher Education and Policy Programme as well as ASEF's Teaching & Learning Programme:

ASEF's Education Department conducts Alumni Impact Surveys on a biennial basis to find out what influence ASEF had on participants through its projects and to evaluate its project formats and outcomes for future enhancements.

Key Findings from the 2021 Alumni Survey Based on the feedback by alumni who joined ASEF's Education Projects during the years 2014-2020

- 99% confirmed that ASEF's projects helped them build personal connections and networks
- 93% commented that ASEF's projects improved their career/professional opportunities
- 81% of participants reported still being in contact with their project peers
- 68% stated that participating in an ASEF project inspired them to study/live/work in another ASEM country
- 54% of ASEFEdu alumni of higher education & secondary education projects established new collaborations



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<https://asef.org/themes/education/>



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[ASEF YouTube](#)

[ASEFEdu Medium blog](#)

“

“The multiple cross-country collaboration and experiences in a different country gave me a totally new dimension to my perspectives. It not only increased my political participation and developed my political positive footprint, but it has also taught me empathy in different cultural settings. Though the knowledge was useful, the network I have gained through the ASEF project was what I needed, and I am proud to say that the impact of the ASEF project plays a part in my professional development today!”

”

Feedback from ASEFEdu alumni

“

“Perspectives, Motivation, Inspiration. Most significant are the connections I have made with teachers and researchers from Asia and Europe, several of them I can now call friends. They continue to inspire me, and I continue to learn.”

”

“

“While looking back, I believe the most significant impact the ASEF project had on me was that it made me feel empowered and confident. The learnings and experiences I gathered from the project have enabled a sense of reassurance in myself. It helped me to hone my leadership capabilities and inspired me to take up the role of a changemaker in my community and also on a global scale.”

“The project changed my worldview as I see more commonalities in our problems - be it in an Asian or European context. It also changed my perception to be more mobile in looking for opportunities abroad. Most importantly, it changed my view of volunteering, especially advocating on urban issues and agendas which is now more possible thanks to the support of fellow peers from ASEF projects. Previously, before the ASEF Summer University, my world was just my country.”

”

11 – 16 December 2019, Madrid, Spain

Model ASEM Project Series - Impact on Education & ASEM Connectivity



- Official youth event at ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meetings (ASEMFMMs) with an ASEM Youth Intervention
- Capacity-building for students to fine-tune their skills in diplomacy, negotiation, consensus-building and public speaking
- Enhanced participation of young people in the ASEM Process through Official Dialogues and personal interactions between Youth and ASEM Foreign Ministers
- Equitable access to an invaluable network that promotes Youth Diplomacy, Asia-Europe relations and creation of ASEM Youth Ambassadors

The 9th Model ASEM was a political simulation of the actual 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEMFMM14) in 2019 in Madrid. Bringing together 128 students from all 51 ASEM countries, the youth participants experienced Asia-Europe diplomacy through various elements including workshops, study visits and role-play exercises. ASEF also facilitated 19 meetings between participants and ASEM Foreign Ministers and Senior Officials.

During the simulation elements, participants represented all 53 ASEM Partners and attended plenary sessions, bilateral meetings and Senior Officials' Meetings. 14 Resource Persons, ASEF-trained youth representatives (called Model ASEM Mediators) led these various sessions as Chair, Vice-Chair, Moderators and Rapporteurs, following their participation in the Model ASEM Mediators Training 2019 in Valletta, Malta, earlier in the year. The participants closed the simulation with a negotiation on the 9th Model ASEM Chair's Statement.

As part of the Model ASEM training programme, participants had the opportunity to receive first-hand insights on international relations and diplomacy throughout the conference in form of panel discussions with diplomats as well as visits to 18 ASEM Diplomatic Missions based in Madrid. Participants also attended skills-based workshops on cultural diplomacy, election security, protocol, fake news, negotiation, public interviews and public speaking. A highlight of the 9th Model ASEM was the ASEM Youth Dialogue with HE Dr Miroslav LAJCÁK, then Minister of Foreign and European Affairs for the Slovak Republic, moderated by 4 Model ASEM participants. ASEF also facilitated more than 15 personal meetings between 9th Model ASEM participants and their respective Foreign Ministers.

The 9th Model ASEM concluded with 4 participants joining the Opening Ceremony of the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting (ASEMFMM14) and presenting a collective ASEM Youth Intervention, in the presence of Foreign Ministers from 51 Asian and European Countries, the Leaders from the EU and the ASEAN Secretariat, and His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain, bringing the youth voice to the ASEM Process.

Visit the [project website](#) to learn more.



23rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU23)

“Liveable Cities for a Sustainable Future”

September – November 2021

Virtual with focus countries Bangladesh, India & Pakistan

ASEFSU Project Series - Impact on Education & ASEM Connectivity



- Capacity building & Global Citizenship Education for students & young professionals through an experiential learning journey across ASEM-countries & virtually
- Interdisciplinary Hackathon competition where ASEM youth, local communities & ASEM stakeholders collaborate to tackle socio-economic challenges
- Awareness creation and promotion of ASEM priorities & the SDGs of UN Agenda 2030

As part of its experiential learning programme for young people, ASEF organised the 23rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU23) on “Liveable Cities for a Sustainable Future” with a focus on Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The three-month long virtual programme welcomed over 90 young people – including young developers, programmers, designers, urbanization and SDG experts - from 39 ASEM countries.

The ASEFSU23 was ASEF’s first Hackathon where participants had to develop digital prototypes to tackle three urban challenges:

1. Bangladesh: Creating green cities: Tackling Waste Management in Dhaka
2. India: Creating healthy cities: Addressing Obesity among Children in New Delhi
3. Pakistan: Creating accessible cities: Enhancing Urban Mobility in Lahore

The comprehensive programme included SDG trainings & country specific workshops as well as an intensive prototype development phase where participants received experts mentoring on an intellectual & technical level. The project closed with a pitching event, where participants presented their solutions to a distinguished jury panel. The winning teams continued with a prototype testing phase to evaluate a possible implementation of their digital solutions on the ground.

Next to the development of 12 digital prototypes for possible implementation on the ground, ASEFSU23 focused on the creation of diverse multi-media content productions to expand and share knowledge and good practices on urbanisation across ASEM, including: academic papers, publication on liveable ASEM cities as seen by young people, youth podcast on urbanisation as well as video clips and short documentaries on urban challenges in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Visit the [project website](#) to learn more.

ASEFYLS Project Series - Impact on Education & ASEM Connectivity



- Official youth side-event at ASEM Summits with ASEM Youth Intervention
- Thought & action leadership programme for students & young professionals that focuses on values & sustainable impact in society
- Enhanced participation of young people in the ASEM Process through Official Dialogues and personal interactions between Youth and ASEM Leaders
- Access to an invaluable network that drives key priorities of ASEM and the UN Agenda2030 and training of future societal leaders

In the lead up of the 13th ASEM Summit, ASEF organised the 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) as the official youth event of ASEM13. The ASEFYLS4 was a 10-month long leadership programme on "Sustainable Development in a post-COVID-19 world" for over 180 young people from all 51 ASEM countries. The programme included three key elements:

1) A 3-month long Knowledge Building Phase on the SDGs, which ASEF conducted with the College of Europe in Natolin (Poland) and renowned speakers from IOM, UNESCO, UNFCCC and WHO; Highlights of the Knowledge Building Phase included four virtual ASEM Youth Dialogues with ASEM Leaders and Officials:

- HE Mr Micheál MARTIN, Taoiseach/Prime Minister of Ireland,
- HE Dato LIM Jock Hoi, ASEAN Secretary-General
- HE Mrs Pornpimol KANCHANALAK, Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand,
- Amb Johannes MATYASSY, Deputy State Secretary of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

2) A 6-month long Leadership in Action Phase, where participants worked in 15 teams to design and implement SDG related activities on a local community level or online to demonstrate their leadership and action towards Sustainable Development; the Leadership in Action projects varied in their nature, ranging from podcast & multi-media productions, workshops and skills trainings for young people to awareness creation campaigns and policy dialogue.

2) A 1-week long ASEFYLS4 Summit Conference, where the participants presented the Outcome of their Leadership in Action Projects. Three ASEFYLS4 youth representatives were also invited to join the Opening Ceremony of the 13th ASEM Summit and deliver an ASEM Youth Intervention on "Sustainable Development in a post-COVID-19 World". The ASEFYLS4 programme concluded with the launch of the ASEM Youth Report on Leadership which captures the views and voices of over 13,600 young Asians and Europeans on their experiences, aspirations as well as opportunities and barriers of youth leadership in both regions.

Visit the [project website](#) to learn more.



8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8)

Outlook 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

10 September 2021, Virtual

ARC Project Series - Impact on Education & ASEM Connectivity



- Official Dialogue Partner & Official Side-Event of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME)
- The only bi-regional multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for university and student leaders, experts, policy makers and ministers
- Its main outputs, including research & policy recommendations feed into the preparation process of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings
- Capacity Building Trainings on SDGs as spin-offs for the higher education sector

ASEF organised the 8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8) on 10 September 2021 in the lead up of the 8th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting. ARC8 tackled a key priority area within the ASEM Education Process: Inclusion & Equity in Higher Education. The conference welcomed over 1,500 university managers, academics, students, policymakers and representatives of higher education networks from the 51 ASEM Partner Countries to leverage on the current COVID-19 disruption and put the values of inclusion and equity in the center of their recovery roadmap. As part of conference programme, the ARC8 Outlook Report 2030 was launched, focusing on 4 subthemes:

- Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education
- Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World
- Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways
- Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge



Group photo of the ARC8 Experts, contributors to the ARC8 Outlook 2030 Report

The Opening was graced by HE Dr Kung PHOAK, ASEF Governor for ASEAN and Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Professor Dr Anek Laothamatas, Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation, Thailand, delivered the Closing Remarks.

Visit the [project website](#) to learn more.

Highlights of the ARC conference programme included the launch of two key ASEM education reports:



Publication

ARC8 Outlook Report 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

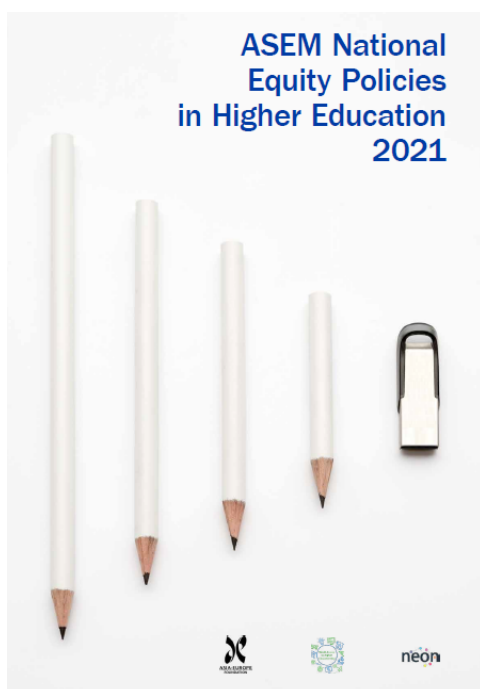
The Report outlines emerging issues that could grow into major challenges and/or opportunities in the coming 10 years related to inclusion in higher education. Inputs for the report came from an in-depth consultation process and from previous research done by 25 Asian and European education experts.

The Report consists of 4 chapters analysing the future of inclusion from different perspectives and makes two sets of recommendations for:

- ASEM policymakers, to serve as a basis for policy dialogues and as an input to their discussions on the ASEM Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030.
- ASEM university leaders, to outline capacity building directions for institutions and inspire joint action to make universities more inclusive in the next decade.

A copy of the Report is available online [here](#).

A screen-reader friendly version is published online [here](#).



Publication

ASEM Equity Policy on Higher Education Study 2021

This Report is ASEM's first comprehensive equity study, which draws upon a survey on national equity policies which ASEM conducted between September 2020 and July 2021 across ASEM.

An online questionnaire was sent to all ASEM Ministries of Education on policy commitments in relation to equitable access and success, their targets and implementation as well as the impact of COVID-19 on the progress in making higher education more equitable. The Report is based on national equity policies in 47 ASEM countries and was published by ASEM in collaboration with the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON).

In addition, 47 individual ASEM countries briefs have been produced that outline in detail the respective national equity policies.

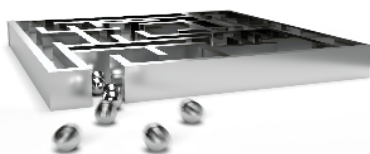
A copy of the Report is available online [here](#).

A screen-reader friendly version is published online [here](#).



ASEFInnoLab1 March-May 2021 & ASEFInnoLab2 November-December 2021 , Virtual

ASEF InnoLab Project Series - Impact on Education & ASEM Connectivity

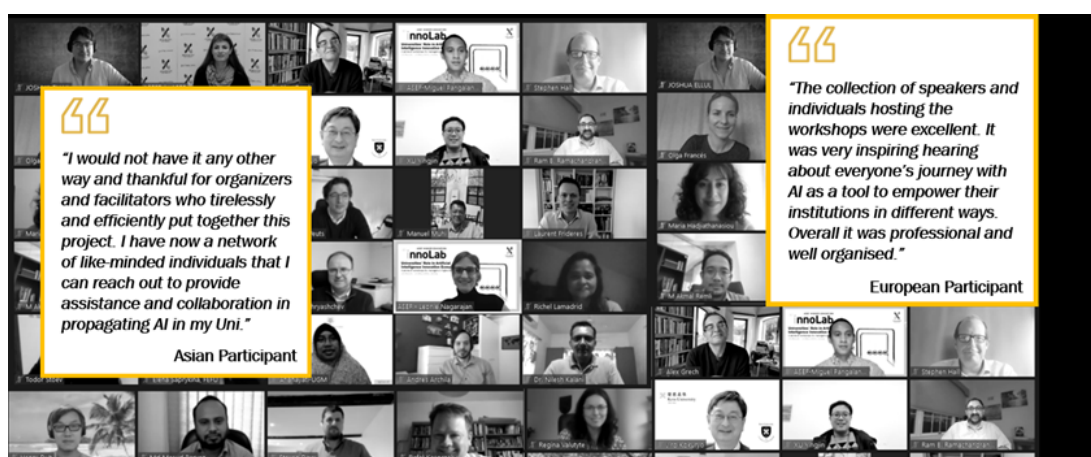


- Design thinking laboratory for leaders, managers and administrators of tertiary higher education institutions in charge of innovation and research
- Incentivises STEM collaboration among ASEM universities and creates a sustainable peer network
- Learner-centred methodology with a focus on collaboration that inspires personal and institutional actions
- Outputs feed into the ASEM Education Digitalisation Taskforce advising the ASEM Education Secretariat

The 1st and 2nd edition of the ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab) on the theme "Universities' Role in Artificial Intelligence (AI) Innovation Ecosystems" took place in 2021. In partnership with Fudan University, ASEF designed two 8-week long online projects for up to 40 participants each - university managers, administrators and academics - to exchange good practices, co-create new ideas and explore areas for collaboration among their institutions. Next to the creation of a community of practice, key outcomes of the ASEF InnoLab editions are participants' strategies and actions plans, ready for implementation, in the following two areas:

- 1) Teaching and Entrepreneurship for AI Innovation Ecosystems
- 2) Research and Technology Transfer in AI Innovation Ecosystems

To leverage on the content and knowledge outputs, ASEF is currently developing online modules for ASEF e-Learning platform as a spin-off of the 2nd ASEF InnoLab. These online modules will be open to all interested audiences.



Visit the [project website of the ASEFInnoLab1](#) to learn more.
Visit the [project website of the ASEFInnoLab2](#) to learn more.



15th ASEF Classroom Network (ASEF ClassNet15) & Collaborations in 2020 & 2021

“Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Role and Readiness of Teachers”

25 – 29 November 2021 and throughout 2020 & 2021

ASEF ClassNet Project Series - Impact on Education & ASEM Connectivity



- The only platform in Asia and Europe that facilitates connectivity, knowledge and intercultural exchange in secondary, high, and vocational schools
- Sustainable network for collaboration & co-creation where teachers & students discuss, explore and apply education technology at the secondary level education
- Contribution to teacher professionalisation and the development of 21st century skills among students by focusing on contemporary education topics

To ensure connectivity and facilitate partnerships among institutions & educators in the secondary education sector, ASEF organised the 15th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet15) and initiated several ASEF ClassNet School Collaborations since ASEMME7.

ASEF ClassNet School Collaborations 2019

The 15th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet15) took place from 25-29 November 2019 in Tokyo, Japan. The conference gathered 126 participants from all 51 ASEM countries, amongst them secondary, high and vocational schoolteachers, policymakers, scholars, pedagogical experts, education and EdTech leaders. The Conference facilitated a robust action-oriented dialogue on ESD, AI, and the role and readiness of teachers by providing a multi stakeholder platform for secondary/high schools and vocational schoolteachers, researchers, policy makers and EdTech leaders to:

1. Raise awareness and build knowledge on the topic “Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and AI: The Role and Readiness of Teachers” as an integrative element in teaching and learning in secondary, high, and vocational school education, through case-studies and practical tools
2. Encourage schools to join an active Asia-Europe network and to initiate collaboration and support for creating holistic and timely relevant future learning environments
3. Suggest policy recommendations based on discussions on ESD and AI during the conference to education policy makers and governments for better integration of ESD into school curricula with the help of AI tools.

The participants also had the opportunity to learn about the best education practices from the local institutions such as Ochanomizu Senior High School, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as well as the Institute for Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) as part of the study visits integrated in the programme.

In the lead up of ASEFClassNet15 in Tokyo, 45 School Collaborations were implemented by ASEFClassNet alumni and participants. ASEF shortlisted 6 collaborations to compete for the ASEF ClassNet Awards for their outstanding intercultural and innovative ICT components (3 awards in the Gold Category, 3 awards in the Merit Category). These 6 award-winning school collaborations mobilised a total of 756 students, 52 teachers, 40 schools in 24 ASEM countries.

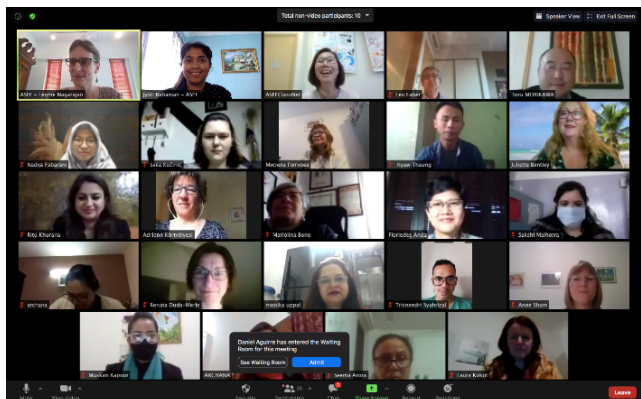
ASEF ClassNet School Collaborations in 2020 and 2021

The key objective of ASEF ClassNet School Collaborations is to facilitate capacity building for teachers & students through multi-stakeholder cooperation in the secondary education sector with a focus on Digital Competence, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship amidst COVID-19. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition of schools to online teaching & learning, ASEF solely focused on virtual activities in 2020 and 2021. These activities incorporated both transversal themes of the ASEM Education Process, namely “Sustainable Development” and “Digitalisation”.



A New Education Scenario: Well-being of Teachers, Students & Parents

A peer-to-peer collaboration with activities focusing on 1) Wellbeing & Mental Health, 2) Parent-Teacher Collaboration, 3) 30 Pedagogical Knowledge & Digital Competences and 4) Intercultural Understanding & Exchange



Gender Equitable AI and AI for Gender Equality

A school collaboration that challenged students to observe the world through the lens of the SDGs, specifically by focusing on gender equality and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and expressing their observations through blogs and collaborative design & visual activities

Outcomes of this school collaboration can be found on this blog [here](#) and on the [e-twinning platform](#).

Connectivity created

- 82 secondary, high, and vocational schoolteachers and educators engaged
- 55 schools and education institutions represented
- 30 ASEM countries
- 650 students aged between 11-18 involved
- 17 spin-off activities among Asian and European schools initiated

Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), Universiti Malaya, 2019- 2021

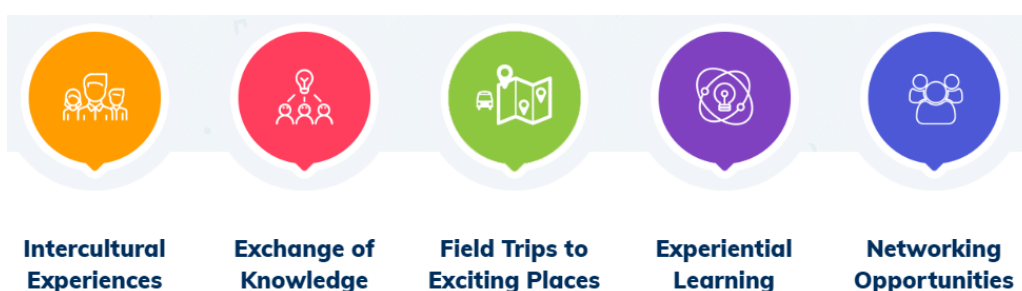


Vision: To be a centre of excellence in learning, research and international reference on Asia and Europe.

Mission: To spearhead quality academic and research work through smart partnerships between Asia and Europe.

AEI-ASEM Summer School

The AEI has organised the AEI-ASEM Summer School since 2015. It is an on-going initiative to enhance balanced mobility of students, researchers and academics between Asia and Europe (ASEMME4).



Its objective is to bring more European students to Asia to promote Balanced Mobility. The summer school has attracted learners from Europe and other countries to discuss and interact on topics such as cultural and religious pluralism in both Asia and Europe. It promotes AEI as a body that brings Europe to Asia, creates future opportunities for European higher education institutions to explore and initiate outbound mobility programmes and exchanges with AEI, and enables European learners to experience first-hand cultural and religious pluralism and participate in activities.

“

What an incredible two weeks! I have made some incredible friends and met some frankly fascinating people. Malaysia is a beautiful country that I luckily have not left quite yet. It has such a rich past and present that I am so fortunate to have had the chance to learn about and experience. So many insightful lectures, field trips, and of course the two-day Asia Europe conference, have given me much food for thought (and perhaps some inspiration for my thesis!!!)

”



Antonia Gough, UK

“

AEI-ASEM Summer School gives me opportunity not only to learn serious stuff such as regionalism and multiculturalism, but also gives me the opportunity to understand the people. The friendship that is created by this event would last a lifetime!

”



**Ghifari Athallah Ramadhan,
Indonesia**

AEI-ASEM Summer School 2020

The AEI-ASEM Summer School in 2020 was virtual and co-hosted with Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin, Ireland on 'Multiculturalism in Asia and Europe: Issues and Challenges'. It explored issues related to multiculturalism and diverse societies in Southeast Asia and Europe. It included modules that discussed increasing diversities arising from migration and greater mobility in the regions as well as the rise of identity politics and polarization within societies. Both ASEAN and the EU face common and differing challenges in their regional and global environment, and EU and ASEAN member states are also confronted with these issues within their own societies. This raises interesting questions and comparisons on how these issues are being addressed at the national and regional level. This summer school enables discussions of some of these issues with case studies provided for comparison to share best practices and ideas.

AEI-ASEM Summer School 2021

The AEI-ASEM Summer School in 2021 was also virtual and co-hosted with Universitas Padjadjaran and University of Freiburg/FRIAS (Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies), Germany. It focussed on today's ever globalizing world and the growing concern that various factors such as conflict or growing economic inequality have contributed to the disempowerment and increased vulnerability of different groups in society. The lectures explored the issues related to public empowerment in Southeast Asia and Europe presenting students with a unique opportunity to learn from experts from both regions. The lecture modules covered social, economic, cybersecurity, and employee empowerment in both Asia and Europe, discussing issues of common concern as well as key factors in the pursuit of enhancing social resilience. The modules will also provide a platform for peer-to-peer discussion on the topics at hand in order to take into account the experience and opinions of the participants.

AEI Postgraduate Programmes

The core objective of AEI is to further develop Asia-Europe relations by providing opportunities for post-graduate studies for career advancement as well as to enhance the academic and cultural experience of students and scholars. The programmes are designed to with a view to developing in them, a better understanding of the cultures, history, politics, institutions, economics, business and legal practices of both regions.

- Masters in ASEAN Studies
- Masters in European Studies
- PhD on regional and inter-regional studies



AEI's Master programmes are coursework based with small class sizes and an adaptable learning approach which emphasises Socratic style discussions and student led learning. Classes have been conducted in a hybrid online manner throughout 2020-2021 and incorporates guest lecturers as well as initiatives such as the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) pilot project with Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany in 2021.

AEI Ambassador Lecture Series

AEI hosts lectures by Ambassadors from both Europe and Asia as well as senior officials from the two regions who deliberate on current topics in their own countries or regions. For example, in 2021, the Ambassadors of Sweden and Norway spoke about the Nordic Model: Swedish and Norwegian Perspectives.



Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (JMCoE) (2017-2021)

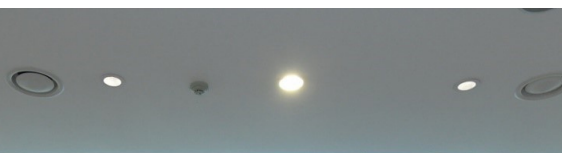
The project is entitled: “ASEAN-EU in Dialogue: Learning from Each Other”.

The JMCoE work programme for the years 2017-2021 aimed to sharpen the focus of AEI on ASEAN-EU Studies and to build domestic capacities both in research and teaching.

Some activities that were carried out were:

- EU and European Ambassadors’ lectures for Malaysians and the international community
- EU-ASEAN officials/academics exchanges in symposia and panels
- Europe Day in schools in Malaysia where students are given information on the EU and European Higher Education
- An annual Asia-Europe conference on Asia-Europe political, economic and sociocultural issues with key speakers from both regions
- EU-ASEAN comparative regionalism workshops
- Teaching EU Studies in ASEAN workshops
- Virtual classes on ASEM for students at AEI and at a German university by Professor from Germany (Bochum University)





STRUCTURE-BASED EXCHANGE THROUGH PAIRING

ASEM-DUO

Photographs by [ASEM-DUO Secretariat](#)

People-To-People Connectivity

ASEM-DUO contributes to the overarching ASEM objective of people-to-people connectivity which was confirmed at the highest political level by all ASEM members. The objective of balanced mobility is achieved through reciprocity ("pairing"). There is unanimous support for the continuation of the Programme as ASEM-DUO is considered as one of the uncontested success stories of ASEM.

7 ASEM-DUO Programmes

As of October 2021, there are six ASEM-DUO Programmes in operation, supported by seven governments which are Belgium (French Community), Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, Republic of Korea, India and Germany.

Every year since 2000, more than 200 students and professors have benefited from the initiative; during AY2020/2021, 332 students and professors were selected for support.

However, a sizable number of exchanges has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Contributing Countries

As announced in ASEMME7, DUO-India was launched in July 2019 and selected awardees. There were a few challenges for students to apply for the exchanges since it was the first call for applications in the middle of summer vacation. Therefore, fewer students had been selected than planned, but more professors had been selected than expected.

In addition, Germany became one of the contributing members of ASEM-DUO in 2021. Germany will contribute to the fellowship fund of the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Program and support exchanges between Germany and the Republic of Korea.

One of the fellowship programs will be terminated in 2021. Unfortunately, the Flemish Government in Belgium decided not to prolong the DUO-Belgium/Flanders Fellowship Programme as of the academic year 2021/2022 due to changes in priorities of the Ministry of Education. Therefore, there will be no call for DUO-Belgium/Flanders 2021.

Testimonials from awardees

I am very happy with my exchange as both the university, as well as the ASEM-DUO fellowship have offered me a great opportunity to increase my intercultural competence and international communication network. This has helped me to further broaden my perspectives and get a better and more thorough understanding of people of various different cultures that I have encountered and interacted with. Hereby, I want to thank ASEM-DUO for making this exchange possible.

**Deniz Tosun (Germany, Exchanged in Korea),
Ingolstadt University of Applied Sciences**

I want to say thank you for the ASEM-DUO which helps to make my dream to study in Europe into reality. I really gained not only on-class knowledge, but also got valuable opportunity to get access to the splendid culture and people in Europe. I really appreciate this worthwhile time spending in Belgium, which may also give me profound influence in my future study and daily life. Hope the students in the future to exchange also have a good and memorable experience in Belgium.

**Wenyuan Yang (China, Exchanged in Belgium),
Fudan University**

My time abroad has opened my mind to a wide range of possibilities. Through meeting people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures I personally believe that I have become a more "worldly" person and open to new experiences. Most importantly I would like to thank ASEM-DUO for supporting me on my journey to Sweden. Knowing I had their support was a great reassurance and I will be forever grateful to ASEM-DUO for giving me this opportunity.

**Amelia Hayes (Australia, Exchanged in Sweden), La
Trobe University**



“

The DUO-fellowship not only helps further one's education but also brings exposure to new cultures, gains a global perspective, better employability, networking, and broadens one's horizons.

”

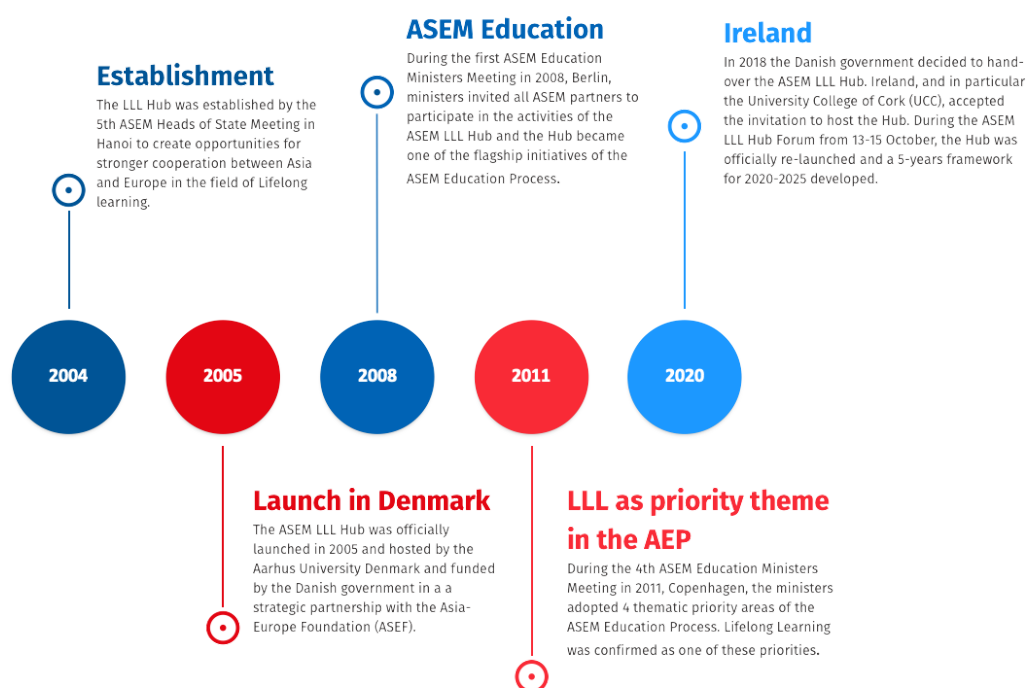
**Hannah Singh (India, Exchanged in Spain), Indian
Institute of Technology Roorkee**



ASEM EDUCATION AND RESEARCH HUB FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (ASEM LLL HUB)

Comparative Research on Lifelong Learning

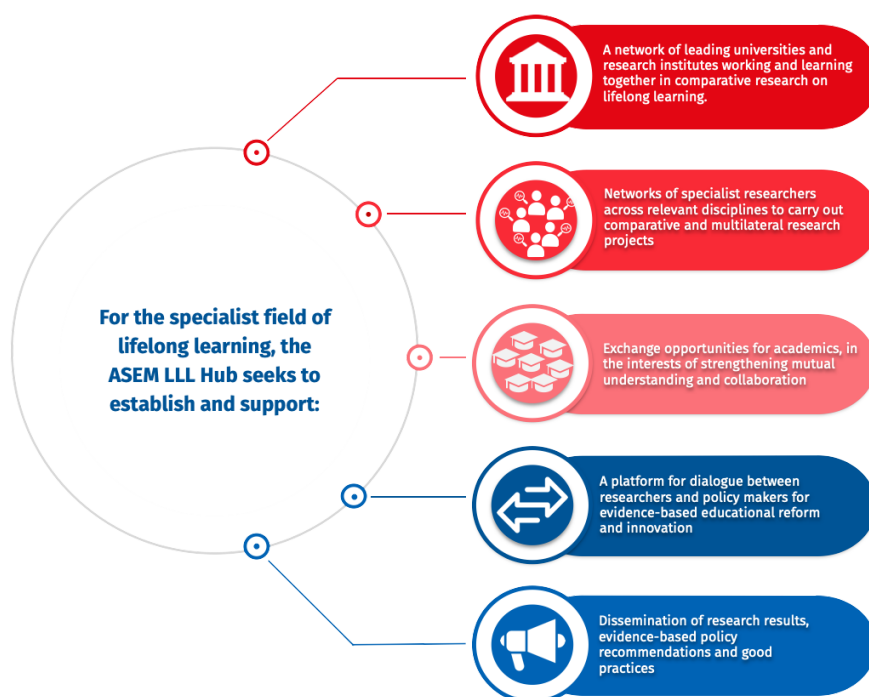
The ASEM LLL Hub, established in 2005, is an official network of Asian and European higher education institutions, working and learning together to achieve excellence in comparative research on lifelong learning, to offer research-based education policy recommendation, and to develop mutual understanding between Asia and Europe. It also facilitates researcher and student mobility and exchange within and between the two world regions.



Platform for dialogue

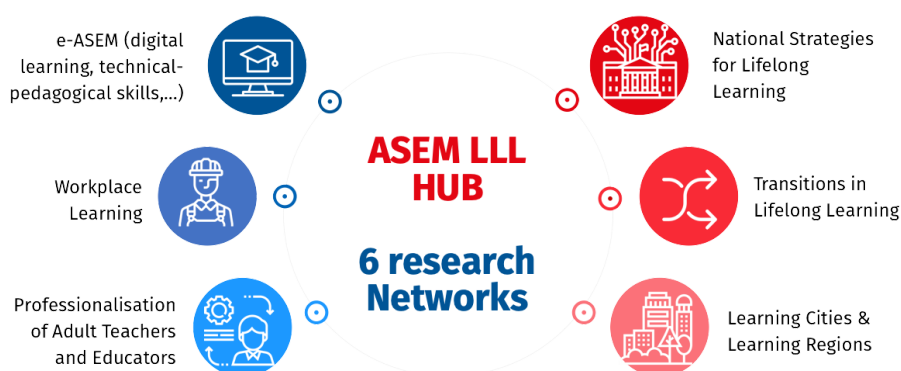
The ASEM LLL Hub provides a platform for dialogue between researchers, practitioners and policy makers in order to contribute to evidence-based educational reform and innovation. Its six research networks exchange knowledge, conduct comparative research and produce coordinated publications and reports. In parallel with six active research networks,

the Hub has a Council of Research Network Coordinators composed of senior representatives from its six research networks, as well as representatives from both ASEF and ASEM Education. Additionally, the Hub has an International Advisory Council that at present brings together 25 national ministries and 5 international organizations.



Research Networks

In cooperation with partner universities and ASEM governments, the ASEM LLL Hub together with its six research networks organizes yearly seminars and conferences, publishes books and disseminates information on its website. At ASEM LLL conferences, the research results are presented to the public, representatives of ASEM ministries and academic communities.



Research Network 1 e-ASEM

e-ASEM, the ASEM e-Learning Network for Lifelong Learning, aims to set up an online research network that allows ASEM LLL partner universities to continuously exchange ICT skills and e-learning related academic and practical experiences. In this regard, e-ASEM is promoting international collaborative projects for information sharing, research, and human resource development on ICT skills and e-learning. Among the network's many activities, the following have been at the forefront of the objectives.

- Initiating an online research network that allows ASEM LLL University partners to continuously exchange research results on developing ICT skills and e-learning related to academic and practical experiences
- Establishing an online community for sharing information, knowledge, and human resource development
- Conducting collaborative research projects and practical activities among the ASEM member countries with regard to

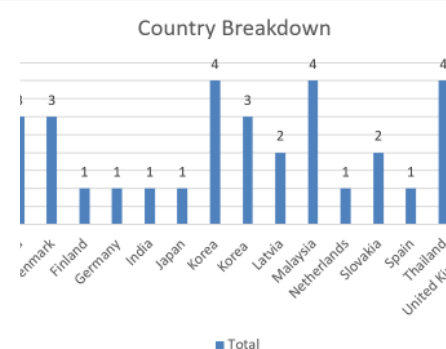
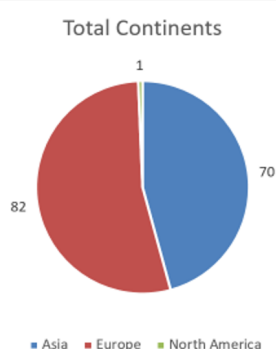
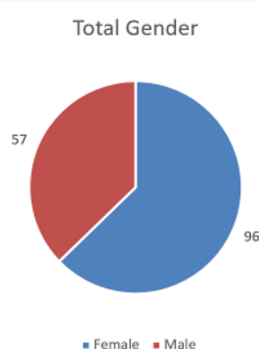
ICT skills, e-Learning and culture of e-Learning in lifelong learning

- Sharing recent research products and technological trends in ICT skills and e-learning among ASEM member countries

The strategies for the network are divided into three phases:

- Establishing an e-ASEM network and online community (2006-2007)
- Activating the e-ASEM network (2008-2009)
- Conducting e-ASEM network-based collaborative research and projects (2010-)

This network is coordinated by Professor Karanam Pushpanadham from the M.S University of Baroda, India. Professor Jan Pawlowski from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland is the European Coordinator, and Professor Jaitip Nasongkhla from the Chulalongkorn University, Thailand is the Asian Coordinator.



This research network has been very busy as of late and here are some of the stand-out recent activities :

- Asian-European study on the status of digital transformation;
- Review and comparison of national standards for MOOCs and micro-credentials;
- Research on the implications of instructional design in higher education;
- Guidelines to gamification practices in higher education;
- Cross-networking research on cognitive learning in remote technology-enhanced learning environments.
- International webinar on Artificial Intelligence in Education (9th October 2021)

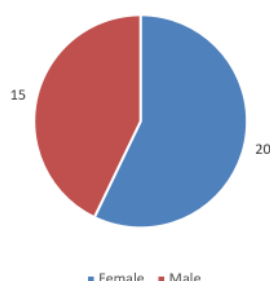
RN1 is the most Asian dominated network, with 70% of members coming from Asian countries. A breakdown of membership for RN1 can be seen in the graph above.

Research Network 2 Workplace Learning

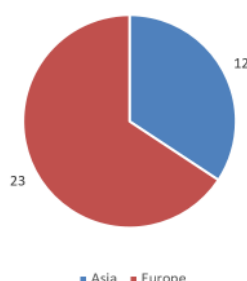
This research network directs itself to the task of decoding working places as lifelong learning spaces across Asia and Europe: in brief, the CODE initiative. Workplaces exist not simply in companies and public services, but equally across a wide range of organisational and social contexts, including in the Third sector (non-profit-making NGOs, voluntary work, etc.) and in diverse forms of self-employment, including under irregular and precarious conditions. They offer very different kinds of learning opportunities – some are learning-friendly, others are less so; some provide structured work-related education and training for employees, whereas in others, learning is integrated into the flow of working processes.

Therefore, the ‘learning continuum’ between formal, non-formal and informal learning is a key framework for understanding how opportunities for professional and personal development at work are distributed, structured, experienced and used. Through exchange of information, workshop discussions and joint studies, the network is building up a shared body of knowledge that is driven forward by comparing and contrasting how workplace learning is provided, practised and understood in Asian and European countries.

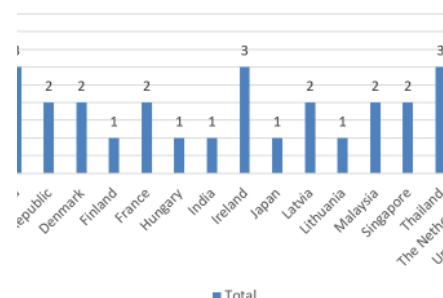
Gender Breakdown



Continent Breakdown



Country Breakdown



Network members

The network was established in 2005 and meets at least once each year; its members currently come from 17 countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, India, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, The Netherlands, PR China, Thailand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

This network is coordinated by Professor Karen Evans from the University of London, UK. Associate Professor Elina Maslo from the University of Latvia is the European Coordinator and Professor Ruhizan Yasin from the Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia is the Asian Coordinator. Graphs showing the breakdown of membership in RN2 can be seen above.

Joint studies

In 2009-10, the network conducted a comparative study: What do people interpret to be ‘voluntary’ and ‘compulsory’ with respect to workplace learning? What does their company/organisation offer in terms of formal and non-formal work-related learning? Which of these are ‘voluntary’ and which ‘compulsory’?

How do objective opportunities and subjective perceptions influence employees' motivation to learn at work and their satisfaction with the learning they have undertaken?

Between 2013 and 2016, network members have collaborated in a further research-based inquiry into workplaces as learning spaces. An aim has been to identify what makes workplaces conducive to learning in different cultures and organisational contexts. The book 'Workplaces as Learning Spaces – Conceptual and Empirical Insights' (released in December 2016) brings together contributions from Asian and European members.

ASEM RN2 Study 2020 – 2023

“Resilience of skill ecosystems in Asian and European countries in pandemic times.”

The skill ecosystem approach (cf. Buchanan et al. 2017) serves as an analytical perspective for identifying key developments in vocational education and training in Asian and European countries. This approach is particularly concerned with identifying the contexts and conditions that influence the development of qualification structures.

The innovative potential of the perspective and its difference to the mainstream lies in the fact that vocational qualifications are not only seen as an effect of the quality of a country's education system, but in their mutual integration into an 'ecosystem' consisting of various elements as:

1. Business settings and associated business models
2. Institutional/policy frameworks
3. Modes of engaging labour
4. Structure of jobs
5. Level of skills and systems for their formation.

These five context variables of the Skill ecosystem (SES) approach also form the basic framework for an RN online2 questionnaire, which is to be filled out several times in a certain period of time (approx. 2 years) by all participants.

When we have collected all these materials in two years, reports on the development during the pandemic will be summarised and a joint comparative paper can be written, possibly clustered according to structural similarity of the countries/pandemic situation/vocational training systems/policies...- so that different strategies and effects can be identified. Our focus includes the initial training situation in the countries as well as formal and informal continuing education (workplace learning) and forms of school-to-work transitions.

Other Activities

Webinar with keynote speech from Prof. John Buchanan on “Ecosystems approach and its relevance to resilience of vocational education and training” (April 28th 2021)

Research Network 3 Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Educators in ASEM countries

The quality of adult teachers and trainers is seen as a key factor for the implementation of lifelong learning. The network is dedicated to exchanging, comparing and researching professionalisation and professionalism of this group. This research network is currently being revamped, with new members joining weekly. 2022 will see the network launch webinars and conferences, as well as articles and research into the professionalisation of adult teachers.

Key research fields and questions from the network up to now:

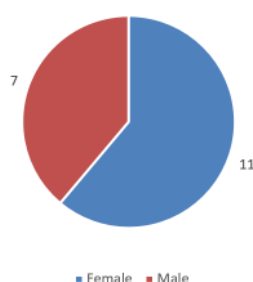
- Competences: Which competences are needed by adult teachers? How are competences and qualifications related in different countries?
- Effects: What evidence can be found concerning the effects of teacher training?
- Accessibility: What role do access regulations and qualification standards play in the adult learning field?

- Curriculum development: What methods and criteria are used for the construction and validation of teacher training curricula?
- Methods: What role do practice vs. theory-oriented approaches play in the choice of teacher training methods?

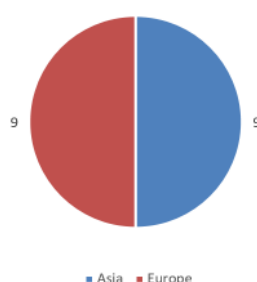
This network is coordinated by Professor Ekkehard Nuisl von Rein from Duisberg/Essen University, Germany.

The breakdown of membership in RN3 can be seen in the graphs below:

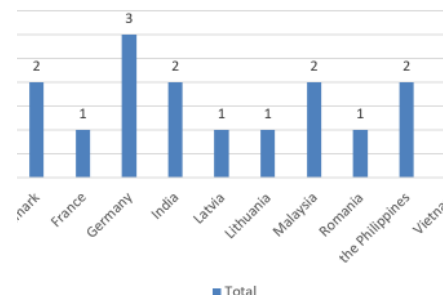
Total Gender



Total Continents



Total Countries



Research Network 4 National Strategies for Lifelong Learning

Within the framework of ASEM Education and Research Hub, the goal of the network “National lifelong learning strategies with regard to citizens’ motivation and barriers to continuing education and training” is to create a forum among European and Asian countries for presenting and exchanging knowledge, ideas and experiences of lifelong learning policies and practices. This is done by encouraging network participants and affiliated researchers to gather inputs that:

- Reflect the national development of implementing lifelong learning policies and strategies;
- Examine the lifelong learning policies and practice in the framework of national socio-economic development;
- Promote sharing of research achievements and practices of implementing lifelong learning;

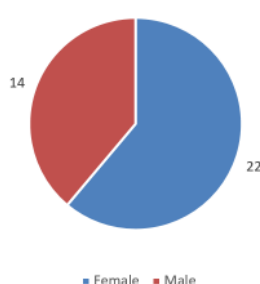
- Develop possible areas of cooperation and corresponding action plans.

These inputs help to promote policy and strategy dialogue among policymakers, researchers and practitioners who are affiliated with the network.

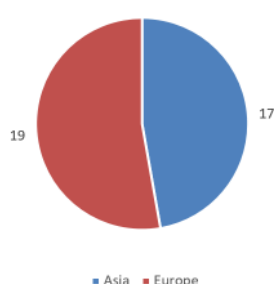
This network is coordinated by Professor Michael Osborne from the University of Glasgow, UK. Professor Zenaida Reyes from the Philippine Normal University is the Asian Coordinator.

The breakdown of membership for this network can be seen in the graphs below:

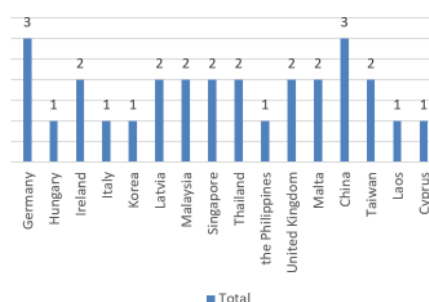
Total Genders



Total Continents



Total Countries



Activities:

January – February 2021 Intergenerational Learning

March - May 2021 - Interlinkages between health, economy, education, and the sustainable neighbourhoods

June - August 2021 – Gender

September - November 2021 - Tensions between learning for the economic sphere (jobs) and learning for well-being/democracy

ASEM EDUCATION

Compendium for Higher Education

General

The [ASEM Education Compendium for Higher Education](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the multiple academic systems of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) partner countries. This tool helps staff and educators from academic institutions, located in ASEM member states, to compare the various academic systems and to find helpful information needed for co-operations with higher education institutions from ASEM member states.



Objective

The primary aim of the ASEM Education Compendium is to improve transparency on the diverse educational landscape of the ASEM Education Process and to establish a valid source of reference for higher education institutions. Secondly the compendium also facilitates mobility and cooperation within the ASEM region.

History

The initiative started in 2011, during ASEMME3 in Copenhagen. Later on the first compendium was announced in 2013 in Kuala Lumpur. The [last update](#) of this version of the compendium was in April 2016.

After an evaluation of this compendium a thorough review has taken place in order to make the compendium a more useful and more user-friendly tool for all stakeholders in the ASEM countries. In 2018, the new structure and templates for the compendium took shape. The new compendium focuses on 3 chapters: the higher education system, quality assurance and credit systems.

The choice has been made to create an [online tool](#) in order to facilitate easy updating. To give guidance on how to use the compendium, a [video](#) has been created.

Data Collection

The compendium data has been compiled by the ASEM partner countries and reviewed by the [ASEM Expert Group on interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems](#), through a system of peer review, with the help of the ASEM Education Secretariat.

Since 2016, this Expert Group meets regularly to facilitate dialogue and promote cooperation in the field of credit transfer mechanisms and learning outcomes systems. The participating members have continuously collected relevant information on their various higher education systems with the aim of establishing a common understanding of terminology and concepts of the ASEM education systems.

The data provided in the tool is updated annually. The Expert Group and the ASEM Education Secretariat are continuously working on expanding the Compendium and adding further country profiles.

Consult Compendium

The main interface displays a grid of country profiles, each with a flag and a 'MORE INFO' link. The countries shown are Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium - Flemish Community, Belgium - French-speaking Community, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, and Cambodia.

Three detailed view overlays are shown:

- Belgium - Flemish Community:** Chapter 1: Higher Education System. It includes a schematic diagram of the higher education system with levels: Short cycle (University College, 90-120 credits), Professional Bachelor (University College, at least 180 credits), Advanced bachelor, Bridging programmes, MASTER (University College (School of Arts) - University, at least 60 credits), Preparatory programmes, Advanced master, and PhD. The diagram is numbered 5 through 8.
- China:** Chapter 1: Higher Education System. It shows a list of sections: Section 1.1: Schematic Higher Education System, Section 1.2: Description of the System, Section 1.3: Number of Institutions, Section 1.4: Number of Education, Section 1.5: Structure, Section 1.6: N (or similar), Section 1.7: Educational, and Section 1.8: Other.
- China:** Chapter 2: Quality Assurance in Higher Education. It includes Section 2.1: Quality Assurance Body in Higher Education (Two external quality assurance at the national level: Postgraduate Education: China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development (CDGDC); Undergraduate Education: Higher Education Evaluation Center of the Ministry of Education (MEEEC)). Section 2.2: Quality Assurance System is a table with columns for Voluntary, Compulsory, Regularity, External, and Internal, and rows for Study programmes (Postgraduates: 6 years, Undergraduates: 3 years) and Evaluation (X, X, X, X, X). Section 2.3: Link Programme Authorisation with Quality Assurance. It includes a table with columns for Evaluations on accredited degree-awarding programs are conducted on a regular basis. Results of evaluations can be as follows: PASS: meaning the program is validated and can continue to enrol students; CONDITIONAL PASS: meaning the program needs to be rectified within a prescribed time period before a follow-up evaluation, during which the program has to decrease or stop student enrolment; FAIL: meaning the program is no longer accredited.

Expert Group Digitalisation

In order to engage the ASEM members and stakeholders in a dialogue on how digitalisation can promote connectivity and collaboration between Asia and Europe and to identify synergies on activities in the field of digital learning and teaching, a new ASEM Expert Group focusing on digitalisation was established in December 2019, in Berlin, Germany.

Objectives

The objective of the expert group is to promote exchange on the potential as well as challenges of digitalisation in education with specific regard to the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process. The meetings of the expert group serve as a dialogue forum on the digital transformation in the ASEM Education Process, hence ensuring that the dialogue between the two regions addresses current and future innovations and transformations in education.

Activities

The expert group was established at a kick-off meeting in December 2019, in Berlin, Germany, bringing together digitalisation experts from ASEM Education Ministries and representatives from ASEM stakeholder organisations.

At the second meeting (June 2020, virtual) the group decided to draft a Working Paper which analyses the challenges and opportunities of the digital transformation in the AEP and provides recommendations to policymakers.

The idea evolved when the expert group was asked to provide feedback and input for the draft of the ASEM Education Strategy. It became evident that detailed input on digitally enhanced education would too strongly focus the new strategy on digitalisation.

The third and fourth meeting (February and August 2021, virtual) were hence used to collect input and identify overarching topics for the paper's chapters, to assign responsibilities for the drafting process and to develop recommendations. The Working Paper of the EG Digitalisation is structured along four thematic priorities:

1. Digital Infrastructure,
2. International exchange and mobility,
3. Futures of (lifelong) learning
4. Quality assurance and recognition.

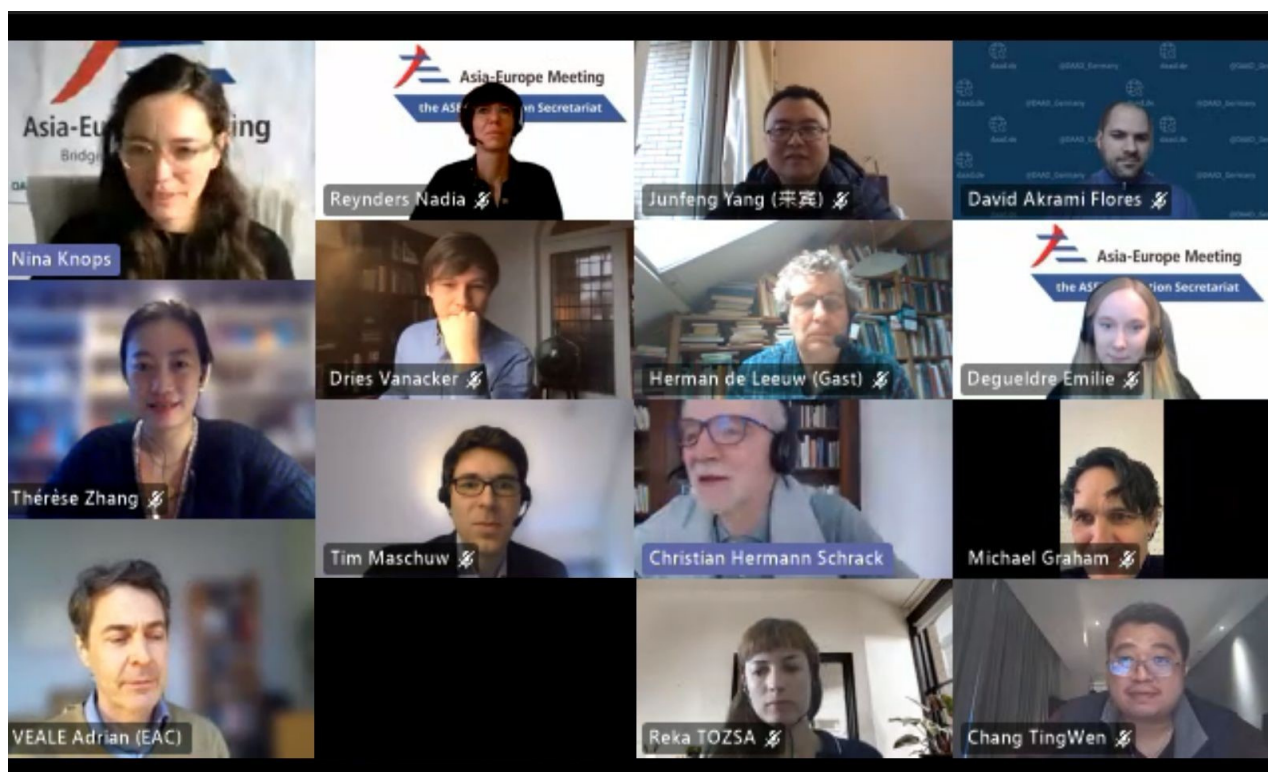
The paper looks at challenges and opportunities of digitalisation, enabled or facilitated in the sphere of education, and advises ASEM policymakers on key issues that need to be addressed to transform education and make it more flexible to respond to current and future demands. Furthermore, the paper focuses on providing key messages which aim at ensuring that the digital transformation in education is inclusive and leaves no one behind.

Coordinator:

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

Members:

Artevelde University of Applied Sciences (Belgium); Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF); Beijing Normal University (China); Dania Academy; Erasmus Student Network (ESN); European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport; European Training Foundation (ETF); European University Association (EUA); Ghent University (Belgium); Groningen Declaration Network (Netherlands); International Association of Universities (IAU); International Scientific Communication Consortium (Russia); Ministry of Education (India); Ministry of Education and Science (Latvia); Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Austria); Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (France); National Europass Centrum (Netherlands); National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (India); Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), Thailand; SEAMEO RIHED; University Politehnica of Bucharest.





ASEM WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME

General

The ASEM Work Placement Programme (ASEM WPP) is a project under supervision and cooperation framework of the Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers of Education (ASEMME). ASEM WPP is established for promoting the exchange of talent between Europe and Asia within the ASEM Education Process. The programme focuses on work placements for students enrolled in higher education.

History

The initiative started in 2011, when during ASEMME3 in Copenhagen a pilot project was established. This pilot has been running up till 2018. After an evaluation of this pilot phase, a full roll-out of the project was implemented from 2018 onwards. Five ASEM countries have been involved since the start of the programme: Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Indonesia and Thailand.

Objective

The objective of the programme is to establish, promote and sustain the mutual exchange of interns between Europe and Asia on the basis of balance and mutual benefit. The target group are undergraduate & master students, who go on mobility for a duration between one and six months.

Benefits

The programme ensures benefits for governments, higher education institutions, industry and students.

"My main takeaway from this experience was the academic guidance I received. I was glad that I had the opportunity to present my thesis to the staff and interns of CESASS [...]. With this insight, I had the opportunity to gain critical thinking on academic writing, seeing how the work of Indonesian academics adds to global academic conversations.

Altogether, my internship at CESASS has greatly helped me to see my positionality as an academic from the Global North. I see now that mutual understanding is the way to work in academia between the Global North and the Global South."

Name: Janka Rebeka Szoke

Home institution: KU Leuven, Belgium/Flemish Community

Host organisation: CESASS, Indonesia

Current study programme: Antropology



"I've booked emotional growth by building relationships with the students and my colleague-teachers. Everyone at the school was very friendly and open. You feel welcome and accepted.

Because of the differences in teaching, I've learned to be flexible and creative while creating lessons fit for their classrooms. We were also able to pass on some of our didactic knowledge and compare the way we teach. It helped us reflect on our own school system as well.

Our help and work were really appreciated. It made me gain confidence about my teaching and self-worth. I've made personal growth by volunteering. Helping these kids really brought me joy and made me feel like I was doing something good and making a difference in the world."

Name: Samantha De Boey

Home institution: Karel de Grote Hogeschool, Belgium/Flemish Community

Host organisation: Parikrma Foundation, India

Current study programme: Social Education

Some figures from ASEM WPP Belgium/Flemish Community:

Host country	2018-19	2019-2020	2020-21*
Thailand	16	23	3
Indonesia	14	20	1
India		17	
China			2
South Korea			2
	30	60	8

*In 2020-21 there is the big impact of the COVID-crisis which caused a drop in the numbers of students being mobile.

Governments:

- Contribute to the internationalization of higher education
- Support workforce development strategy
- Contribute to economic growth

Higher Education Institutions:

- Provide high quality education by inserting qualitative work experiences in the curriculum
- Establish international links and strategic alliances with the labour market

Industry/business sector:

- Enhance a company's competitiveness through transfer of academic know-how
- Access to a supply of talented/skilled internship students
- Express their needs and have direct input through the programme

Students:

- Gain work experience and international contacts
- Develop competences needed to work in multicultural environments
- Employability

More information can be found [here](#).



"If one can derive a key learning point found in an international experience, it will be that, if one is willing have an open mind to new perspectives, he/she is bound to endless self-development opportunities. Beyond learning to be able to thrive in different geographical and sociological circumstances, I deeply believe that intercultural experiences allow us to develop a strong and dynamic worldview that will not only be a benefit to one's foundational values, but also help our contribution to the society."

Name: Stefano Zora Parameswara
Home institution: Universitas Indonesia and Universität Duisburg-Essen, Germany
Host organisation: DB Schenker, Germany
Current study programme: Electrical Engineering Double-Degree Bachelor Programme

"I would definitely recommend this experience for this exact reason. You learn how to see the world from a different perspective. You get to know what it is like to be the 'different one' in a foreign country. You become more independent and get new values. Living in a foreign country like Indonesia makes you grow and even makes you a better person."

Name: Paulien Descamps
Home institution: Erasmushogeschool Brussel, Belgium/
Flemish Community
Host organisation: ViaVia Jogja, Indonesia
Current study programme: Travel, tourism and leisure



"Being an avid student of global affairs and a proponent for UBD's Historical Studies to branch into more formal international studies, Brussels was a natural choice to try to seek employment. [...] The experience was surreal, especially for a Bruneian who'd essentially arrived from halfway across the world. The GMF Brussels office was a one minute walk away from the nerve-center of the European Union, where the European Commission and Council made their homes."

Name: Benjamin Jr. Gerard Carvalho
Home institution: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam
Host organisation: The German Marshall Fund of the United States (Brussels Office), Belgium
Current study programme: Historical Studies



"Besides the work put into the product, this experience has also changed my perspective on many things related to culture, work ethics and my mental approach to society. I had the opportunity to explore the country and meet some amazingly friendly people."

Name: Brecht Pallemans
 Home institution: Karel de Grote Hogeschool, Belgium/
 Flemish Community
 Host organisation: AppMan, Thailand
 Current study programme: Applied Computer Sciences

"My internship abroad is certainly a great added value for myself as a person and for my studies. After these three months I have become more independent and I am not scared to do things. I have got to know new people and the Thai culture. The people here are very friendly and always willing to help you. I also learned to work in a different working team, like the teachers at the school. This experience was really the time off my life."

Name: Smahane Afassi
 Home institution: Hogeschool Gent, Belgium/Flemish
 Community
 Host organisation: Thung Song Nakhon Si Thammarat,
 Thailand
 Current study programme: Social Education



Asia-Europe Bridging

by Dr Cloud Bai-Yun of UK ENIC

From the Bridging Declaration to APNNIC, Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres

The working group on qualifications recognition was constituted in 2011 as a follow up action on the Chair's Conclusions of the 3rd ASEMME, with the view to 'Drafting the Convention on the Recognition of Qualification in Higher Education in the Asian and European Regions'.



Above: Inaugural meeting of CBQAN member agencies



Above: Working together to develop practice guidelines for qualifications recognition in ASEM countries

To better support the ASEM Education Process, and more specifically to improve recognition practices, the group reached the conclusion that in place of a new Convention, the most effective step forward would be a clear roadmap statement to encourage closer links across the regions building on the existing regional Conventions.

In September 2012 the group met for the second time in Beijing and agreed the final proposal to the 4th ASEMME.

With the creation of the Bridging Declaration, the focus of the working group also evolved, shifting from a legalistic approach to developing 'concrete steps to implement the ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration' following the Conclusions of ASEMME 4 in 2013.



Above: working Group meeting in Hangzhou, China Hosted by CDGDC



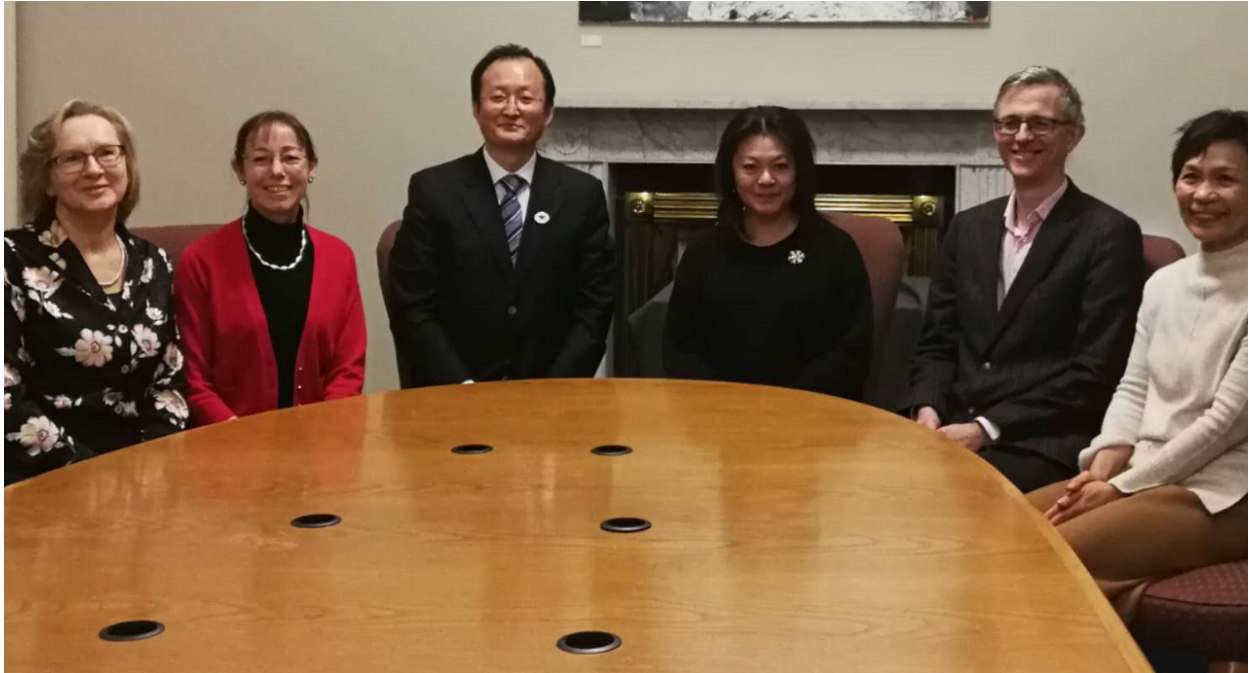
Above: Launch of CBQAN symposium

The refocused 'implementation WGR' progressed further through continued dialogue in Kunming (2013), Riga (2014), Hangzhou (2015), Tallinn (2016) and Kuala Lumpur (2017). The objectives of these activities were to 'strengthen and facilitate dialogue, coordination, collaboration and promotion of qualification recognition in higher education among the ASEM member countries... in order to foster a strategic cooperation in qualification recognition, credit transfer, comparative researches on national qualification frameworks and harmonization of academic standards'.

To this end, the group committed to a number of priority action plans including:

- Building the website of Asian network of information centres
- Drafting Guidelines, Principles and Good Practices on Recognition
- Establishing Cross-border Quality Assurance Network (CBQAN)

Developing good practices in qualifications recognition remains important, particularly in the changing world environment. It would be timely to review holistically the evolving priorities and challenges we face taking into consideration the developing characteristics of Asia and Europe.



Above: Elected Board members of CBQAN 2018



Erasmus+ Programme

Think of Erasmus+ and the chances are that you will think about student mobility inside Europe. And yes, Erasmus is one of the European Union's greatest success stories since the first students moved between European universities in 1987.

But since then, a much wider range of opportunities for education institutions, as well as individuals, link up Europe's education sector not only in Europe, but also develops partnerships between EU countries and other partner countries worldwide, including all the Asian countries within ASEM.

Since 2014, all these international mobility and cooperation opportunities have been brought together under the Erasmus+ banner. 2021 has seen the European Union launch a new phase of the Erasmus+ programme which builds on these opportunities for Asia.

Many of these international actions came on stream with the programme's 2022 Call for Proposals, launched in November 2021, and we'd encourage both European and Asian partners to consider getting involved, to share news about these opportunities, and to review results of projects from the 2014-20 period. There will be a new chance each year.

The ASEM Education Strategy will provide a forum for the EU to share information about these upcoming opportunities, and inspiration and good practice from existing examples.

And again, it's not just mobility, it's also about cooperation in partnership.

Capacity-Building for Higher Education

These projects are designed and run by partnerships of European higher education institutions on the one hand, and their counterparts from another part of the world on the other. The over-reaching aim of the projects is to generate benefits for the participants from the partner countries. This, and the fact that this CBHE forms part and parcel of the EU's external cooperation policy, means that partners on the Asian side of ASEM are from developing or emerging countries, rather than Japan, Korea, Singapore, Brunei, Australia and New Zealand.

On the European side, the partnership is always regional in nature, with two and often more countries involved. On the Asian side, projects can be nationally-focused, with one country, though the majority are regional in nature. What do they do?

Projects develop strengths within the higher education sector that can contribute to the development of the education sector or national/regional development as a whole. This can involve developing new teaching content and methods, upskilling academic staff, and boosting HE governance. A specific type of project known as Structural Projects tackles policy-related issues such as HE reform or quality frameworks, and therefore involve national administrations as partners.

Projects therefore often work on the wider education dimension. The project "Blended Learning Training for Teachers educators" (BLTeae – see illustration) led by Aix- Marseille University (France) links up four European countries (France, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia) and four Asian countries (Malaysia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan) in a collaborative community capable to improve and revise teacher training programs. The outcome - a common reference curriculum for teachers' educators.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters These joint programmes are designed and offered by consortia of universities. The EU funds a number of scholarships for students worldwide, and contributes to the management costs of the programme. Did you know that universities from outside Europe can be involved, and can since 2021 coordinate a project?

International Credit Mobility

These are classic student and staff exchange projects with mobility in both directions: travel and living costs are covered by an EU grant assigned to the European university. This mobility enhances intercultural and academic understanding between the individuals, and has a big impact on internationalisation at home. It creates lasting relations between the universities and the students involved. From 2014-2020, over 63,000 students and staff were exchanged between European countries and other ASEM countries – some one quarter of the world total Erasmus+ credit mobility.

European Training Foundation (ETF)

Support to NQFs Development

ETF has continued to support partner countries in development of NQFs and associated qualification system reform in the domains of legislation, stakeholder platforms, institutional arrangements and quality assurance processes and systems. We advise on modernising the qualifications themselves through promotion of occupational standards for labour market relevance. We guide countries in development and use of implementation tools such as registers. Other areas are validation of non formal learning and recognition practices.

We have also expanded our geographical presence and engagement, in acting as a technical advisor for the new African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

Benefits for People Toolkit

We have distributed the toolkit, “Benefits for People”. We are following up its themes via our project Creating New Learning, which is generating new knowledge and producing manuals and guides, on innovative curricula and teaching, and careers guidance, for more personalised learning pathways, and how these relate to qualifications. We have increased our engagement in networks such as OECD, Chain 5, and with African actors in NQFs, via the ACQF work.

We are developing an online network of qualifications agencies worldwide. Related, we are intensifying our focus on Regional Qualifications Frameworks, where we have published a study, the most comprehensive on this topic available.

Global NQF Inventory

UNESCO, UNESCO-UIL, Cedefop and ETF have promoted and disseminated the Global NQF Inventory, via our respective websites and in ETF's case also via blogs on our Open Space online expert community.

Various actors use the information in the fiches e.g. national agencies concerned with understanding foreign qualifications presented to them, and to inform recognition decisions.

Added Value to the ASEM EDUCATION Process

Respective partner countries have validated the draft versions of country fiches for the forthcoming edition. For this new edition, all partners will co-develop and manage a new e-database, which will improve accessibility for users accessing to the country and thematic fiches, facilitate comparability across countries, and make much easier promotion and dissemination.



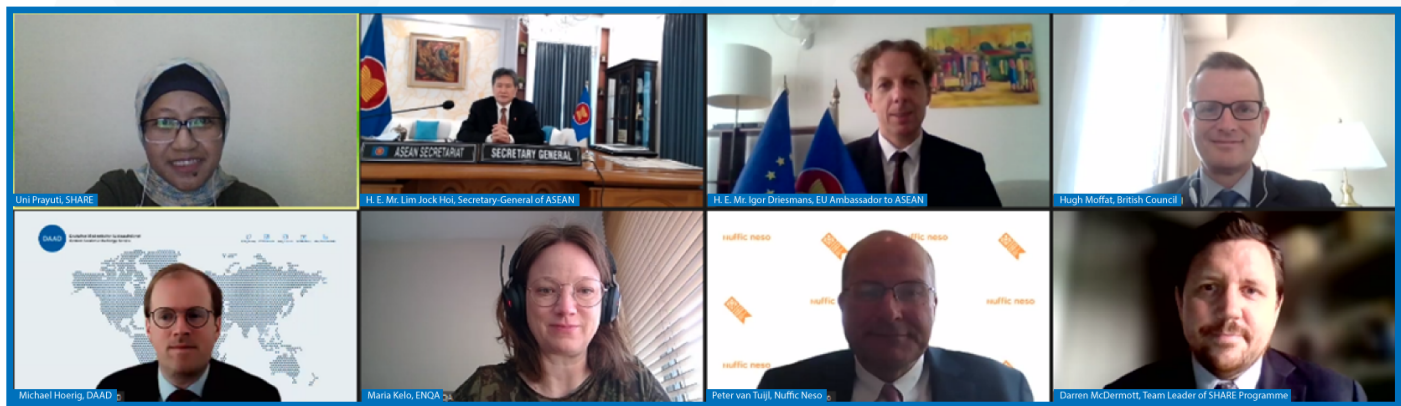
The Global NQF Inventory is a unique source on NQF developments worldwide. It generates knowledge in the information-gathering and evaluation stages. It identifies emerging themes and policy needs e.g. in validation of non-formal learning or digital credentials and advances the knowledge of the global community of practice in qualification systems. Once published, it is a knowledge dissemination tool, and so supports the wider policy aims of Ministers in developing and using shared tools and common and compatible systems such as qualifications frameworks or recognition systems and tools.

Challenges

The Global NQF Inventory is long-established, so countries are familiar with the processes of gathering, supplying and validating information in their exchanges with the 4 agencies. But It is invariably a time-consuming process, and there is some complexity in 4 agencies coordinating its production.



WORKING TOGETHER, LEARNING FOR LIFE



SHARE IS IMPLEMENTED BY



European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) Programme

Catalysing an ASEAN Higher Education Space

Originally conceived as a peace-building project, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN united 10 Southeast Asian countries under a banner of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community", with the signing of the Declaration of the ASEAN Community by ASEAN leaders at their 27th Summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015.

Higher education is a key modality contributing to ASEAN's regional integration and connectivity agendas. Increased exchange on higher education has been recognised as a conduit to building a stronger regional identity, drawing on the experience of the Bologna Process in creating the European Higher Education Area. To further this process at their meeting on 31 May 2021, ASEAN member state ministers for education adopted the new ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025.

The higher education components of the new Work Plan are delineated under the following:

- Outcome 3: Enhanced regional capacity in higher education as part of lifelong learning provision, including the harmonisation of ASEAN higher education and the following outputs.

- Output 3.1. Strengthened role of higher education institutions in lifelong learning through the provision of flexible, innovative, multi-disciplinary, cross-border education and research collaboration.
- Output 3.2. Sustained and strengthened ASEAN capacity in higher education harmonisation through strategies, mechanisms and scholarship provision.

The development and implementation of the Work Plan's activities are led by the Chair of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education, administered by the ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth and Sports Division, and supported by regional partners including the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat, the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED), the ASEAN University Network, the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, UNESCO and the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) Programme.

The SHARE Programme is the European Union's flagship higher education initiative with ASEAN and was earlier this year extended up until the end of 2022. This is in the context of a now 44-year-old dialogue partnership between the EU and ASEAN, which was elevated to that of a strategic partnership in December 2020. Launched in 2015, SHARE is delivered by a consortium comprising the British Council, the German Academic Exchange Service or DAAD, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and Nuffic. The remainder of the programme will see the continued support of the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN stakeholders to establish an ASEAN higher education space, thus enabling greater harmonisation of ASEAN higher education. Through its support of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education, and for the duration of its extension, SHARE is providing further technical assistance in the following areas, among others:

- Developing ASEAN higher education communities of practice for greater coordination, knowledge management, and monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- Supporting the further implementation of national qualifications frameworks and the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.
- Contributing further to the work of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network.
- Producing a study on 'Graduate Employability in ASEAN' as part of a series of studies to support the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025.
- Implementing digital modalities of internationalisation, including virtual exchange and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL).
- Piloting digital credentials recognition and portability to enhance the ASEAN-Europe Credit Transfer System (AECTS) mechanism.



The opening of SHARE's 12th Policy Dialogue in July 2021 saw the official launch of the ASEAN Working Group on Higher Education Mobility 2025 (AWGHEM 2025). Co-chaired by the ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth and Sports Division and the ASEAN Foundation, the working group is comprised of senior officials from ASEAN member state ministries of education and regional higher education organisations.

The primary mandate of the group is to lead the development of a cohesive roadmap to realise and implement an ASEAN higher education space for greater people-to-people connectivity and knowledge transfer across ASEAN in the framework of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-25. This will include the design, ownership and operationalisation of an ASEAN-Branded Scholarship by 2025 to boost intra-ASEAN student mobility.

The working group will be supported by the technical and operational advisory of the SHARE programme up until the end of its extension phase in December 2022. This will necessitate SHARE and AWGHEM facilitating the transfer of ownership of SHARE programme outcomes to ASEAN entities and nominated organisations to be embedded within sustainable ASEAN-led structures and processes.

Addressing the launch of the AWGHEM, Ambassador Driesmans stated: "The working group will act as a concrete to facilitate the transfer of ownership of the SHARE Programme's outcomes to the ASEAN community after the programme ends." He further stated that the transfer of ownership and ensuring the sustainability of SHARE's work will be conducted through the incorporation of its result areas to the higher education components of the ASEAN Work plan on Education 2021-2025.

The SHARE Higher Education Harmonisation Community of Practice was also officially launched at the 13th SHARE Policy Dialogue in November. The Community of Practice (CoP) is a higher education practitioner led platform for stakeholders from across Southeast Asia to work together on addressing the opportunities and challenges in the harmonisation and internationalisation of the region's higher education. It is envisaged the SHARE CoP will work collaboratively to develop strategies and exchange good practice to augment international education provision across the region. It is also a forum for university stakeholders to give voice to their views on the region's higher education policy discussions and decision-making processes.


It is the vision of the SHARE programme that through partnership with the ASEAN higher education community we can extend the benefits of the project to a wider range of higher education institutions and students across the

region and be a catalyst for ASEAN's ownership of a sustainable, collaborative, inclusive and resilient higher education space.

In his remarks, ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General Ekkaphab Phanthavong noted that "University and employer engagement is not just an option, but a necessity to produce a competitive and future-ready workforce. Human resources development has always been at the heart of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community's efforts to realise an inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic community."

Dr Roger Chao Jr., the Assistant Director/Head of Education, Youth and Sports Division of the ASEAN Secretariat further emphasised, "the importance of the CoP goes beyond the exchange of ideas within the community, but the unity and collaboration between practice and policy." He elaborated that the establishment contributes to a circle where practitioners, particularly from the community, contribute to policymaking and policy makers collaborate with the CoP to monitor and look into the effectiveness of the policies that are in place.






Jazlyn Bon Ong Lim Yu

SHARE Scholarship alumna who studied from University of Santo Tomas, the Philippines to Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia

“ The SHARE scholarship programme is an experience of a lifetime.

It has given me a motivation, new friends, and an inspiration to do more for the society. ”




SAI PHYOE ZIN AUNG

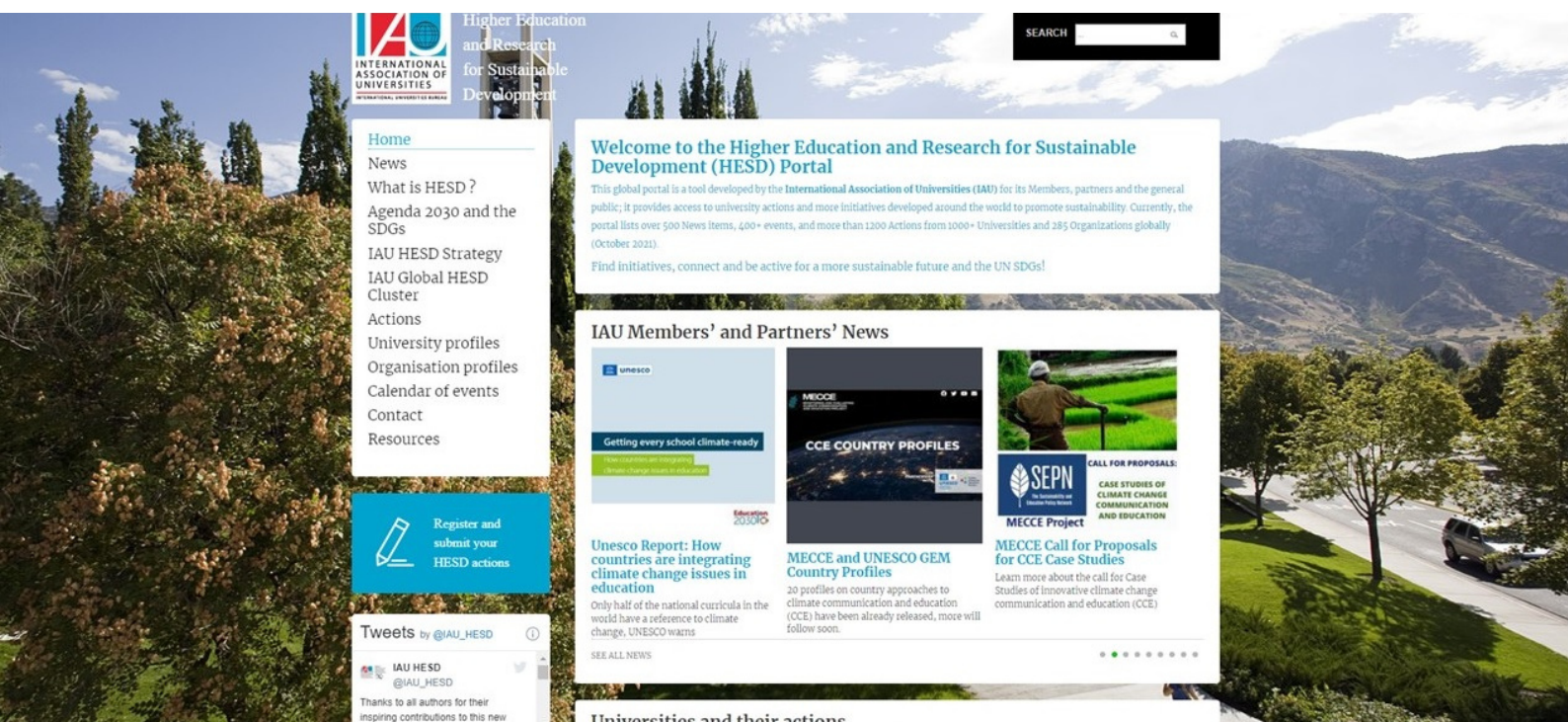
SHARE scholarship alumna who studied from the University of Mandalay, Myanmar to University of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand and University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

“ Studying abroad gave me a chance to learn and improve my vision, self-confidence, and awareness as I could travel and see the new things in my host countries.

I highly recommend students who are interested to study abroad to make your dream come true with SHARE Scholarship. ”







International Association of Universities (IAU)

On-going Activities

In the last two years, the International Association of Universities (IAU) conducted two activities which are of interest to the ASEM process: the Global Surveys on the Impact of COVID-19 and the [HESD Portal](#).

The Global Surveys on the impact of COVID-19 are a new activity launched by IAU in March 2020 to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on higher education around the world. The first survey was conducted at the very beginning of the pandemic (data collected between March and April 2020). It was a very succinct survey in order to understand the situation during a certain period of time, as it was carried out in a period which coincided with different stages of the propagation of the pandemic around the world and the gradual closing of campuses around the world. It was a short survey with questions pertaining to teaching and learning, research and community engagement providing information about the situation at the outset of the pandemic.

The second IAU global survey was conducted one year after the first one (February - May 2021) in order to have a more detailed description of the impact of COVID-19 on higher education at a time where the higher

education institutions (HEIs) have had the time to adapt to a new world of pandemic and to the different restrictions associated to this state. It was a comprehensive survey and, differently from the first edition, it tried to capture not only the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, but also the responses given by the higher education community to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The report of the second global survey will probably be published in January 2022.

The global surveys are interesting in the framework of the ASEM process as they show how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted higher education globally but also at regional level. The results of the surveys show that the impact of COVID-19 has been uneven in the different regions of the world and for different types of higher education institutions inside the same region, but at the same time they show that HEIs have been resilient and adapted their way of functioning in order to continue delivering their missions of teaching and learning, research and service to society.

An interesting result for the ASEM process is that the regional analysis shows that HEIs in Asia and Europe managed to limit the negative impact of COVID-19 more than in all other regions.

The Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD) Portal is a tool developed by IAU for its Members, partners and the general public; it provides access to university actions and more initiatives developed around the world to promote sustainability. Currently (October 2021), the portal lists over 500 News items, 400+ events, and more than 1200 Actions from 1000+ Universities and 285 Organizations globally. The HESD portal can act as a useful source of information but also as a means for HEIs from ASEM countries to promote their activities in HESD.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

Micro-credentials

UNESCO has been conducting work in the area of micro-credentials. Micro-credentials are becoming increasingly prevalent worldwide and are often promoted as a new and more flexible way of recognising knowledge, skills and competences. However, acceptance and recognition of micro-credentials by employers and policy makers is hampered because, among other challenges, there is no universally recognised definition that clearly communicates to lay users, particularly learners and employers, what micro-credentials are. Other challenges include determining whether micro-credentials complement or replace qualifications, or both; the dizzying array of providers and partnerships in the provision of micro-credentials; the need for robust quality assurance and the issue of how to enact it when providers operate outside of the regulated education sector; the lack of research and convincing evidence of micro-credentials' efficacy and relevance so far, and the risk of unintended consequences if funding is diverted away from formal systems.

UNESCO has recently conducted a study aiming to address as a first step the first of these challenges, i.e. coming to a consensus on a proposed definition, in the hope of assisting the international community to move towards a common definition. A forthcoming report presents a discussion of some of the issues highlighted above and proposes a preliminary definition arrived at through a consensus-building process by a global expert panel.



Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

The **Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education** (Global Convention) was adopted by UNESCO Member States in November 2019, becoming the first United Nations treaty in higher education with a global scope. It establishes universal principles for fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications, offering avenues for further study and employment.

With provisions on non-traditional learning modes, the Global Convention also facilitates the recognition of qualifications, prior learning and study periods earned remotely. The Convention requires 20 States Parties to enter into force. Five Member States have already joined the Convention since 2019 and five announced their intention to do so by the end of 2022.

The Global Convention continues to be implemented in complementarity with the **Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education** (Tokyo Convention), which remains relevant for promoting mobility, recognition and inter-university cooperation in the region. It was adopted in Tokyo, Japan in 2011 and has a total of 12 States Parties – Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, China, Fiji, Holy See, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Turkey.

Furthermore, both the Global Convention and Tokyo Convention contain provisions to promote the recognition of qualifications for refugees and displaced persons. The **UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants** is serving as an implementation mechanism for these provisions and represents a one of UNESCO's flagships in response to the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration.

World Reference Levels

UNESCO and its partners are continuing to work on the further development of the World Reference Levels tool to facilitate the comparison of qualifications, skills or learning achievements based on learning outcomes. The expert group on WRL has in particular been working on further piloting the tool, including in the context of the newly established WHO Academy. More specifically, the WHO Academy is investigating how WRLs can support this global learning recognition framework, looking at areas of alignment and integration strategies within the objective of credentialing lifelong learners in the health sector.



Global Inventory of NQFs and RQFs

UNESCO, together with its partners, ETF, Cedefop and UIL, is coordinating the 2021-22 edition of the Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks. In addition to updated information on national developments, this edition of the Global Inventory will present for the first time a comparative analysis on the development and implementation of NQFs around the world.



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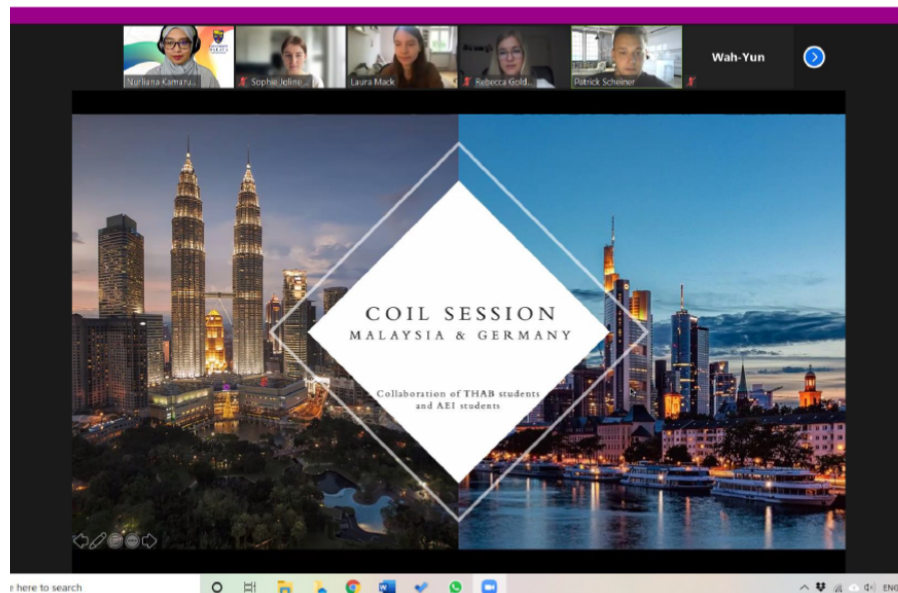
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UNEVOC BRIDGING INNOVATION AND
LEARNING IN TVET

Taking ASEM Student Online Collaboration to the Next Level – Experience from a COIL ASEM Pilot Project Initiative



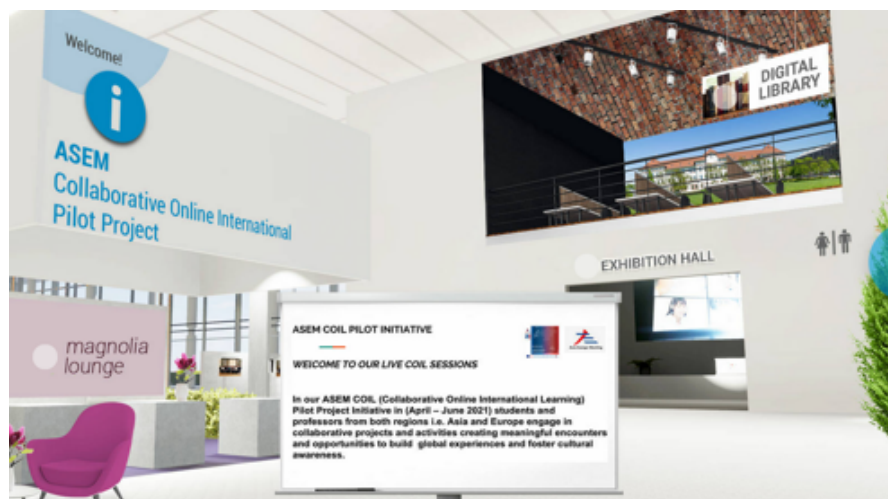
In the spring semester 2021 an ASEM Pilot Project was launched between TH Aschaffenburg, Germany and Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia as well as several other project partner institutions from Asia including Universitas Indonesia (UI), Indonesia. The project was aimed to enhance interregional student collaboration while strengthening staff and institutional cooperation in both regions through COIL.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) seeks to connect students and professors in different countries for collaborative projects and discussions in classes and seeks to provide meaningful, significant opportunities for global experiences and cultural awareness integrated into programmes of study. COIL also seeks to enhance intercultural student interaction (cf. <https://coil.suny.edu> and Coventry reference). It is often synonymously used with the term virtual exchange (cf. <http://www.unicollaboration.org/>) as for examples in EU projects of virtual exchange such as (reference).

The initiative was launched between Prof. Dr. Alexandra Angress from TH Aschaffenburg, Germany and Prof. Dr. Azirah Hashim and Dr. Nurliana from the Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia as a contribution to promoting mutual understanding as overall objective of the Asia-Europe Meeting celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

Student teams from TH Aschaffenburg and their counterparts in Asia were involved in designing and implementing a live COIL activity on topics pertaining to the ASEM Education Agenda 2030 and related SDGs. The initiative was embedded into the course programme of the English taught Master's "International Management" taught by Prof. Angress and Prof. Link) at TH Aschaffenburg, Germany: An amazing number of twelve (including TH AB) partners or cooperating universities in total from both regions – Asia and Europe – were successfully and actively involved in the ASEM COIL Pilot Project: the Asia-Europe Institute of the Universiti Malaya in Malaysia, Universitas Indonesia, Aoyama Gakuin University, Hiroshima Shudo University, Kitami Institute of Technology (all in Japan), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Vietnam and the Vietnamese-German University, Chung-Ang and Sungshin Women's University in South Korea, the National Taipei University of Business in Taiwan as well as Parul University in India.

On the side of the AEI, a total of 20 students from the AEI's International Masters in ASEAN Studies and International Masters in European Regional Integration took part in the programme. For the AEI, the initiative was an excellent opportunity to provide the students with a chance to conduct collaboration with counterparts in Europe. As students focusing in the field of international and regional studies, such collaborative learning effort was a welcomed means of enlarging their study experience. Throughout the whole project period, interactive collaborative tools were used, enhancing students' digital competencies at the same time. On TH AB's exposition platform, a special virtual ASEM COIL Pilot Project exhibition and meeting space was created



Some of the problems initially encountered by students included different levels of understanding concerning the project, the need to coordinate the different time zones and academic schedule, the expectations of who should be making more initiative towards the project and the overall actual experience of cultural differences when approaching a joint project. At the end of the initiative, the students also provided feedback on what lessons can be learned for future COIL initiatives and in general responded positively to more such projects in the future.

Some of the feedbacks received by the organizers from the students are as follow:

“

It was a special experience for me as I was able to learn not only about new tools that would be useful for my future virtual projects, but also some cultural subjects that I haven't thought about before

”

“

Even if you think you have experience in intercultural collaboration it is always worth participating in a COIL and learning even more

”

“

Thank you for giving me some space to grow

”

“

The COIL gave the opportunity to students (from both regions) to connect with one another and get more insights on how the culture is in the respective countries. What was important is that stereotypes that might have pre-existed are now replaced with a more accurate image of the Asia/European countries.

”

The pilot project allowed all participants involved to get/stay connected with partners in the other region even in challenging pandemic times. Aspects such as gaining or improving intercultural sensitivity when co-working with Asian or European counterparts or working successfully in global teams such as promoted in this project can be seen as a concrete contribution to help prepare students to work successfully in international (virtual) teams and work constellations.

The pilot project can be seen as a contribution to the ASEM Education Process which seeks to create more equitable access to meaningful exchanges and intercultural collaboration between Asian and European students and lecturers beyond physical encounters and exchanges.

The overall positive feedback from the participating institutions has been encouraging and the initiators of the ASEM COIL initiative are committed to undertaking similar related future collaborative undertakings involving HEIs from both region.



ERASMUS STUDENT NETWORK (ESN)

ARISE Project

The first instalment of the ARISE (ASEAN Region International Student Engagement) Training & Conference was held May 2019 in Singapore. Organised by ESN in partnership with the Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA) and the OCEANS Network, funded by the Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Alliance (ESAA), and supported by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), it gathered 32 participants from 12 universities from 6 ASEAN countries. This conference served as a pilot initiative for empowering student representatives to support and facilitate internationalisation at their home universities and to improve the support of incoming students.

During the conference, various experts took part in a panel discussion about internationalisation at home in Asia. ESN trainers offered workshops on a multitude of topics, such as cultural integration and student support services, and ample space was given to share experiences and best practices and to network with like-minded youth.

For more information, please refer to the detailed report of the event. ARISE concluded with the creation of an ARISE Alumni facebook group that is still used by ASEAN youth to this day.

Umbrella Organisation

A second instalment, ARISE 2.0, has been in the works since late 2019 and was originally scheduled for May 2020. The focus of the second edition will not so much be internationalisation at home, but rather kicking off the foundation of an umbrella organisation for local student organisations supporting international students in Asia and acting as an Asian counterpart for ESN.

Just as the first edition, it is planned to take place in Singapore, but with participants from ASEAN, as well as East-Asian countries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hosting the event physically at the initially targeted date was out of the window, and the decision was made to completely postpone it rather than hold it online.

The reason for this decision is the fact that while national and a few smaller international umbrella organisations (such as AYO for ASEAN countries) already exist, none of them seemingly aspire to become an Asia-wide organisation.

We believe that this persistent deficit of a region-wide perspective cannot be easily solved by yet another online conference during the pandemic. The fact that no such umbrella organisation has emerged to this day, and that no pointers towards something similar emerging any time soon exist, suggests that in-depth networking and joint strategic planning is necessary and cannot occur in a Covid-related online environment.

Funding and Action Plan

Currently, ESN has applied for funding by ESAA that will allow the organisation of a conference of similar scale to the first edition of ARISE. Participant-wise, the current instalment will exclusively target student organisation representatives and will focus on strategic planning, finding common ground and creating an Action Plan for the foundation of the mentioned umbrella organisation. There is also the possibility to host the conference as one of the capacity building trainings connected to ASEF'S ARC8, on which a decision will be made in the future. There is no decision yet on whether a Covid-related cancellation of the physical event will result in another postponement or rather in a more elaborate online format than just a simple online conference.



Sharing expertise, networking and peer-learning have been at the heart of the ASEM process since its beginnings.

Much of this effort in the first years was in higher education. But more recently, there has been an appreciation among countries and stakeholders that broadening ASEM collaboration to extend across all sectors of education and training, to be fully lifelong learning in coverage, contributes more fully to ASEM's Strategic Objectives, and thereby, to the needs of modern economies and societies.

The European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Union (EU) agency tasked to support human capital development (HCD) in the context of external actions, focuses on Life-long learning (LLL) systems reforms. The ETF engagement with ASEM goes back to 2013. Since then, our main input has been, with our partners and co-producers, Cedefop and UNESCO, the Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, which tracks NQF progress worldwide. Where an ASEM country possesses or is developing an NQF, it will usually feature in the Inventory.

To our satisfaction, the Inventory remains an element in the Action Plan. And we are equally pleased to be engaging with ASEM members in two new themes. We currently run two networks which we believe could contribute to the ASEM process and its objectives. These are the ETF Network for Excellence (ENE) in vocational education and training, and the ETF Skills Lab, a network connecting experts in

SKILLS LAB AND ETF NETWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

labour market research. Both these themes are high on EU and global policy agendas.

ETF launched the Network for Excellence in 2020. It unites high-performing VET providers and other actors who shape skills ecosystems such as employers, research and innovation centres, and local authorities. These currently come from the EU, its neighbouring countries and Africa. They cooperate in pedagogy, good school governance, school to business collaboration, and in entrepreneurial, digital and green skills and other topics. The Network takes an inclusive approach to excellence. Its outputs are peer-learning and tools, guides and shared platforms. Centres become national hubs, radiating good practice outwards and generating excellence.

While the Network is progressing happily – we are currently 218 centres from 32 countries – we are always striving to improve our tools and identify and share excellent practice from around the world, to the benefit of all partners.

And so, we invite centres of vocational excellence from Asian countries to participate in our peer-learning activities and share tools. Contact us at: etf.network.for.excellence@etf.europa.eu

We see that ENE can contribute to attainment of the Strategic Objectives on raising VET's profile and on collaboration between business and industry. (Further information and our publications can be accessed via the links below).

The Skills Lab network builds on ETF's extensive contacts in labour market research and draws on their range of publications in skills anticipation, and demand for skills, qualifications and occupations. Though only launched in October 2021, it already comprises 60 experts from research centres based in the EU and its neighbouring countries. As the word laboratory implies, they observe, examine and analyse change.

Its members will co-develop and apply methodologies in skills demand analysis, including evaluating the use of innovative techniques such as big data analytics; analyse themes such as platform work, online job vacancies, and some economic sectors such as agri-food, tourism, and the automotive industry; and conduct target-specific skills analyses in e.g., youth and skills mismatch. Attention will be given to soft skills and skills for the 21st century.

Especially in application of the newer techniques, member experts will share their experience and knowledge. Working methods will span joint seminars and training; a yearly live event to review the network's proposals; peer learning visits; and innovative group work on specific topics.

Skills Lab's findings will be distilled into a range of guides, tools and other publications. The Lab directly supports the ASEM Strategic Objective on bringing together expertise to anticipate the future demand for skills in both regions.

The network is open to any interested researcher or research institute. Just send an expression of interest, giving main skill demand activities and contact details, to: skillslabnetwork@etf.europa.eu

Further information

- Our web page: [Network For Excellence | ETF \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/network-for-excellence)
- ETF Network for Excellence leaflet in English, French and Russian:
 - [etf network for excellence leaflet en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/network-for-excellence-leaflet-en.pdf)
 - [etf network for excellence leaflet fr.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/network-for-excellence-leaflet-fr.pdf)
 - [etf network for excellence leaflet ru 0.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/network-for-excellence-leaflet-ru-0.pdf)
- Publications:
 - [decentralising vet and setting up coves ukraine.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/decentralising-vet-and-setting-up-coves-ukraine.pdf)
 - [Centres of Vocational Excellence: An engine for vocational education and training development | ETF \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/centres-vocational-development)
 - <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/centres-vocational-excellence-autonomy-forging-public>

Shaping the Future of Adult Learning

INSTITUTE FOR ADULT LEARNING (IAL)

SINGAPORE

Global Lifelong Learning Summit

Achieving Strategic Outcomes

The inaugural edition of the Global Lifelong Learning Summit in 2022 will focus on exploring the future of lifelong learning, as the world adjusts to and aligns with massive changes in work, learning and more. Spearheaded by the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL), an Autonomous Institute of the Singapore University of the Social Sciences, the series of three Summits to be presented bi-annually will aim to achieve the following strategic objectives:

- Establish and reinforce global thought leadership in lifelong learning through bringing together policy, practice and academic communities
- Initiate dialogue and promote key exchanges to advance new thinking and directions for lifelong learning
- Collaborate with key global partners to position the GLLS Series as the global platform for lifelong learning

Establishing Global Thought Leadership Through Key Exchanges

With a distinguished line-up of international keynote speakers, discussants and panellists, the first edition of the Summit series will delve into topics including examining lifelong learning alongside the evolving roles of education and training, a future of work amidst an already disrupted and rapidly changing backdrop and a future landscape for lifelong learning with issues surrounding equity, access and inclusivity. With opportunities for engagement and dialogue across such cross-cutting issues, the surfacing of multiple perspectives, developing insights and new approaches will position the Summit as the definitive global thought leadership platform in the field of international lifelong learning policy and practice.

Fostering Strategic Partnerships

To set the tone for diverse and wide-ranging participation and engagements of all involved in the field of lifelong learning, the IAL is honoured to have on board our partners for the Global Lifelong Learning Summit, namely the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Lifelong Learning Hub, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs and the International Labour Organisation. IAL, with all partners, will thus harness our collective strengths and shared beliefs in the goals set out for the GLLS to shape lines of inquiry, develop conversations and initiatives even between each edition of the GLLS series and forward strategic thought development in global lifelong learning.

Presenting the Global Lifelong Learning Summit

The Global Lifelong Learning Summit promises to be the signature event of the collaborative global effort to fulfil the following Strategic Objectives of the ASEM Education Action Plan 2030, namely:

- Strategic Objective 1: Enhancing Connectivity between Asia and Europe by Boosting Inclusive and Balanced Mobility and Exchanges;
- Strategic Objective 2: Promoting Lifelong Learning, Including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); and
- Strategic Objective 3: Fostering a Skills Approach to Education and Training.

The IAL is proud and honoured to present the Global Lifelong Learning Summit and looks forward to welcoming all delegates to Singapore in 2022!



International Association of Universities (IAU)

Future Initiatives

The International Association of Universities (IAU) plans to conduct two activities which would contribute to the ASEM 2030 action plan: the sixth edition of the IAU global survey on internationalization of higher education and the organization of capacity building workshops.

The sixth edition of the IAU global survey on internationalization of higher education is planned for the year 2023. Conducted by IAU since 2003, the global surveys on internationalization provide for a holistic description of internationalization at global and regional level at a given moment in time. They are comprehensive quantitative surveys, which covers all aspects of internationalization from policy and activities to research, human resources and staff development, student mobility and the design of curricula.



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION AROUND THE WORLD

IAU Global Survey Report

Giorgio Marinoni, Hilligje van't Land, Trine Jensen



The sixth edition of the global survey will be prepared during the year 2022 in order to collect data during the first half of the year 2023 and produce a report in the first half of 2024. One or two ASEM representatives will be invited on board the Working Group (WG) which will help IAU to develop the questionnaire and they could include questions of specific interest to the ASEM process. The WG will provide advice and support in all phases of the survey design, implementation and report writing.

Capacity building workshops are a new activity proposed by IAU for universities in ASEM countries, which aim at sharing experiences on developing holistic strategies for a more equitable, fair and inclusive internationalization at institutional level, in which balanced mobility and exchanges play a key role. Capacity building workshops would build upon IAU's experience in providing advisory services and support to universities and governments to advance internationalization, as exemplified by the IAU's program of advisory services ISAS (2.0). An impact evaluation report of ISAS (2.0) is available on the [IAU website](#).

At least two capacity building workshops in internationalization could be organized each year or each two years, one in Asia and one in Europe in order to ensure a balance between the two regions.

Research Network 5 Lifelong Learning Transitions

While we learn throughout our lives, the quality of our learning often depends on the quality of our educational experiences. Good outcomes early in life can set us up for good outcomes throughout our lives. For many early opportunities are poor, for many opportunities are interrupted because of illness, natural disasters, economic crises, migration and any number of reasons. Many learners have poor outcomes at different stages of their learning journeys, some have forced transitions out of education, but almost universally, in today's world learners will need transitions into or back into education, not just once but many times in their lives. This research network will focus on this theme of transitions as it applies to lifelong learning. It will focus on the transition into and through lifelong learning programmes from the perspective of the learner, the educator, and the education system as a whole. Through comparing and contrasting practice in Europe and Asia, the network aims to significantly add to knowledge and best practice in this field.

Key questions will include:

Transitions In:

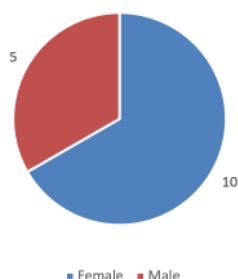
How can we target under-represented groups and minorities and how can we help them to overcome the barriers to access that they face in transitioning back into education as adults?

How can we provide lifelong learning opportunities for learners from migrant backgrounds, for ethnic minorities, for learners with disabilities, or learners with mental health or addiction issues, etc.?

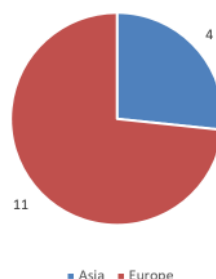
How can practices such as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) assist learners in their transition into lifelong learning programmes?

To what extent can we as educators understand the clash of identities that lifelong learners may experience so that we can better support learners during their transition in?

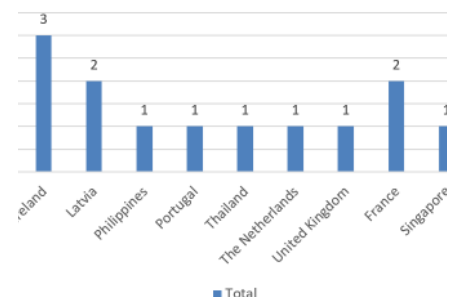
Gender Breakdown



Continent Breakdown



Country Breakdown



Transitions Through:

How can we enhance pedagogical and andragogical approaches to developing curricula for successful lifelong learning interventions where students have the opportunity to actively engage and participate in order to develop their human, identity, social, and cultural capital?

How can we identify and implement best practise strategies for supporting learners in their transition through their learning endeavours?

Transitions Out:

How do we instil a belief in learners that learning is a lifelong process and that their working lives may have numerous vertical and horizontal transitions?

How do we prepare them to realise that as they graduate from a programme, it is not necessarily the end of their learning journey, that this is not a finite process, that their lives may not follow an entirely linear course? And that they may return to learning many more times during the course of their lives?

How do we build their resilience to cope with other possible identity shifts that they may experience in their lives?

Ms Lyndsey El Amoud from Adult Continuing Education in University College Cork is the Coordinator of this network.

A breakdown of membership for this network can be seen in the graphs on the previous page.

Research Network 6 Learning Cities and Learning Regions

This network will seek to build a strong research base that spans the many dimensions of Learning Cities and Learning Regions. More and more cities (and Regions) are self-describing as 'learning' and many are joining global networks like the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. There are virtually as many understandings of what a learning city might be as there are active learning cities.

There is a huge wealth of practical examples of inter-city, city level, sub-city, and neighborhood initiatives under the banner of learning cities. UNESCO provides a list of key determinants of what a learning city should aspire to be. In terms of good practice, there is a proliferation of ideas and models. However, the research field is still relatively underdeveloped.

This network hopes to bring together a range of researchers from across the ASEMcommunity, spanning a diversity of disciplines, approaches, and theories. It also hopes to engage with laboratory cities and regions.

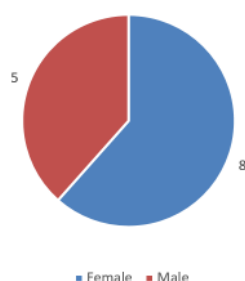
The network aspires to include high-level researchers (across the disciplines), examples of good practice, bottom-up citizen science initiatives, and engagement with policy-makers with a view to enriching the field in terms of theories, concepts, methodologies, and policy formation.

It will align with the common project of Lifelong Learning research across the ASEM LLL Hub and engage with the other Research Networks on this common project. It intends to work in partnership with UNESCO.

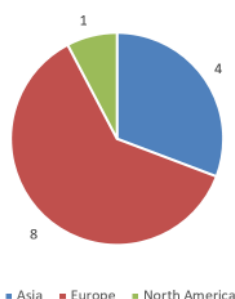
Professor Yukiko Sawano from the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, Japan and Mr. Denis Barrett from Cork Learning Cities, Ireland are the Co-Coordinator of this network. Professor Balazs Nemeth from the University of Pecs, Hungary is the European Coordinator and Professor Suwithida Charungkaitikul from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand is the Asian Coordinator.

A breakdown of membership for RN6 can be seen in the graphs below:

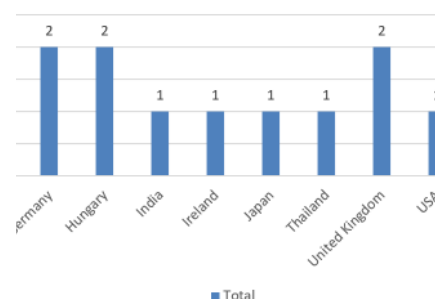
Gender Breakdown



Continent Breakdown



Country Breakdown



Activities:

- First full RN meeting on-line 5th July, 2021
- Participation in a virtual workshop on 2-3rd June with COLLO and AEGT on 'Adult Education in Global Times'
- Dr. Suwithida Charunkaittikul (Asia Co-Coordinator) presented on Knowledge-Based City Remaking in Thailand (7th August)
- Collaborating with eucen on International Learning Cities Book
- Contribute to Conference on Global Learning City Pécs, 2021
- Contribute to 5th International Conference on Learning Cities, 2021
- Contribute to UNESCO CONFINTEA VII and other conferences
- Round Table on comparative methods on learning cities/regions
- Research /literature/field studies on effective design of learning cities/regions

SEA-EU Mobility Programme for Sustainable Development

Youth Learners' Mobility in an Agile World

To find an innovative solution to virtual youth learners' mobility in ASEM for the post COVID-19 recovery phase and beyond, the ASEM Workshop on "Youth Learners' Mobility in an Agile World: an SDG 14 "Life Below Water" Learning Programme as Case Study" was co-organized by Thailand, the European Union Delegation to Thailand, the British Embassy to Thailand, the ASEM Education Secretariat, The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED), EU SHARE and the British Council on 23-24 September 2021 to exchange views and experiences and to brainstorm ideas on how ASEM can promote virtual mobility exchanges in SDG education.

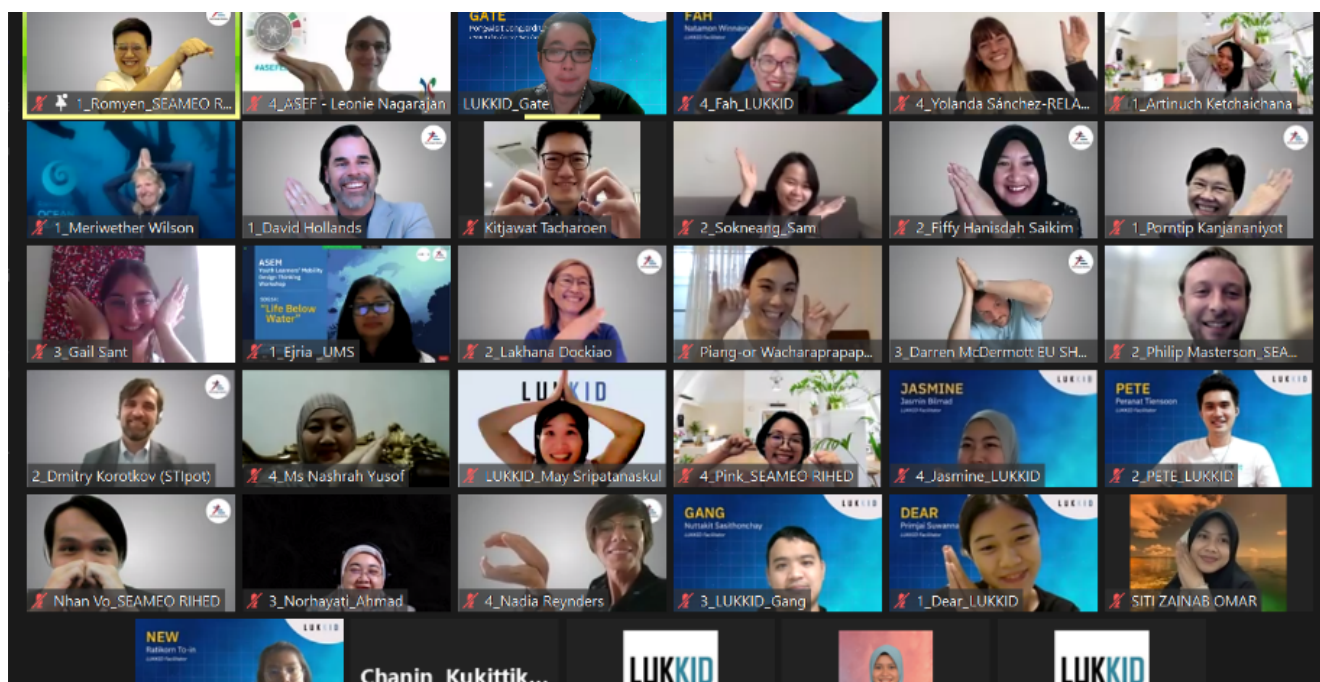
During the Workshop, experts in higher education internationalisation and educational technology and learners took part in discussions on learning mobility. An additional session was also held that used the Design Thinking approach to generate ideas and solutions for a futuristic learning mobility programme on the topic of SDG14 "Life Below Water". Through the SDG14 case study, the Workshop was an important contribution towards the realisation

of the ASEM Strategy 2030 and saw many examples of how the higher education sector has quickly adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and come up with innovative learning programme designs throughout multiple disruptions.

A Virtual Mobility Programme in Support of SDGs

Taking key recommendations from the Workshop, including the need to make international mobility truly accessible and participatory, to maximise benefits and realize futuristic and virtual forms of mobility that are multi-modal, value-based and grounded on a shared goal and to cultivate future generations of learners equipped with the competence, knowledge, and skills to tackle global challenges, SEAMEO RIHED and EU SHARE are working collaboratively to continue to promote innovative and agile educational exchange programmes within the ASEM framework in support the achievement of the SDGs through the SEA-EU Mobility Programme for Sustainable Development.





The objectives of the Programme are to establish a new participatory and inclusive inter-regional mobility programme that can draw on all modes of mobility, including physical, hybrid and virtual to develop innovative learning models for Sustainable Development. The SEA-EU Mobility Programme will be multidisciplinary in focus and encourage inter-regional exchange between Southeast Asia and Europe with the goal of equipping learners with international mindsets, global competencies, and Sustainable Development knowledge. Under the framework of ASEM, this Programme will also complement and expand upon the existing learner mobility initiatives offered by SEAMEO RIHED, including the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme and the SHARE Programme mobility scholarships.

SEA-EU Mobility: Next Steps

In order to launch and pilot the SEA-EU Mobility Programme for Sustainable Development, SEAMEO RIHED and EU SHARE will be conducting 3 additional workshops next year to continue the detailed planning and design of the mobility programme through an inclusive and participatory approach. Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand and other committed partners in Europe are being identified to form an expert group for curriculum development, the selection of mode(s) of mobility and establishment of a working group. The SEA-EU Mobility Programme for Sustainable Development is expected to launch later in 2022 as a pilot programme.

UNEVOC Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET

The Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project supports TVET stakeholders to address current challenges in TVET systems, which have arisen due to technological, environmental, social, and workplace changes. BILT leverages the existing mechanism of the UNEVOC Network to offer opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange between Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. The project complements

national developments by exploring and supporting innovative, market-oriented and attractive modes of learning and cooperation in TVET.



Michaeljung/Shutterstock.com



BILT framework for new qualifications and competencies (NQC)

BILT assists TVET stakeholders to develop and maintain resilient TVET systems that offer relevant qualifications and competencies to learners. The **identification, integration and implementation** (the 'three i's') of new qualifications and competencies is the overarching theme of the BILT project, which analyses how the three i's process works in different systems from the perspective of various stakeholders: ministries, national authorities, and TVET providers. This overarching theme is supported by four complementary themes:

- Digitalization and TVET: providing response to new skills demands, as technology has permeated the world of work and is changing the profile of jobs
- Greening TVET: responding to new development paradigms for sustainability and reduced environmental impact
- Entrepreneurship in TVET: unlocking the potential of innovative entrepreneurial activities and fostering entrepreneurial culture
- Migration and TVET: accelerating the integration of migrants into their host communities, and allowing them to become productive members of the workforce



New: BILT flagship publication New Qualifications and Competencies for future-oriented TVET



Organized in three volumes, the publication is aimed to cater to the diverse needs of TVET-related institutions by exploring and understanding the three I's process from their unique perspectives. Illustrated with case studies and practical examples, the publication proposes solutions to specific TVET challenges. Moreover, it underscores the importance of improving the crucial intersection between the world of work and education, which is now populated with new actors, new tools, dynamics and, above all, expectations from all parts involved.

Outlook 2022: The Self-Reflection Tool

From the beginning of 2022 onwards, the Volume 3 of the publication targeting TVET providers: TVET Delivery: providing innovative solutions, will be transformed into a Self-Reflection Tool. The Tool is intended to allow TVET providers to assess their preparedness to identify, integrate and implement new qualifications and competencies in a timely and accurate manner. To pilot the tool, a series of 'self-reflection' workshops will be held with six selected TVET institutions from Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa. Later on, these institutions will act as multipliers to scale up the methodology within their respective regions.

Bridging knowledge in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe

The BILT 'bridging conferences' are one of several aspects of the BILT project, which contribute to strengthening the European, African and Asian clusters of the UNEVOC Network and to enable peer learning and knowledge exchange between the regions. Since the project inception in 2019, the cross-regional meetings and forums encouraged an ongoing exchange among TVET stakeholders and strengthened peer learning within the global TVET community. The focus of BILT bridging events in 2021 was on the theme of new qualifications and competencies in TVET.

The events brought together TVET policymakers, research experts and TVET practitioners.

- The end-of-year [BILT Learning Forum on New qualifications and competencies: building the future of TVET](#) (7 to 9 December 2021). The Forum features expert discussions on future-oriented TVET systems, a roadshow on digital tools in TVET, a marketplace for innovative practices and the launch of the BILT agenda for 2022-2025.
- Online conference on [Bridging Africa and Europe](#) (June 2021)
- Online conference on [Bridging Asia-Pacific and Europe](#) (April 2021)

A major outcome of the bridging events is the identification of successful TVET initiatives shared by the UNEVOC Network and beyond, and documented by UNESCO-UNEVOC as [Innovation and Learning Practices](#). These describe practical examples of how TVET stakeholders have addressed specific challenges within one of the BILT thematic areas. They offer a learning opportunity for other TVET stakeholders, with the possibility to implement key elements in their own context.

BILT is implemented by UNESCO-UNEVOC, with the support of the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), and sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

To learn more about BILT and opportunities for engagement, contact unevoc.bilt@unesco.org.



The following section comprises articles by six experts elaborating on various topics related to the ASEM Education Process. They provide insights on the current situation and reflect on the future. The topics that will particularly be addressed include mobility in a post-Covid world, digital transformation, recognition, inclusive lifelong learning, synergies with other education processes and programmes and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ASEM Education Process.

The articles express the author's viewpoints and not necessarily those of the ASEM Education Secretariat.

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Impact of COVID-19 on ASEM Education and Moving Forward in a Volatile World



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COVID-19 and inter-regional/multilateral cooperation

Inter-regional cooperation or multilateral cooperation was brought to a sudden standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it became impossible for delegations to meet face to face to discuss social, economic and cultural matters. The major problem faced by countries was how to speed up collaborative research to identify vaccines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As such, world leaders discussed and agreed to have close cooperation to reduce the infections of COVID-19 by utilising online platforms in various international meetings such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union, as well as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

The impact of COVID-19 on Asia-Europe cooperation and the ASEM Education Process

Since the inception of the ASEM in 1996, 53 partners in Asia and Europe have strived to strengthen their relationships through strategic partnerships for mutual benefits in various fields, including education. The pandemic has undoubtedly triggered a very drastic disruption to education in Asia and Europe. This can be seen in the millions of students who were affected by the closure of the schools and higher education institutions. The education community responded quickly in many situations, by shifting to online education to ensure that education and the transfer of knowledge continued. They also strived to leave no student behind.

However, disruptions caused by the pandemic and insufficient support from ministries and stakeholders have placed the ASEM Education Process in a somewhat precarious position as many meetings and initiatives have been put on hold, postponed or moved to a virtual format. This uncertainty will quite likely cause a certain level of disruption to the development of the ASEM Education Process and its four priority areas including its two transversal themes, digitalisation and sustainable development.

The last two times meetings were held face to face were during the Seventh ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7) in May 2019 in Bucharest, Romania and during the First inauguration meeting of the Standing Working Group on ASEM Education Strategy 2030 in December 2019 in Berlin, Germany. Since then, many of the ASEM education meetings have been cancelled, postponed or organised virtually. The Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) scheduled to be held in New Delhi, India on 8 and 9 April 2020 was cancelled. In addition to that, the TVET Seminar planned in Russia has been postponed to 2022, and the PLA on Inclusive Mobility planned to be held in Ghent, Belgium has been postponed to a future date too. During the pandemic, several meetings shifted to online mode. They include the First Senior Officials Meeting (SOM1) in preparation of the Eighth ASEM

Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME8) hosted by Germany, the AEI-ASEM Summer School 2020 and 2021, the ASEM Education Action Plan 2030 Workshops and the Second Senior Officials Meeting (SOM2) and ASEMME8 that will be held in December 2021 hosted by Thailand.

Online meetings and activities can bring along also certain benefits to the ASEM education communities: at the Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya (AEI, UM) some 200 students from Asia and Europe participated in the online AEI-ASEM Summer School in comparison to the on-site programme which can generally accommodate only up to 40 students. Online meetings and activities have encouraged a more diverse participation of students and new opportunities for collaborations. This is also evidenced by more participation in the SOM1 of ASEMME8 and ASEM Education Action Plan Workshops, where participation has gone up. However, online meetings lack the interaction and dynamism that are often found in face to face events, as it is more difficult to interact effectively without knowing each other and differences in time zones further complicate the interaction between participants.

Although the ASEM education meetings, initiatives and projects have been conducted online during the pandemic, the extent to which they have actually achieved their desired objectives without face to face communication is unclear. Also, it is doubtful that the ASEM education communities have strengthened their networks to enhance their education system and to sustain the progress of the ASEM Education Process in Asia and Europe during this challenging period. It is therefore of utmost importance to address the issue brought about by the global pandemic and to prepare for future ASEM education cooperation. It remains key that the ASEM education community and stakeholders continue to keep networking across both regions to maintain the success of the priority areas of the ASEM Education Process.

Networking for international higher education cooperation

Networking is a key element in higher education cooperation especially at the international level. Networking between higher education stakeholders,

higher education institutions and/or national governments often lead to strengthened informal and formal cooperation between partners, in some cases formalised by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Through MoUs, countries and HEIs could attract more international students, cultivate mobility and exchange of staff and students, research collaboration and other mutually beneficial initiatives. As such, networking plays a significant role in the creation of multilevel partnerships, international collaboration, resource and knowledge sharing, mutual learning and sharing of best practices.¹ Partnerships in the ASEM Education Process can strengthen higher education systems, including internationalisation of higher education in ASEM member countries to enhance cooperation and visibility. Internationalisation of higher education must therefore remain a priority for ASEM education partners and stakeholders to ensure that ASEM partners and students in Asia and Europe can reap the benefits through the four priorities of ASEM Education Process.

Networking to strengthen the ASEM Education Process

The ASEM Education Process is a non-binding process that provides an exclusive setting and a venue for discussion, dialogue and sharing of best practices in international education with a priority for equality which could indirectly influence the policy formation on education of ASEM partners.² A former Malaysian senior official for ASEM Education stated that the ASEM Education Process meetings at stakeholder and political level provide a platform for effective networking between policymakers from Asia and Europe leading to exchanges of students, staff and experts, research and project partnerships as well as sharing of best practices. However, what appears to be lacking in the ASEM Education Process is an effective way of networking among ASEM partners to sustain the education process for the mutual benefits of ASEM education partners. During an interview at the Senior Officials' Meeting, an Austrian senior officer underlined that senior officials' commitment is vital in assisting ministries to develop guidelines and policies on higher education and to improve the higher education delivery systems.

1. de Wit, H. (2015). Partnerships for the future: Trends, challenges and opportunities. In N. Jooste, H. de Wit, & S. Heleta (Eds.), Higher Education Partnerships for the Future (pp. 95–102). Port Elizabeth, South Africa: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

2. Gaens, B. (2018). ASEM: Partnership for greater growth? In B. Gaens & G. Khandekar (Eds.), Inter-regional relations and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (pp. 33–58). London: Palgrave Macmillan.



Photos © Dr. M.Miandy, left: Informal networking, right: formal networking

Way forward

The lessons learned from the pandemic should galvanise people to re-establish existing cooperation to strengthen networking and partnership among countries around the globe. The ASEM education community and stakeholders should strengthen their connections by organising high-level ASEM Education meetings either virtually or face to face. They should also implement the action plan of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 including various initiatives and projects, such as to conduct education meetings and projects in a hybrid mode allowing for higher participation and more collaboration.

In addition to that, the ASEM education partners should cultivate a positive mind-set to work together with other partners in cooperation with the ASEM Education Secretariat through effective strategic alliances and networking. Strategic alliances are an essential mechanism to ask for information on education matters to peers and to develop cooperation for the development of the higher education system in Asia and Europe. A former Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia mentioned that the ASEM Education Secretariat should play an active role in keeping the ASEM Education Process constantly active and to assist the ASEM Education partners to implement initiatives and projects effectively.

Furthermore, either face to face or online cooperation through the ASEM Education Process

will encourage multi-level partnerships, international integration and regional identity building. Effective networking and cooperation can also assist ASEM partners to access the market and expand internationally, as well as to learn about a multilateral governance structures for the enhancement of the education system in their own country. Strategies to attract more international students to take part in either physical or virtual mobility will be better developed and close cooperation with existing and new higher education institutions could be strengthened. An ASEM expert and European university professor who has been involved in ASEM Education Process since 2008 stated that higher education institutions in all ASEM partner countries must be more vibrant to enrich cooperation in the field of higher education for visibility and mutual benefit.

The ASEMME8 meeting which will be held in December 2021 could become a starting point for ASEM education partners to re-establish networking to help bring a brighter future for the ASEM Education Process and reignite mutual benefits for ASEM partners. Therefore, a strong commitment is necessary to nurture partnerships and collaboration among ASEM education partners, higher learning institutions, industry/business and other stakeholders in the post-COVID-19 world. Past achievements and future successful ventures will ensure that the ASEM Education Process remains an active inter-governmental dialogue platform to strengthen education cooperation between ASEM education partners.

Constructing a Strong Recognition Culture for ASIA-EUROPE Educational Cooperation

Student mobility without full transfer of credits and fair grade conversion is mere “academic tourism” which –in times of financial restraints and debates about greening student mobility– is definitely not the way to go. Ensuring accurate registration and full recognition for every form of international credit mobility of students in higher education is after all often a requirement of the financing authorities of exchange programmes, also for such programmes supporting mobility between Asia and Europe. There are many examples we can think of e.g. Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility, EU SHARE, ASEM DUO. This is of course very understandable, since this is of utmost importance to avoid unnecessary prolongation of the studies implying extra costs and negative framing of mobility in general (as a kind of subsidized pastime). In the framework of student mobility in higher education, there are two important pillars of recognition: full transfer of the credits awarded at the host university to the home university as well as fair grade conversion. This means that once there is no discussion anymore about the fact that courses successfully completed abroad are taken into account for the home degree and the credits are automatically recognized, one should also start discussing grade conversion.

In the framework of intercontinental mobility such as in the ASEM-context a stronger focus on recognition (full transfer of credits, fair grade conversion) would be beneficial to increase the participation in and the trustworthiness and the quality of these types of student exchanges and as such enhance the Asia-Europe Dialogue.

Conditions for Recognition

The last [midterm assessment](#) of Erasmus+ (2018) suggests that 80% of mobile students receive recognition for their study abroad period. This number is somewhat higher than the one reported in the [PRIME II](#) (2010) study by the Erasmus Student Network (73% received full recognition) which shows that very little has changed during the last couple of years in Europe. This might explain the increasing political interest for recognition in Europe (e.g. the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on Promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad). But also on a global scale (e.g. UNESCO’s [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#)) there is a clearly increased political interest in recognition issues. This explains why many higher education institutions worldwide are investing in supportive measures to increase the recognition of the study abroad periods of their students.



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After all, everything related to recognition very much depends on the mutual trust and understanding between the partner higher education institutions (HEIs) involved in the educational cooperation (student mobility). Both at the academic and administrative level a good knowledge of the counterpart and creating common ground are very important conditions to set up good working procedures regarding recognition, including grade conversion. Fortunately much is in place within the ASEM-context to underpin this mutual trust and understanding.

Both Asia (especially the ASEAN countries) and Europe (both at the level of the EU and broader in the European Higher Education Area) have created very sound mechanisms that overarch existing national and institutional Quality Assurance (QA) systems and Qualifications Frameworks (QF) and much is in place to mutually recognise these. We can explicitly refer to the AQRF (ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework), the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF), the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area or the European Qualifications Framework.

These QA & QF mechanisms are cornerstones for recognition (in the form of credit transfer and grade conversion) and their existence in both the Asian and European contexts and their intercontinental applicability create a sufficient basis for the necessary mutual trust and understanding.

Credit Transfer

In Europe we have seen the creation over the last three decades of a comprehensive credit transfer system in the form of ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). Unfortunately, with regard to credit transfer, notwithstanding the existing QA- and QF-foundations described above, there is currently no consensus on the use of a single credit transfer system with the purpose of recognition, not between Asian countries and even less so from an intercontinental point of view. For instance, in Asia at least three major credit transfer systems are in use:

“The AQAF (ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework) has become the umbrella framework for quality assurance practices in higher education in ASEAN countries since its creation in 2013. Reviews of accrediting agencies against its quadrants and principles are now conducted by AQAF on a regular scale, after having been piloted in 2016/17. Eight agencies from five ASEAN member states have been reviewed or are in the process of doing so. AQAF thus became a cornerstone in ASEAN’s aim to establish a regional Higher Education Space by 2025. Meanwhile, almost all member states have established national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and four countries referenced their NQFs against the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) with others bound to follow. These processes are a testament to ASEAN’s willingness of driving harmonisation and internationalisation of its higher education ecosystem.” (Sebastian Gries, Programme Manager Qualifications Frameworks & Quality Assurance, European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region - SHARE)

- AUN – ACTS: the AUN ASEAN Credit Transfer System
- UMAP – UCTS: the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Credit Transfer Scheme
- SEAMEO-RIHED – ACTF: the SEAMEO-RIHED Academic Credit Transfer Framework

Because of this lack of unity, the EU-funded project EU-SHARE proposes to use a pragmatic approach to [credit transfer](#) in the context of cooperation between ASEAN-HEI’s and between EU and ASEAN HEI’s (in the form of the ASEAN – Europe Credit Transfer System - AECTS).

But such a pragmatic approach clearly differs from the comprehensive approach implemented in Europe (ECTS). And even then, as pointed to in the previous paragraph, one out of five students are still experiencing problems with the recognition of their study abroad period in Europe. This explains for sure the high expectations regarding the digitalisation of credit transfer. This is for example clear from the ambitions of the Erasmus Without Paper project, which plays a central role in the European Commission’s [European Student Card Initiative](#), a key initiative of the [European Education Area](#), as well as the ambitions of EU-SHARE that is in its current stage piloting digital credentials recognition and portability.

This means that further cooperation in this field, e.g. in the framework of the [ASEM Expert Group](#) on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems, remains extremely useful.

If credit transfer remains a challenging topic in the Asia-Europe educational cooperation, this is all the more the case for grade conversion. Hence a pragmatic approach will be necessary to ensure that steps forward can be taken also in this field.

Grade conversion

Grade conversion is a real challenge in higher education and one of which the potential impact on students' participation in mobility programmes is often underestimated. Not only does it explicitly conclude the study abroad experience in a fair way, since grades are often used to differentiate between students, grade conversion can have a serious impact on students' future which offers sufficient reasons for fair grade conversion. Higher grades can:

- Open doors to scholarships/grants
- Give access to specific (merit-based) extra-curricular activities
- Play a crucial role in applications for postgraduate / Master- / PhD-programmes

This also explains why in many cases students use their right to appeal when grade conversion is applied in a non-transparent or (according to the students) unfair way. Or (even worse) when no conversion at all is performed.

An important facilitating element in fair and transparent grade conversion is developing a common set of approaches to grading, at the level of a course programme or an institution or a level in between. This comes down to what we could call working (within an institution) on a common "grading culture". This is a condition to be able to raise (within an institution) the awareness that in other countries, in other HEI's, in other disciplines grading might happen in a (completely) different way and will hence increase the sentence for the importance of grade conversion.

In the [ECTS Users' Guide](#) it is proposed to produce and use ISCED-based Grade distribution tables as the basis for grade conversion. If, for technical or other reasons, this is not achievable, an alternative

is to do this at the level of the institution / programme / course and make these widely available.

The most logical way to do that is to provide this information on the HEI's website). Alternatively (and when the grading culture allows for this), providing grade distribution tables at the country level could also be used. The Erasmus+ funded [Egracons](#)-project (now part of Erasmus Without Paper) provides such tables for those countries that have sufficient (= statistically relevant) grade distribution tables available. But anyhow, because even in Europe, many institutions do not provide Grade Distribution Tables, it remains important to think about a workable way to deal with this. In such a situation, programmes are advised to communicate in advance how grades will be converted, also to their students.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction: student mobility without full transfer of credits and fair grade conversion is mere "academic tourism" which is not the way to go with regard to student mobility. This means that also in the context of interregional mobility between Europe (EU and beyond) and Asia (ASEAN and beyond) we have to construct a strong recognition culture, building further on the foundations (regarding qualifications frameworks and quality assurance) put in place as the basis for the necessary mutual trust and understanding.

Digitalisation and Higher Education: Impact of Digital Transformation on the ASEM Education Process



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With the advent of Industry 4.0, the knowledge economy and society geared to transform into a digitalised sustainable entity. The [Seoul Declaration](#) in 2017 identified the inherent potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for educational innovation. It is important to note that later, during the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7) in Bucharest in May 2019, digitalisation (along with sustainable development) was [identified](#) as one of the two transversal themes of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) by the Education Ministers to address the issues of connectivity and collaboration between Asia and Europe. The ASEM Education Expert Group on Digitalisation was kicked off in autumn 2019. This expert group worked in close collaboration with the DAAD and brought out a working paper to be presented in the forthcoming ASSEME-8 in December 2021. The DAAD had also organized a conference and [published selected papers](#) to understand the challenges and opportunities in digitalisation of teaching, learning, and research in higher education. This article attempts to highlight relevant areas, issues, challenges, and opportunities in the process of digitalisation of higher education in ASEM region and the role that AEP can play in enhancing collaboration and ensuring inclusivity between Asia and Europe.

Access to Digital Infrastructure

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, overnight, digitalisation became a pressing necessity in all walks of life including higher education. Earlier, there have been concerted efforts toward integration of technology in higher education in many Asian and European countries. The COVID-19 pandemic compelled higher education institutions to rely on digitalisation of higher education to avoid sudden disruption in teaching-learning and research processes. In the post-pandemic situation, digitalisation of higher education may take various forms and manifest itself in different formats such as virtual or blended provision of education.

The transition from the traditional mode of teaching to a completely online mode has been challenging for teachers and learners alike. The digitalisation process is a double-edged sword. It can support more inclusive education: students from different background have more easy access to online education, students with disabilities can use supporting tools to follow classes and students in general can benefit from listening to classes multiple times. On the other hand, the absence of digital infrastructure, both in hardware and software terms, can create a digital divide or digital inequity which is [apparent](#) in many countries of the ASEM region and elsewhere.

In the post-pandemic era, economies all over the world are experiencing financial crunch, whereas the building of digital infrastructure requires substantial investment. The situation yearns for efficient and inclusive use of old devices and gadgets that are still in good working condition, with other higher education institutions and communities within the ASEM region. During the pandemic, it was

[reported](#) that women and disadvantaged groups suffer more in terms of access to digital devices and information. While engaging with scholars and students in the AEP, ASEM can give special attention to the of “digital gender divide” and ensure less and less of gender imbalance in opportunities such as student and faculty exchange or work placement internships, offered by it in the ASEM region. The AEP can offer opportunities specially meant for women in the ASEM region to ensure gender parity.

Quality concerns in E-Content and E-Learning

The Asia-Europe collaboration in higher education through digitalisation can address the issue of digital quality content creation and quality assurance of e-learning. There is no lack of freely available digital content on various branches of knowledge. But the access to quality digital content is a matter of concern as it is scarce and [expensive](#). Often, information on the availability of quality digital content and valid sources is not easily accessible. The AEP can identify existing digital platforms ([Internet Archive](#), [National Digital Library of India](#)) that provide information on quality content freely or at a low or discounted price and make these available for the higher education systems of both the regions.

To ensure the internal and external quality assurance in e-learning, the AEP needs to cooperate on this topic and make use of existing [guidelines](#) across Europe and Asia. If we could develop a common ground, this could enhance virtual mobility in the ASEM region, which comes with the high standards of quality assurance mechanisms in place. The AEP can also engage scholars from both regions who are involved in the ASEM-DUO and ASEM Lifelong Learning Programmes and utilise their expertise for generating quality digital content in the form of public lectures, interviews, workshops, and seminars or webinars.

Digitalisation and Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning (LLL) is one of the priority areas of the AEP. The aim of it is to create learning opportunities to all those who aspire for continuous professional development. Under this priority area, ASEM Education partners are carrying out initiatives such as sharing best practices and future perspectives in the ASEM Network of MOOCs, and LLL and Learning Cities to name a few. Apart from this, lifelong learning could be an effective mechanism for ensuring social justice, reducing the gap for vulnerable groups, including women, tribal, indigenous people, refugees, migrants, religious and racial minorities. Similarly, the

technology of production is ever changing and requires continuous skilling, reskilling, and upskilling while on the job. Digitalisation holds out the way forward for offering such learning opportunities. Lifelong learning through digitalisation is affordable and flexible. Through the digitalisation process, the reach of ASEM initiatives on LLL can be enhanced and access to education can be ensured to those who missed the opportunity to learn earlier in life.

Industry, Business and Digitalisation of Higher Education

The ASEM region witnesses a vibrant industrial and business mobility between Asia and Europe. Engaging business and industry in education is another priority area of the AEP. The understanding of culture and work ethics of a particular nation are crucial in successful industrial and business mobility. The ASEM digitalisation process can significantly contribute towards education and developing skills and attitudes on the finer and critical aspects of Asian and European cultures and work ethics among the current and prospective workforce and ensure a long-term productive and pleasant relationships of employers, employees, and other members of the labour force and society. With the help of digitalisation interactive platforms can be created wherein individuals can get access to relevant information pertaining to cultural features of different societies and also interact with people and share their experiences at the same time. Through these digital interactions, intercultural understanding can be advanced in order to prepare individuals from the ASEM regions for global citizenship.

Conclusion

The AEP is committed to create a vibrant and inclusive higher education in the ASEM region. In the post-pandemic era, the issues of access, equity, and quality in higher education have become ever more crucial. To address these issues in a comprehensive manner, it is vital for the AEP to employ digitalisation of higher education both as a means and as an end at the same time. In this, the collaboration amongst various institutions is imperative. The AEP is already working closely with UNESCO, ASEAN, the ASEAN University Network, and the Erasmus Student Network, to name a few. This bilateral and multilateral collaboration through exchange of best practices and research in the area of teaching and learning through digitalisation of higher education would certainly strengthen the AEP.

ASEM Lifelong Learning Research: Developing an Inclusive Lifelong Learning Culture for All in post-COVID times

Lifelong learning is one of the four pillars of the ASEM Ministers of Education cooperation, together with Quality Assurance and Recognition, Engaging Business and industry in Education, Balanced Mobility. The fourth pillar, Lifelong Learning, including TVET, constitutes the strategic priority areas from the first ASEMME meeting in 2008 in Germany, till today.

The ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub was created in 2005, as a concrete outcome of the ASEM Summit in 2002 in Copenhagen. It was established as a platform for university researchers and policy-makers, with a secretariat hosted by the Danish University of Education. The hub coordinated the activities of five research networks across over 40 universities and an advisory council consisting of representatives from national ministries, international intergovernmental organisations and university leadership. The research priorities were decided by both researchers and policy-makers: 1. Development of ICT skills, e-learning and the culture of e-learning in Lifelong Learning, 2. Workplace Learning, 3. The professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Educators in ASEM countries, 4. National strategies for Lifelong Learning concerning citizens' motivation and barriers against continuing education and training, 5. ASEM LLL Core Competencies.¹

The ASEM LLL Hub has grown fast and included more than 100 researchers from 40 universities to carry out joint research and publications in these five areas. A sixth area has been added in 2020: Learning Cities. The ASEM Education Process and the high political interest and participation in the events of the ASEM LLL Hub have since 2005 contributed to national lifelong learning policies and strategies in the ASEM area.

The ASEMME 2 in 2009 in Vietnam had lifelong learning as its main theme, and the SEAMEO Research Centre for Lifelong Learning was established as a regional centre in 2010 with the aim to facilitate knowledge exchange and policy learning in Asia. The Centre was governed by a Board of Ministries from all 11 SEAMEO countries and developed strong research ties with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

1. Que Anh Dang (2015) A decade working together for ASEM Lifelong Learning: Looking back and Looking ahead <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/49182248/asem-gazette-vol-1> (pages 19-24)



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Arne Carlsen has served as Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Vice-rector for Education and for Internationalisation of the Danish University of Education, and Rector of the Nordic Folk Academy.

Challenges

Some of the challenges in the past years have been concerning a synergy effect with other regional organisations. The ASEM LLL Hub has had extensive cooperation with ASEF from the first years, and with the AES when it was created. There was some cooperation with the ASEM Rectors' Conference, other regional university alliances and networks, and bigger international organisations, but there was more potential to develop synergy and cooperation in the form of a platform or partnership, which still has to be achieved.

Other challenges have been the difficulty to assure continuity and momentum when changing the institutional settings of the related secretariats. Hopefully the [ASEM Gazette](#) can continue to be a communication and reporting platform for the many actors in the field, and to assure historical memory.

In the past few years, much lifelong learning research in Asia and Europe has focussed on the analysis of the content of training programmes at the workplace, education opportunities offered by private, NGO, or state providers, and cross-sectoral and cross-departmental modes of cooperation. Education offers on their side, have focussed on promoting and offering education, training and learning, based on apps, mobile phones, artificial intelligence and high tech, targeted to digital transformation.

Lifelong learning has often been seen as a tool to cope with change in the economic environment, with the transitioning in and out of jobs, and has often focussed on keeping and including older age groups to remain in the job market by supporting the development of new skills.

Lifelong learning however, is not only a tool to be used when people lose their job or are pushed to develop new skills and competencies. It is rather a philosophy of continuous learning for the community, person, and employment. It is also an organising principle for all sectors and sub-sectors of learning, training, and education. The task of the relevant stakeholders – policy-makers, researchers, practitioners, and learners – is, therefore, to create and develop a lifelong learning culture. The

framework is already given with the [Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the [Education 2030 Framework for Action](#), and the [UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education](#).

International partnerships

International collaboration and inter-regional research cooperation in lifelong learning are today in high demand, despite some recent more inward-looking national tendencies. There is a big number of researchers organised in the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub and other regional and bilateral organisations and projects. Some countries like Singapore have recently created an international platform for a Global Lifelong Learning Summit, with ILO, OECD, UNESCO, South Korea and Japan.

Quality education and lifelong learning have become an imperative, as expressed in recent years by UNESCO, ILO and OECD. This has happened as a response to the demand for empowering the workforce and making individuals more resilient. It has taken the form of policies to support skills development, the capability to meet new demands and economic change, and by encouraging people to continue to learn. There has been a continuous focus on strengthening community and inclusion.

Asia has a strong tradition to support community-based lifelong learning, based on collectivistic philosophy. Inclusion is often seen as a moral responsibility to be a good person and to improve oneself to support the common good, whereas the Western world traditionally has focused more on individual rights. Maybe the two types of citizenship and moral education can meet in striving to improve one-self and develop a harmonious relationship with others.

ASEM Education Process

There are wider perspectives of peoples' learning needs than what is typically offered by education providers. The ASEM Education Process could consider in the coming years to develop meeting places that support researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and learners – to strengthen LLL. This could happen by inviting to strengthen multi-

partnership collaboration and by calling for a universal entitlement to lifelong learning. The universal entitlement could eventually lead to the adoption of a UNESCO convention on lifelong learning.

There are so many lifelong learning opportunities to strengthen people-to-people relations and learn from each other East-West, that would benefit from the relationship to the ASEM Education Process. One of them is the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. The 2021 Yeonsu Declaration on building healthy and resilient cities through lifelong learning points to the key role of cities in promoting learning for health and strengthening resilience. It can lead to avoiding an increase in health inequality. It can hopefully also lead to local actions and development strategies on Health Literacy for All.

The ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub has just opened a new Research Network, in which joint research is carried out on Learning Cities. It can hopefully appeal also to early career researchers and bring forward research-based proposals for themes of the next international conferences on learning cities, and for the upcoming International Conference on Adult Education CONFINTEA VII, in the important series of World conferences taking place only every twelve years.

AEP and New areas of joint action

Monitoring and measurement of lifelong learning is a relatively new area in ASEM. The difficulty of measuring participation in non-formal and informal learning has led to a new interest in developing frameworks of measurement. Such frameworks have previously been based on the Delors four pillars of learning for the 21st Century, like the European Lifelong Learning Indicators ([ELLI-Index](#)) for measuring lifelong learning in the European Union.

The new interest of international organisations like WHO, ILO, and OECD in lifelong learning, thus joining the efforts of UNESCO and ILO's request for a universal entitlement to lifelong learning, based on the fourth industrial revolution and the sustainable development goals, have also given new impetus to talk about a convention for lifelong learning.

Finally, there is much potential in implementing the new transversal skills in learning, training and education, whether they are called transversal skills (UNESCO), 21st Century Skills (OECD), soft or life skills, they still include entrepreneurship, leadership, negotiation, green skills, learn to learn, cope with change, teamwork, and others.

Lifelong learning is one of the four original pillars of ASEM Ministers of Education cooperation, and it seems to be possible to take this cooperation to an even higher level both for policy, research and practice.

ASEM Education Mobility in challenging times



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The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has been impacting student and staff mobility and the internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) around the globe in unprecedented ways. The disruption and fragmentation of international mobility and education systems caused by the pandemic has also dramatically shown how fragile the achievements of the SDGs are and that questions of inclusion and mobility in international education needed to stay high on the agenda in both regions. The latter had already been addressed in the 2019 [ASEM Chair's Conclusions](#) entitled "Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals". At the outbreak of the pandemic, UNESCO [invited](#) HEIs to prioritise inclusion and equity in their recovery roadmaps, to develop new partnerships, inclusive online learning solutions, and improve policies together.

At the moment of writing, countries in Europe are experiencing the fourth wave of the pandemic with the situation changing quickly and higher education institutions (HEIs) closing campuses again, all illustrating the continued challenges for temporary mobility of students and staff in particular. While no final assessments on the impact of international student mobility can be made yet¹, there is some available data on credit mobility, e.g. a [temporary study](#) related to international mobility in the Erasmus+ programme, a key funding programme for credit mobility in Europe. After the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 a lot of the planned Erasmus+ visits were still realised including via hybrid and virtual mobility.

How can we use these challenging times and experience of the ongoing pandemic as an opportunity to rethink international education and scale up our endeavour to strengthen balanced and inclusive mobility in the AEP and to shape a broader, more resilient and inclusive "ASEM Education Space"? (Que Anh Dang 2016).

Towards a more comprehensive and inclusive vision of international education

In Asia and Europe, international educationalists and policy makers share the endeavour to seek to ensure effective, inclusive pathways to prepare students for a global future in which they can live, thrive, succeed and interact competently and mindfully across cultures with each other. The past two years have dramatically illustrated that this is not a given and that we need to strive for a

1. In Germany, for example, 2,494 non-degree seeking international students were enrolled in the winter term 2020 compared to 9985 students enrolled as non-degree seeking students. Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2021 retrieved 03.12.2021 at 11:07:44 CET; see also the pandemic as one key obstacle in https://www.wissenschaft-welt offen.de/content/uploads/2021/06/WWO_2021_210916_web.pdf (p. 77 tables C2.17/C2.18)

more comprehensive vision of international education. We also need to include the physical and mental well-being of our students. The call to make international higher education activities more inclusive, and thus beneficial and impactful, for a greater number of beneficiaries can help generate fundamental change and innovation of HEIs in both regions.

Internationalisation can provide a pathway that enables HEIs to make global learning one of their key organising principles. This catalyst role of internationalisation of HEIs was also highlighted in the [IAU Global Survey Report](#) whose authors hope that “the perceived importance of international collaboration in order to develop joint solutions to the current and future crisis will increase in the short, medium and long term”. A [DAAD survey](#) of 171 HEIs in Germany in March 2021 on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international student mobility confirms that a majority of respondents expect internationalisation to have a continued or even growing role.

pertaining to international assignments have confirmed that one key success factor of real acquisition of intercultural competences is the quality of interaction with representatives of the host population. Encouraging interaction among students was also one of the key recommendations of an [ESN report](#) published in the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe when HEIs had to revert almost overnight to online teaching due to social distancing and contact restrictions in the pandemic.

Creating meaningful interactions and insightful moments of learning – both on site and on screen – in a supportive learning environment should be one of our key guiding principles as international educationalists in our educational endeavours. While it is acknowledged that physical mobility cannot be replaced by online classes and virtual exchange programmes, there is a great need to reflect upon and test and combine new and old ways of learning to create more enhanced, mindful encounters for a diverse student body and include more students in the learning and exchange experience.

Virtual Exchange (VE) and Collaborative Online International Learning are by their nature inclusive, balanced and sustainable, and have largely resided within the domain of Internationalisation-at-Home. Good practice examples such as the Coventry University's Collaborative Online International Learning ([COIL](#)) experience – which started years before the pandemic – demonstrate that academic programmes and collaborations can be made fit for purpose and geared towards ‘virtual internationalisation’ by providing students on site an opportunity to interact virtually with peers at international HEIs and professionals in their field of study and vice versa. Virtual mobility elements can help prepare for potential future physical learning mobility or provide international perspectives to local students who are not likely to be mobile in the future. Formats such as “Integrated Virtual Learning” (van Rooijen 2020) also provide learning opportunities to students participating both virtually from abroad and locally on campus and thus offers a great degree of flexibility while it can help enrich the individual and collaborative learning experience. Through a wider spectrum of learning opportunities individual students’ learning and lifestyle needs can be addressed even better as new divides emerge with the exponential rise of use of digital formats in recent years.² A diversified approach of learning that combines face-to-face, virtual and hybrid learning environments is based on one key educational principle – student centredness.

In search of striking a balance between new digital/hybrid formats and quality assurance

ASEM success Stories such as SHARE, ASEM DUO and AEI illustrate more internationalisation opportunities can be offered to students through interconnected international networks and curricular embeddedness of global perspectives. While cultural face-to-face immersion will continue to be a challenge in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis, online international programmes in a digital environment can be used to provide quality education and create opportunities for interaction among students. This is highlighted by Dr Nurliana Binti Kamaruddin from AEI, Universiti Malaya:

2. Prof. Etsuko Katsu of Meiji University was advocating a combination of these different formats as pure online formats tended to benefit in particular highly self-regulated learners while leaving others behind during the trilateral meeting of university leaders from Japan, France and Germany “Future University Development beyond Pandemic Times” (20 October 2021). The German Rectors’ conference has published the recording of the webinar here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9EiErSfExA&fbclid=IwAR0RKLD09JXCzigAgCpNOfo0aMerbZfDQreBpt4nuzbXfQfya_ycCZoPVo

“The significant decrease of international and exchange students due to the COVID-19 pandemic does not indicate a decreasing interest in students to experience studying in other countries. While it is certain to acknowledge that the physical experience of studying abroad remains the motivating factor for students to enrol in a foreign university, new opportunities have been created through increased effort for online teaching and learning that universities such as the Asia Europe Institute (AEI) have put in ranging from virtual webinars and events, joint classroom, and hybrid teaching. These options will remain at Universiti Malaya and remote learning options will be made permanent for many of its current programmes. The challenge will be to seek a balance between all the new options without losing focus on what is most important for a university: providing quality education for its students. Thus, universities will need to take into consideration not only the aspect of ICT infrastructure and classroom tools, but also the ability of the lecturers and students to connect in a meaningful manner.”

It is in this spirit that the ASEM COIL Pilot Project was created, to explore, test and evaluate with the support of colleagues at home and from Asian partners new ways of learning in an online environment. A focus on common topics such as Education for Sustainable Development presents valuable learning and engagement opportunities for the future to engage students and lecturers from both regions in similar ASEM COIL project initiatives.

Whilst an onsite mobility experience cannot be replaced and the benefits of digitalisation should not be overrated as panacea to all (educational) challenges, the recent dynamics of multiple virtual and hybrid formats can offer new and flexible pathways that enable more students to gain international experience. Future HEIs are envisioned “without walls” as cross-border, hybrid institutions with a higher number of participants and combining physical and virtual facilities.

Due to an increasing pressure to address global societal and environmental challenges such as the pandemic and cutting CO2 emissions, blended and hybrid collaborative formats of learning and

mobility are likely to be further reinforced in the future - such as in Erasmus+ through the new Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) that combines collaborative formats of onsite and online learning mobility as an integral part of a course module or programme.

International cooperation continues to provide a vital stimulus for innovation, teaching and research for HEIs and will be essential during post-pandemic times. The AEP can offer HEIs from both regions a structured framework that allows the systematic evaluation and exploitation of lessons learned in a common endeavour to build more resilient and comprehensive international education.

Thinking Higher and Beyond: Alternative Futures of ASEM Education

Discussions about the future of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) started before the pandemic at the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting in 2019. The concrete act of formulating an ASEM Education Strategy for 2030 aims at creating a revised framework for developing and implementing result-oriented initiatives and projects.¹

2021 marks the 13th anniversary of AEP – the 'youngest' sector with great potential in the ASEM family. Seeing AEP growing, we can reasonably hope that its future will be longer than its past. At a glance, it takes after its 'parents', such as the Bologna Process and the ASEAN Higher Education Space, but AEP has been creating its own identity and has all good reasons to think higher and beyond what has been achieved. At this age, AEP is faced with options and opportunities enabling it to test new ideas to craft its alternative futures.

In the last two years, AEP has been profoundly affected by the pandemic where societies, economies, higher education systems, as well as the climate, change faster than ever before and require collaborative and innovative solutions. To respond to its members' diverse needs for post-Covid recovery in uncertain times, AEP needs to create its alternative futures – multiple possible futures – based on the constellation of ideas and initiatives. This article puts forward three feasible ideas aimed at (re)creating productive synergies with other education projects and processes through building a sustainable *AEP Honeycomb Network*, a *Wood-wide Web of Universities*, and *Redefining Success* in the ASEM region.

AEP Honeycomb Network

Extensive membership has been a mechanism for constructing the ASEM process, but the size of the group has an impact on the cooperation. On the one hand, an advantage of a large number of higher education systems working together is to generate greater outcomes for global initiatives, such as achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the other hand, a challenge faced by such a heterogenous group is the great difficulty in managing the group dynamics. AEP has full potential to build on a distributed leadership approach in order to create a honeycomb network that consists of many honey cells – that are sub-group issue-based projects, whether they are a joint curriculum programme in tourism, a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) partnership. These honeycomb cells combine Asian and European expertise and experience to initiate hybrid practices and create new outcomes that benefit all involved.



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1. [ASEMME7 Statement](#) (Education Ministers, 2019, Bucharest, Romania).

The pandemic has presented opportunities for adding new honeycomb cells (e.g. teachers' digital capacity enhancement) to the ASEM education cooperation. The Asian and European partners are faced with similar new issues, but the acute situation is felt much stronger in the Asian lower-income countries. The ASEAN education ministers acknowledged that 'education is key to the regions' post-pandemic recovery' and committed to 'boosting investments in human resources as well as soft and hard infrastructure, scaling up and mainstreaming existing initiatives, integrating critical transferable skills into the curricula, enhancing the capacity of teachers to design and deliver digitally enabled curricula' and 'mainstreaming gender equality will also be prioritised throughout response and the recovery process given the gendered impact of the pandemic'² (ASED, 2020).

Another example of the honeycomb network model is the practice of automatic recognition of qualifications in Europe. The Benelux sub-region of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, has for many years signed the [treaty](#) of automatic mutual recognition of qualifications. In September 2021, the Benelux countries and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) agreed to allow automatic recognition of higher education qualifications. That means degrees obtained in any of the six signatory countries can be used to pursue higher education degrees (such as master's degrees and doctorates) or work in any other state under this agreement. Similarly, the [Nordic region](#) has also been working on automatic recognition of qualifications and [digitalisation of credential data](#). With the Benelux'

In Asia, a lot has been achieved in mutual (not yet automatic) recognition to facilitate student mobility within the continent. Since 2005 the ASEAN countries started Mutual Recognition Arrangements in a number of professions. This is an important step in facilitating the flow of professional

The logo for the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is displayed, featuring a stylized red and blue 'A' shape. Below it, the text 'Asia-Europe Meeting' is written. To the right, a stylized world map shows Asia and Europe highlighted in red, with dotted lines connecting them.

2. Joint Statement of the 11th ASEAN Ministers Meeting (2020). Malina: Adopted on 20 November 2020.

services and the mobility of skilled labour. Whether these countries will pursue automatic recognition is still to be seen. However, several honeycomb cells have been formed, such as the [Tokyo Convention](#), ASEM Cross-border Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education ([CBQAN](#)). A future is open to greater ASEM initiatives, but concerted efforts are needed from members to ensure the realisation of such a fruitful future.

A Wood-Wide Web of ASEM Universities

The ASEM Education Process has been primarily an inter-governmental project with limited involvement of universities, except for the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub and the former ASEF Rectors' Conference. It is vital to acknowledge that higher education institutions have a much longer history of international cooperation than the AEP and they are still the main agents that drive internationalisation. Therefore, it would be wise to create alternative futures by building on the wood-wide web of Asian and European universities, for example, the European University Association, ASEAN University Network, European Universities Alliances, the League of European Research Universities, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Networks, Erasmus+ University Consortia, [CAMPUS Asia](#) consortia. Within these webs, there is also a web of European academics working on Asian soil and an increasing number of Asian scholars working at European universities. It is possible to tap into the resources of intellectual diaspora societies to increase their contribution to the ASEM education process.

To make use of such networks, it is also essential to pay attention to the alignment between the international dimensions of the three core functions of higher education: education, research, and service to society, and ideally, blend the 2030 ASEM objectives in their institutional strategies. AEP has been primarily concerned with the 'education' function so far.

A possible way of engaging with universities is to emphasise their role in achieving all the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the core functions above, not only the target '4.3 equal access to technical/vocational and higher education' but also all other goals. For example, it is worth exploring ways to work in partnerships with the 17 UN-appointed universities around the world, which serve as '[Academic Impact' Hubs](#) to promote scholarship and best practices around each of the 17 SDGs. Many of them are located in the ASEM region. This initiative would be well suited for the next Bologna Global Policy Forum in 2024.

Redefine Success

Another way to create alternative futures is to revamp our thinking about what 'success' is in the ASEM education process. The pandemic has profoundly affected all aspects of our life, especially in education and international cooperation. Perhaps it is time for us to rethink the true meanings of all the instruments that were thought of as powerful tools to boost intra-regional and inter-regional higher education cooperation, such as student mobility, credit transfer systems, qualifications frameworks.



A Wood-wide Web of ASEM Universities, © dreamstime

All these compatible and complementary instruments set out the direction of reforms in order to attain the comparability between HE systems. They effectively place a greater focus on internationalisation abroad (overseas education, physical mobility) than on internationalisation at home (internalisation of curriculum).

For example, the discourse of 'balanced mobility' in the ASEM context has changed its meaning over time. Initially, it referred to the aim to attract more Asian students to Europe to strike a balance between the number of Asians studying in North America and those who study in Europe. Subsequently, 'balance' is about motivating more European students to study in Asia through joint programmes. In today's context, though the above meanings remain, the focus is placed on 'inclusive mobility' – a quest for the balancing of participation of elite and disadvantaged students, which may be achieved through virtual exchanges in addition to physical mobility. However, virtual mobility and online education are not always inclusive, both in Asia and Europe. Therefore, AEP needs to revise mobility policies and practices.

As ASEM Education Ministers are going to adopt the 'ASEM Education Strategy 2030', it is the right time to redefine success of internationalisation and create alternative paths to future joint initiatives. Reflecting on 'balanced mobility' and 'inclusive mobility', a European official commented:

"We are not critical enough about mobility [...] Frankly speaking, fair recognition of qualifications does not automatically foster better balanced mobility between Asia and Europe".

An Asian senior official also shared his thoughts:

"The ratio of the Asian students studying in Europe out-rated the European students in Asia, but we cannot blame Europe because we, Asians, wanted to study in Europe in the first place [...] Asia has much larger and younger populations, balance in terms of number would be unlikely".

Additionally, the 'Asia' in ASEM includes also Russia and Kazakhstan.

AEP success comes in many forms and has multiple meanings. If we are to maximise and celebrate success in the post-Covid era, we need to re-evaluate what matters, our priorities and our ways of collaborating, and as a result, redefining what success in AEP really means and to whom. Revisiting and clarifying the purposes of AEP and a constant mutual learning mindset should form the foundation for new and lasting ways of cooperation.

In lieu of a conclusion

In a critical time of transformation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, education disruption, [neo-nationalism](#), and climate change, being successful as an inter-regional education project is more about the constellations of partners and stakeholders orienting toward alternative futures. Alongside the ASEM ministerial cooperation, a honeycomb network of initiatives and a wood-wide web of universities would thicken the education ties that bind the two regions. AEP's futures depend on moving as a collective.



CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Main conclusions of the report

Looking back on the development of the ASEM Education Process (AEP) since ASEMME7 (Bucharest, Romania, 2019) and considering the findings of this report, the following main conclusions can be drawn:

1 The Chair's Conclusions of ASEMME7 (May 2019) have set the political and practical agenda for the ASEM Education Process until ASEMME8 (December 2021). In the statement following ASEMME7, ASEM Education Ministers welcomed the proposal to introduce 'sustainable development' and 'digitalisation' as transversal themes within the four priority areas of the AEP. The ASEM Education Ministers also asked senior officials to develop a Strategy Paper on the ASEM Education Process Vision 2030 to be presented for discussion and adoption during ASEMME8.

During SOM1 (virtual, hosted by Germany, 2021) and other ASEM Education events and meetings, senior officials, stakeholders, external experts and the ASEM Education Secretariat exchanged experiences and information on topics under the four AEP priorities and discussed issues related to the further development of the AEP.

These discussions between ASEM partners and stakeholders were based on the **firm belief that the AEP is an important transregional forum for dialogue and cooperation that can address and successfully meet (inter-)regional and global challenges** and deserves therefore continued support. This positive attitude is encouraging for all who wish to widen and deepen Asian-European education cooperation in the coming years under the ASEM umbrella.

2 The period between ASEMME7 and ASEMME8 has been plagued by the global COVID-19 pandemic. This has caused a disruption in AEP collaboration as many meetings and initiatives have been put on hold, postponed or were adapted to a virtual format. ASEMME7 was the last meeting held face-to-face. The ISOM, scheduled to be held in New Delhi, India in April 2020 had to be cancelled and other high-level meetings, including SOM1, SOM2 and ASEMME8 had to be organised virtually.

Other meetings, including the TVET seminar, planned in Russia, and the peer-learning activity on inclusive mobility, planned in Belgium, were postponed and are yet to take place. While the global pandemic has had an adverse effect on live interactions within the AEP, limiting possibilities for networking, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders have found new ways to cooperate as shown by the many initiatives, projects and activities presented in this Stocktaking Report.

It will, however, be necessary to re-establish and redefine cooperation and partnerships among countries and stakeholders in the next period, while building on lessons learned and positive past experiences.

This Stocktaking Report demonstrates that, despite the global sanitary crisis and all related challenges, a **significant number of ASEM Education activities carried out** by ASEM partners and stakeholders have made progress and at least partly achieved the set objectives in order to contribute to the AEP priorities and further develop the AEP. This Stocktaking Report shows the great enthusiasm and commitment of ASEM partners and stakeholders.

3

In the upcoming period there will particularly be scope to work on the following areas of the AEP: policy dialogue, communication and visibility; synergies with multilateral organisations and processes and management of the ASEM Education Process.

a

Policy dialogue: The informal ASEM Education Process has made good progress during the last decade.

The **ASEM Education Strategy 2030** endorsed during ASEMME8 has paved the way for the implementation of a long-term common political vision, while the accompanying **Action Plan** defines clear objectives and measurable targets. Together, they provide the basis for the implementation of a coherent ASEM Education vision for 2030, which will contribute to make the forum even more relevant and influential on a global scale.

ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will reaffirm the AEP as an advanced transregional dialogue and cooperation platform. They aim to develop the AEP as a platform to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and training through equal and mutually beneficial Asia-Europe partnerships, leveraged by people-to-people connectivity.

Through partnerships, exchanges and collaboration, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will support the education sector to train individuals able to navigate through rapidly changing and increasingly complex societies and labour markets, while respecting national, regional and local education contexts and practices, as well as academic values.

The ASEM Education Process will continue to provide an informal dialogue platform for policy makers active at different levels in the education sector. The ASEM Education political meetings (Senior Officials' and Ministers' meetings) and the various working groups will allow partners to develop and discuss innovative ideas and exchange good practices for future policies.

Through meetings, joint initiatives and projects policy makers will interact with a wide variety of actors, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, such as youth and students, education institutions' representatives, researchers, academics, representatives from quality assurance and recognition agencies, civil society organisations, as well as business and industry partners, etc.

More synergies are needed between, on the one hand, the ASEM Education Process and the ASEM Education Ministerial Meetings and on the other, the ASEM Summit and the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meetings, as well as other ASEM Ministerial Processes

and Meetings which tackle priorities of the ASEM Education Process. Through the Action Plan, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will seek to identify more opportunities for dialogue and more systematic exchanges with the overall ASEM Process in order to guarantee better follow-up and coherence of activities, projects and initiatives carried out.

b Synergies with multilateral organisations and processes: The ASEM Education Process deals with highly topical issues in education, many of which are also discussed in other international forums (e.g. ASEAN Plus Three, UNESCO, Bologna Policy Forum).

The ASEM Education Process is part of a wider ecosystem involving a large network of international actors and organisations. In the next decade, closer cooperation and dialogue will not only be fostered and reinforced with existing ASEM Education partners and stakeholders, but will also be encouraged with other relevant multilateral processes and organisations, such as the Bologna Process (BFUG) (especially in the framework of the Bologna Global Policy Dialogue), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN), as well as quality assurance and recognition bodies (e.g. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), ENIC-NARIC network). This list is not exhaustive nor set in stone; ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will continually seek to connect and exchange with other multilateral actors and fora where relevant.

ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will seek to foster synergies with multilateral organisations and other multilateral processes to serve common goals and pool resources and capacities, where possible, to avoid duplication of efforts, as well as to establish new and more systematic collaborations. ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will do so, by identifying areas of common interest and shared objectives, and subsequently intensifying relations among partners and stakeholders, as well as with multilateral processes.

Through policy dialogue, partnerships, networking and concrete collaboration between institutions, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will strive, on the one hand, to build on existing projects and programmes and, on the other, to launch joint projects and initiatives in the field of mobility and international exchanges, transversal skills development and lifelong learning in all education sectors and areas, including TVET.

In addition, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders will continue to closely monitor relevant initiatives in its field of expertise and strive to be as proactive as possible to contribute where appropriate.

ASEM Education partners and stakeholders also acknowledge that challenges such the global COVID-19 pandemic cannot be tackled in isolation and recognise the role the ASEM Education Process can play as a transregional platform for dialogue and cooperation. They will, therefore, seek to **mitigate the detrimental effects of the pandemic in the post-Covid** world by gathering lessons learned in terms of mobility, benefits and disadvantages of digitalisation, as well as inclusive access to education, including lifelong learning opportunities.

C Communication and visibility: Although ASEM member countries cover 60% of the world's population and represent 65% of the world's GDP, the **lack of visibility of ASEM and the AEP** remains a continuing challenge. Some new **awareness-raising** activities should be envisaged to make both forums more visible to the education sector and to the public.

Improving the AEP's visibility and raising awareness about ASEM Education initiatives and projects by sharing success stories is crucial for several reasons. First of all, highlighting good practices within the AEP demonstrates that it continues to be relevant and legitimates its existence. Secondly, broadcasting the benefits of actively taking part in ASEM Education activities can, on the one hand further deepen Asia-Europe collaboration within ASEM, and on the other hand encourage more partners and stakeholders to contribute. Finally, stronger commitment and deeper collaboration as a result of increased visibility, could have a positive effect on the four identified strategic objectives, thereby allowing them to yield better results.

Communication is the core issue and needs to be enhanced both within the AEP and the ASEM Political Process and with external partners and stakeholders. ASEM Education partners and stakeholders should use all the tools at their disposal, such as documentation, the dedicated website of the ASEM Education Process and the official ASEM Infoboard website, social media channels and newsletters to better disseminate flagship initiatives, results and information. Nevertheless, the AEP cannot act in isolation and should remind its partners and members to advertise the process within their own structures in order to create a multiplier effect. If communication material is deemed insufficient, ASEM Education partners and stakeholders should contemplate the possibility of developing new formats and tools where needed.

Finally, multiplying and combining communication tools and channels could be beneficial not only to reach a larger audience, but also to target specific underrepresented groups of beneficiaries.

d Management of the ASEM Education Process: Education is the only sector of ASEM that has a Secretariat. The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) has proved to be one of the cornerstones of the AEP during the last decade. The ASEM Education Secretariat has been hosted so far by Germany, Indonesia and Belgium. It facilitates and coordinates the different ASEM Education activities, projects and initiatives and ensures effective communication about these projects and initiatives, as well as communication between partners and stakeholders on a multilateral basis. The ASEM Education Secretariat also facilitates overall processes such as monitoring reports, preparation documents for the political meetings, discussion papers, etc. in close collaboration with meeting hosts and partners.

According to the established rotation principle, the ASEM Education Secretariat should be hosted by an Asian country from January 2022 to December 2025. However, following several calls for interest issued in 2020 and 2021, thus far no Asian ASEM member has expressed its willingness to take up this role after the end of the Belgian mandate on 31 December 2021.

A discussion on how to increase the attractiveness of hosting the ASEM Education Secretariat is of crucial importance to ensure continuity and avoid any loss of expertise and institutional memory.



Call for involvement and commitment

The Stocktaking Report clearly demonstrates many positive aspects of the ASEM Education Process and the **strong commitment of various ASEM partners and stakeholders to develop Asia-Europe dialogue and collaboration** in the field of education under the political umbrella of ASEM. This Stocktaking Report, however, also shows that there is room for improvement and that it would be beneficial to the process if a wider panel of ASEM partners or stakeholders would take up the coordination of initiatives. The success of informal political processes such as the ASEM Education Process relies heavily on the active commitment of its partners and stakeholders, as well as people-to-people connectivity.

For this reason, the ASEM Education Secretariat would like to conclude this Stocktaking Report by inviting ASEM partners and stakeholders to express their interest to coordinate or participate in specific existing initiatives and welcomes any suggestions for new initiatives, projects or activities. Finally, the Belgian AES would like to extend again an invitation to all ASEM Education partners to take over the Secretariat after the end of its mandate. In view of the commitment of partners and stakeholders in on-going and future projects and initiatives, as well as the endorsement of the ASEM Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030, it is essential to ensure a smooth transition.

We hope that this report will provide ASEM Education partners and stakeholders with new insights, motivation and inspiration to engage in the ASEM Education Process as their active involvement and commitment are of utmost importance to keep up the momentum of the ASEM Education Process and to support its future development.

We wish to thank you for your insightful contributions, constructive feedback and for the pleasant collaboration over the course of our mandate.

The ASEM Education Secretariat Belgium, December 2021.

