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ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM)
Intermediate Senior Officials Meetings (ISOM)
“Implementation of the ASEM Education Strategy and Vision 2030”
St. Julian’s (Malta)
24 / 25 November 2022

Draft Minutes

List of Participants

#	Delegation	Name	Surname
1	Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)	Toru	Morikawa
2	Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)	Reka	Tozsa
3	ASEM LLL Hub	Lyndsey	El Amoud
4	Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)	Azirah	Hashim
5	Austria	Reinhard	Nöbauer
6	Belgium French Community	Caroline	Hollela
7	Belgium Flemish Community	Magalie	Soenen
8	Brunei Darussalam	Mariana	Nordin
9	Brunei Darussalam	Dina Roslina	Aliuddin
10	Cambodia	Nith	Bunlay
11	Cambodia	Chankoulika	Bo
12	Estonia	Janne	Pukk
13	European Union (European Commission - DG Education, Culture, Youth and Sport)	Adrian	Veale
14	European Training Foundation (ETF)	Michael	Graham
15	European University Association	Thérèse	Zhang
16	Finland	Jonna	Korhonen
17	France	Manuel	Bouard
18	Germany	Rainer	Gruhlich
19	Germany	Stefan	Schneider
20	Germany	David	Akrami Flores
21	Greece	Ioannis	Katsanevakis
22	Hungary	Laura	Sinóros-Szabó
23	India	Aniruddha	Das
24	Ireland	Vincent	Landers
25	Latvia	Anita	Vahere-Abrazune
26	Lithuania	Jurga	Strumskienė
27	Lithuania	Simona	Dzikauskaitė
28	Malaysia	Khairul Salleh	Mohamed Sahari

29	Malaysia	Normalia	Ibrahim
30	Malta	Rose Anne	Cuschieri
31	Malta	Valerie	Attard
32	Malta	Gabriella	Mallia
33	Malta	Adam	Liwak
34	Malta	Mandy	Mifsud
35	Mongolia	Zorigt	Munkhtuya
36	Mongolia	Oyunaa	Purevdorj
37	Netherlands	Max	Bueno de Mesquita
38	Poland	Malgorzata	Piatek
39	Portugal	Angela	Noiva Gonçalves
40	Romania	Maria Madalina	Matei
41	Slovakia	Monika	Korkosova
42	Slovenia	Mateja	Robič
43	UNESCO	Andreas	Snildal
44	UNESCO-UNEVOC	Sarah	Elson-Rogers
45	ASEM Education Secretariat	Luca	Lantero
46	ASEM Education Secretariat	Letizia	Brambilla Pisoni
47	ASEM Education Secretariat	Sibeles	Chiari
48	ASEM Education Secretariat	Francesca	Pedrani

ASEAN Secretariat, Australia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Lao PDR, Luxembourg, Myanmar, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom and Viet Nam have not participated in this meeting.

Welcome remarks by the Maltese Minister of Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation

Minister Hon. Clifton Grima welcomed the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) members expressing his gratitude for the contribution of the Asia-Europe Education Process to Higher Education and mentioning the successful cooperation, mutual respect and equal partnership engagement among governments and stakeholders towards growth and change. While recalling the impact of the energy and food crisis on sustainability at the expenses of the education sector, he quoted the Malta's National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education 2022-2030 and highlighted Malta's commitment to support the further development of the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) in an international and global action, by emphasizing the importance of enforcing relations between education, research and innovation taking into account the demographic, social, health, digital and environmental factors. The Minister concluded his introduction underlining the need to learn from the past as to ensure prosperity and security in Europe and Asia, and expressed his hope that the representatives would work together successfully and synergistically, being inspired by their collective efforts to rebuild the education system based on a shared identity.

1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome remarks by the Chief Executive Officer of Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)

The MFHEA Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Rose Anne Cuschieri, welcomed the vision and mission statement of the Education Strategy Paper of AEP, as a tool towards a future that is better prepared for global challenges. She stressed the important role played by the education sector and, specifically,

by Higher Education Providers, who should guarantee integrity, equity and safety for all students and learners. In the spirit of efficient coordination based on a clear division of roles and responsibilities, a joint effort can assure industrial and learning development, improvement of job opportunities and stimulation of economic growth, when based on comparable data collection and while fostering a dynamic mechanism targeting the ever-changing needs of learners and a greener and more digitalized world. Underlining Malta's commitment and encouraging the cooperation between Asian and European representatives, the Dr. Cuschieri concluded recalling the importance of the connection between education and the labor market in the view to ensure a fruitful and beneficial learning experience to learners.

1.2 Welcome remarks by the current ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)

The Head of the Italian AES, Mr. Luca Lantero, thanked Malta for hosting this meeting and congratulated the outgoing Belgium AES representatives for their work in the previous period (2017-2021). He expressed his gratitude for having taken over the ASEM Education Secretariat for the next four years (2022-2026) on 1 July 2022. He introduced the Secretariat members attending the meeting. Delighted by holding the first post-COVID meeting in person and defining AES as an exciting and challenging restart in education, he stressed the importance of the goal of organizing the Ministerial Conference in the end of 2023 and hopes for active commitment of both, Asian and European members, with the support of the AES.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification. The time schedule was slightly changed during the meeting for more efficient time management.

Attachments:

ITEM2_ASEM_ISOM_Draft_Agenda.pdf

ITEM2_ASEM_ISOM_Draft_Annotated_Agenda.pdf

ITEM2_ISOM_Agenda.pdf (presentation during meeting)

3. Update from the previous Secretariat (Belgium)

The previous Secretariat presented this Item along with the presentation of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 (item 4).

4. Presentation of the “ASEM Education Strategy 2030” and “ASEM Action Plan”

4.1 Presentation of the “ASEM Education Strategy 2030” by the outgoing Belgium Secretariat

Ms. Caroline Hollela, from the previous Belgian AES, reported on the activities of the Secretariat in the previous mandate by presenting the elaboration of the Strategy, with also the intervention of Ms. Magalie Soenen. She gave an overview of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 that was adopted during the ASEMME8 in Thailand in 2021, based on the indications of the ASEMME7 in Bucharest where the AES was given the responsibility to coordinate and facilitate the Strategy Paper drafting. While emphasizing the need to keep the AEP a voluntary intergovernmental process with balanced European and Asian representation, she recalled the success of a participatory, dynamic and co-constructive approach among ASEM partners and stakeholders, with the support of the ASEM Education Secretariat and the Standing Working Group. She underlined that the ASEM Education Process prepares learners to face global challenges, makes citizens more responsible and engaged in a tolerant, prosperous and sustainable Asian and European region. She added that, this ASEM Education Process facilitates ownership and pursues its mission of dialogue, inclusive and equitable

education. In order to realize its activities, the Belgian AES elaborated six instruments and working methods that would foster policy dialogue, exchange of knowledge and experiences and people-to-people connectivity. In this context, the ASEM Education Process (AEP) has a long-term common vision that provides a framework to develop and monitor results-oriented initiatives and projects, on the basis of a practical and informative Action Plan. While thanking the strong ministerial support in ASEMME8, the Belgian Secretariat also reminded participants of the challenges faced during its mandate, such as working by distance that consequently raised the need to develop diplomatic and listening skills; inaction due to the pandemic era where it was difficult to mobilize energy and innovation; time management; and turnover of human resources within the secretariat in itself and in its partners. In conclusion, it was addressed the necessity to consider that AES would be in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan and contributing to the 4 Strategic Objectives, as reported in the Stocktaking Report, and advised to elaborate an effective data collection methodology with the support of the Standing Working Group.

Once the presentation on ASEM Education Strategy Paper finished, two attendees intervened. The first participant asked the outgoing AES how they had chosen the 4 Strategic Objectives and the 2 transversal themes. The former AES explained that they were identified by the Standing Working Group members when united in Berlin in 2019 on the basis of brainstorming exercises actuated in working groups.

The second participant added that the former Belgian Secretariat work was useful in constantly reminding AES members of the already done work and situation and stressed their capacity in collecting comments after the Standing Working Group's meeting in Berlin and making the best of everyone's contributions.

Attachments:

ITEM4_ASEM_MT_2022_ISOM_4a_ASEM Education 2030 - Strategy Paper.pdf

ITEM4_Strategy2030_ActionPlan.pdf (presentation during meeting)

4.2 Presentation of the “ASEM Action Plan”

The Head of the current Italian ASEM Education Secretariat, Mr. Luca Lantero, invited to consult the “ASEM Action Plan”, approved during ASEMME8 as a collection of examples of actions that the ASEM members can develop together to reach the goals of the “ASEM Education Strategy 2030”. Apart from the 4 Strategic Objectives and 2 Transversal Themes, already anticipated by the outgoing Belgian Secretariat, the “ASEM Action Plan” defines the structure and organization of the ASEM Education Process on a 2-years meetings cycle: Intermediate Senior Officials Meeting (ISOM), Senior Officials Meeting 1 (SOM1) in spring, and Senior Officials Meeting 2 (ISOM2) + ASEMME Ministerial Conference in November. After reiterating that both, policy makers (i.e. Ministries of Education and Higher Education) and stakeholders, including supporting structures such as the Standing Working Group, are the main actors in the ASEM Education Process, the AES invited the representatives to update on their existing projects and activities, specifically asking for inputs from those who have already an efficient methodology for data collection in place. It was also underlined that the Action Plan was adopted in Bangkok during the Ministerial Meeting in 2021 and the Stocktaking Report 2022 “From Bucharest to Bangkok” took stock and summarized the initiatives and projects taken in the AEP.

In conclusion, Mr. Lantero pointed out the connection between the ASEM Education Process and other regional initiatives, namely the Asia and Pacific Economic Cooperation and the BFUG, the interaction with which will be facilitated by the Secretariat itself.

Once the presentation of the Action Plan was concluded, four participants intervened.

The first participant asked for examples for contributions from members and stakeholders on the

previous Action Plan, in order to better understand how to contribute to the ASEM Education Process and to make it more visible and linked with other initiatives in the world. In response, Mr. Lantero stressed out two elements: 1. visibility and identity, as two tasks that the AES has, to the point that it is intended to invest a lot in communication activities; 2. the development of different actions through the involvement of all partners in the Experts Groups, who will contribute to the continuity and updating of the Stocktaking Report 2022.

The second intervention reiterated the importance of elaborating an effective data collection methodology, and AES ensured that it would be taken into consideration and Expert Groups will be asked to collaborate on it.

Another participant asked how feasible it is to materialize all Strategic Objectives and their implications for the rest of the world. AES confirmed that its ambitions are restricted to the Asia-Europe area as a starting point and outlined the positive effects of interconnection of the work of different organizations that are present in the meeting. Additionally, Mr. Lantero outlined the role of the ASEM Experts Groups, that are composed of experts that each European and Asian country indicates in order to support the ASEM Education Process to go forward.

A participant confirmed that it was an added value for the process to have a national expert working in one of the Expert Groups.

Attachments:

ITEM4_ASEM_MT_2022_ISOM_3b_ASEM Education 2030 - Action Plan.pdf

ITEM4_Strategy2030_ActionPlan.pdf (presentation during meeting)

5. Updates from ASEM Members

5.1 Countries updates section

Countries were invited to briefly present the current state of play based on the “ASEM Education Strategy 2030” and “ASEM Action Plan”.

1. **Austria** recalled that the ASEM Process went through difficult times due to online meetings caused by the pandemic, but the success of the working group is a good start and Austria is already looking for experts. It is also engaged in the Lifelong Learning Hub activities.
2. **Belgium Flemish Community** gave an update on the latest initiatives taken up for the implementation of the Action Plan: Belgium would organize a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on inclusive mobility in Higher Education in the ASEM framework. It is aimed at exchanging experience among partners about the challenges they are facing and the good practices they are putting in place. Partners are encouraged to contact Belgium Flemish Community to set the Asia-Europe balanced agenda of the event together. Additionally, Belgium informed to be engaged in several international projects on inclusive mobility and called for cooperation, especially with Asian countries. The Belgian representative also stressed the links and synergies between the ASEM Process, the BFUG’s Global Policy Forum and the Bologna Process. She added that the Bologna Process was established in 1999 when the Ministers of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration and it is since then supported by Ministries of Education to make their Higher Education systems more comparable and compatible as well as to better communicate with one another. More specifically, Bologna Process members agreed to implement structural reforms in Higher Education in their countries, by establishing e.g. a 3-level academic system (Bachelor, Master, PhD) or a European Credits Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). She also added that, over the last 23 years, the Bologna Process has expanded in the European Higher Education Area, nowadays composed of 49 countries and 8 Consultative Members and supported by the BFUG Secretariat and working groups on specific topics, e.g. a Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue focused on regions (Asia, Africa and Americas). This structure has similarities to the AEP. Moreover, she stated that the future Global Policy Forum will be held in Tirana in

2024. Belgium concluded by encouraging to work together also by enhancing communication with regional networks such as ASEAN, CAHEA, EU-Share as to define common areas of interest to prepare events on specific topics and define teams in the context of ASEM.

One attendee intervened to inform that the EU-Share project will come to an end in December 2022 and invited to sign up for its future and last side event between the European Union and ASEAN.

3. **Cambodia** expressed gratitude to participate in the meeting for the first time, by stressing that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has taken part in some of the initiatives in the context of the Action Plan. The representative underlined the relevance of the European Commission's initiatives, like the ASEAN-EU Higher Education Fair 2022 that saw the participation of many universities, and capacity building workshops (one of the latest supported by EU-Share). More specifically, the Cambodian representative stressed that they have actively taken part in several Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects, like RecoASIA, aimed at enhancing regional cooperation on recognition. Finally, Cambodia recalled the participation in the SEA-EU Mobility programme for Sustainable Development and the importance of Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) activities.
4. The **EC - DG Education, Culture, Youth and Sport** stated that the EU can make two contributions to the ASEM Education Process that are included in the Action Plan. The first one is that, cooperation between Europe and Asia can be supported by the Erasmus+ program whose call for proposal was launched on 23 November 2022: the primary opportunities are for mobility projects, students and staff exchange and cooperation, which can benefit the higher education sector and country development (i.e. digitalization, university governance, green engineering techniques). The second one regards the exchange of views and practice: the EU is a mobilizing organization in the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), by identifying shortcomings in Europe and Asia, reshaping the role of communication in a fast-changing time while supporting inclusive education and green and digital transition. It was also shared that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) will meet in Brussels for a Commemorative Summit on 14 December 2022.
5. **Finland** observed that the Action Plan resonates well with the Bologna Process and with the internationalization strategy and mission updated in Finland within the higher education institutions. From the Ministry's point of view, Finland can support international programmes with steering and funding, and with global outreach and Europe-Asia cooperation. Finland also managed to take part in the Global Convention, a participation that is now handled by the parliament and is waiting for a final decision. Lastly, Finland is active in digitalization activities and in finding ways with Asian countries to transfer credentials of students achieved in their mobility.
6. **Germany** reported on the work of the Expert Group on Digitalization coordinated by DAAD, whose work started in 2019 and delivered the report for the Ministerial Conference in 2021. As was stated in the Chair's Conclusions of ASEMME8, "the Ministers appreciated the initiative of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to continue the coordination of this expert group and invited all partners and stakeholders to delegate additional relevant experts." The German delegates renewed this call for additional nominations to continue the work on a peer-learning basis; planning another virtual meeting on 16 December on the topic of digitally enhanced learning and teaching.
7. **Hungary** informed that Asia is a strategic partner and Hungary has a special program for certain people called "Stipendium Hungaricum" established by the government in 2015. Around 30% of Hungarian higher education students are foreign students, many from Asia, and it is a growing number. Besides, Hungary has agreements between States, also with State Partners from ASEM, such as Bangladesh, India, China, Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan and Cambodia; and bilateral agreements on exchange programs and cooperation

- projects. One project is funded by Erasmus+ that focuses on quality of teaching in HE where Asian partners can be involved. It is a cooperation project with technical support tools on digital higher education quality, whose documents can be shared with partners. Hungary is also receiving guests from South Korea and is going to sign a Concept Paper with them through bilateral agreements with universities.
8. **India** noted that the Department of Higher Education works as an international cooperation cell and contact point for the ASEM Education Process. The participant stated that he was representing the Embassy and that the Indian High Commission and the Ministry of Education would be sending their official report to the AES. He also added another update referring to the new National Education Policy 2020, about the education changing in the HE sectors, including focus on digital transformation and skills development. The representative said that his Minister called for a new knowledge network that may create synergies between India and global institutions. The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025. Also by 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education, for which a clear action plan with targets and timelines will be developed. This is in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4.4 and will help to realize the full potential of India's demographic dividend.
 9. **Ireland** stated that, after the stops due to the pandemic, the Ukrainian crisis and the lack of physical engagement, this ISOM was an opportunity to re-new ASEM cooperation. In the context of the Strategic Objectives and the new proposed Action Plan there is information to share among partners regarding basic education, further higher education and new and existing national strategies especially in digitalization, in alignment with the EU digital strategy. Ireland welcomed opportunities to engage bilaterally and multilaterally and is interested in participating in one of the proposed Expert Groups. Ireland was very active in the ASEM process between 2017 and 2018, and it is planning to be more active.
 10. **Malaysia** informed that the representative is part of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency in charge of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Quality Assurance (QA) of all the programs in the country. Firstly, the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) in the University of Malaya is important and offers summer schools, with the theme of civil engagement and sustainable development in the 7th edition. Since 2019, there have been online meetings where participants gathered together virtually in August (15-31), co-hosted by a German University and joined by 60 participants from China, Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, Russia and India. 20 students participated in the final student forum. Secondly, the AQAN Asian Quality Assurance Network is currently based at the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. Malaysia worked a lot in the EU-SHARE projects and kept the relationship between ASEAN and Europe. Main focuses on the context of ASEAN are the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, micro-credentials and QA. In the national context, these topics are also covered along with Lifelong Learning (LLL).
 11. The representative from **Mongolia** informed that it was the first time she was attending this meeting. Firstly, she updated on the overall Law Package in Higher Education based on two main principles: the introduction NQF, by mapping it in comparison with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Asia as important steps in mutual recognition, and the opening of HEIs overseas. An Erasmus+ project for capacity building has supported the development of the HE sector in Mongolia and the establishment of a National Information Centre (NIC) with the purpose of exchanging information with other countries. She also added that the staff from the Ministry and NIC were trained to verify qualifications. Some initiatives at HEI level are happening about pursuing international accreditation for some programs. One of the latest experiences is with the Mongolian University of Medical Sciences that is implementing joint programs which aim at internationalization. Moreover, the National Regulations on the Recognition of Qualifications within the country were introduced and

some of the students who graduated from overseas have had their qualifications recognized at national level. Dissemination of the NQF is another topic made public by the ministry and the verification process is one of the priorities.

5.2 Stakeholders updates section

Stakeholders are invited to briefly present the current state of play based on the “ASEM Education Strategy 2030” and “ASEM Action Plan”.

1. **Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)** explained that it is a post-graduate institution that offers Masters in European Studies to engage students coming from Asia and Europe. AEI is specialized in in different areas of research on Asia-Europe relations. It also had an Erasmus+ Capacity Building project focusing on building research capacity in institutions in Laos and Malaysia (2017-2021) as well as a virtual exchange program and summer schools in collaboration with European and Asian universities. AEI is also engaged in many projects: in the ASEM e-learning course on Asia-Europe connectivity in economics, social culture and international relations; in EU-ASEAN Youth Diplomats Program, a project with the EU Delegation in Malaysia; in a project on the Indo-Pacific strategy with e.g. Malaysia and the Netherlands.
2. **ASEM LLL Hub** is composed of 200 members from 32 countries from Europe and Asia and formalized its mission in 2020 as to address the thematic priorities and key objective of promoting LLL, exchange of knowledge, expertise and good practice as well as collecting evidence to establish an evidence base to guide political decision-making. The work in the hub is organized in 6 research networks on specific thematic areas. Is has a common research agenda across the networks with a close focus on equity and inclusion, identity respect and dignity, digital education, demographic trends like migration and aging populations, knowledge policy and capacity building, and engagement with Civil Society and community-based LLL. For the past years, due to the pandemic, the energy was concentrated in expanding the networks to include members of all ASEM countries, by reaching out to build partnership with organizations across Europe and Asia. The Chair of LLL Hub is taking a six-weeks mission in South Asia. In September, ASEM LLL Hub managed to host its first event in person “Global LLL Week” in Cork, with representatives of 21 different ASEM countries (11 Europeans, 10 Asians). The main research undertaken by ASEM LLL Hub researchers across the networks in response to Action 5 and 6 of the Action Plan focuses on intergenerational learning, learning cities, widening access to reach marginalized learners. Responding to action 16, the LLL Hub has put effort towards transforming research into tools, like increasing flexible patterns, like prior learning, micro-credentials and individual learning accounts. On the theme of dissemination, under action 6, the Hub was working to elevate the presence of the Hub through presentations and keynotes addresses at various international conferences including the World HE Conference, the Global LLL Conference in Singapore, UNESCO Transforming Education Pre-Summit and the Education Panel at EU-ASIA Forum. ASEM LLL Hub wants to continue to expand the research networks, strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones, and also to continue publishing leading research into LLL so to work on translating research into policy recommendations addressing the Strategic Objectives of the ASEM Education 2030 Action Plan.
3. **ASEF** played an active role in the AEP since its beginning in 2008. Impressed by the efforts of Ministries to continue dialogue during the pandemic: this investment for the future must continue. In this regard, it is intended to reiterate the gratitude to the previous Secretariat and also the appreciation to Italy for taking over the torch and to Malta for hosting the ISOM. ASEF has been implementing projects since 1997 with civil society in the two regions of ASEM. ASEF contribution to the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 remains strong and clear by continuing creating networks that contribute to dialogue and capacity building. Update on ASEF activities since ASEMME8 is the following: 1. Research: ASEF continues to collect

data on different topics to support regional dialogue, exchanges and mutual learning. During the last year ASEF has published 5 studies: a) ARC8 Outlook report on the future of inclusion in HE; b) the ASEM National Equity Policies Map; c) Report on inclusion in Asian HE; d) handbook for teachers to renovate STEM; e) Perception studies on young people leadership and inspiration during the covid-19 pandemic. 2. Capacity buildings: ASEF contacted 4 trainers for HE managers over 30 Asian countries in advancing inclusion in HE, by also addressing the needs of young people in education. 3. Actions: over 100 actions planned by HE managers were designed to advance their HE area in their institutions. 4. Visibility: it is the most important issue, and ASEF raises awareness of the ASEM Education Process as well. The ASEM newsletter, edited by ASEF, has grown dramatically with new subscribers and ASEM members are inviting to reach out in case they want to feature their future events in it. 5. Looking forward: ASEF is launching projects for youth leaders, teachers and managers next year as well. ARC9 Regional Conference on HE is a bi-annual project and this year works on sustainable development in HE while analyzing the scope, trends and threads of ASEM universities with SDGs. The data collection is key to success, as mentioned by the previous Secretariat. Based on data analysis, ASEF is going to establish a policy dialogue event in 2023 and ASEM members are invited to participate.

4. **ETF** is an agency of the European Union, works on LLL and vocational education and training, and is an ASEM stakeholder since 2013. It is engaged in many projects, especially in cooperation with UNESCO and other European agencies. An inventory that tracks the development of national qualification frameworks, including almost all countries represented in the ASEM Process (more than 100 profiles and NQFs worldwide) will be published in 2023. Another contribution that ETF runs is the center of vocational excellence and facilitates a network of schools and providers of educational trainings that demonstrate innovation in the field. ETF contributes to the ASEM Strategic Objective 2 “Promotion of TVET” by supporting harmony and proposing new tools. ETF has impacted on the ASEM Action Plan (specifically contributing to Strategic Objective 3.4 about bringing together expertise from Europe and Asia on skills anticipation) with also another project called “Skills Lab”, including the network of 130 researchers that work on big data, platform work and online job vacancies platform. ETF has some researchers from Asia from the UN Office in Thailand, but ETF is looking to partnering with Asia as well, since partnership is very simple, informal, not representative. Lastly, ETF provides an analysis of provisions on micro-credentials and will publish guidelines that will help institutions to recognize and provide this type of qualifications in February/March 2023.
5. **EUA** is a membership-based non-governmental organization gathering more than 850 individual universities and 35 national rectors’ conferences across the EHEA (49 countries). EUA launched a Global University Association Forum (GUAF), conceived as a platform for more systemic exchange and cooperation between Universities Associations in different world regions, in order to address common interests in a global setting and with the idea to enhance collaboration with sister organizations across the globe. The GUAF includes the Association of African Universities, the Association of Arab Universities, the American Council on Education in the U.S., Universities Canada, the Latin America and the Caribbean Space for Higher Education, and, in Asia, the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Association of Indian Universities, and the China Association of Higher Education. The GUAF started in 2021, and the first physical meeting was held in Barcelona in 2022. The idea is to continue dialogue on various topics that may also be of interest for ASEM priorities and Strategic Objectives (i.e. mobility and recognition, sustainability, limitation of international cooperation and impact on academic freedom and institutional autonomy). Furthermore, Quality Assurance is one of the strategy priorities of EUA. In the EHEA the main stakeholder organizations are EUA representing higher education institutions, ENQA representing Quality Assurance Agencies, ESU representing students, and EURASHE also representing higher

education institutions, and more specifically the professional higher education sector. They launched a project called QA-Fit, coordinated by ENQA and funded under the Erasmus+ program, that aims at collecting evidence and reflecting if the current European Framework on QA framed in the European Standards and Guidelines responds and is responsive to trends and innovation in HE. It also aims at understanding if and how there should be more room for development and alternative approaches for QA, thinking of digitalization, micro-credentials and so on. It is a mapping exercise that also gives a critical look at the ESG adaptation in different contexts. It is interesting to see how this regional framework can enlarge in other dimensions. It is a good momentum to map and find evidence on what is happening in Quality Assurance.

6. **UNESCO-UNEVOC** stated that under Action 6 of the ASEM Education Action Plan there is a project listed as “Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET” added in the ASEM repertoire last year. They entered Phase 3 of the project (until 2025) funded by the German Federal Ministry and implemented by UNESCO-UNEVOC. UNESCO-UNEVOC’s common interest fields are digital skills and digital pedagogy, entrepreneurship, soft skills, labor market innovation, mobility. UNESCO-UNEVOC has three regions of interest: Europe; Asia-Pacific and Africa. “Bridging” stands for bringing together partners to discuss ideas, and there was a European Conference meeting this year in Finland and an Africa-Europe Conference in Kenya. For 2023, the Asian Conference is planned to be held in Singapore in 2023. The key-partners from Asia-Pacific are TESDA, ASEAN representatives, workshops, and expert groups. “Innovation” stands for the identification of innovative practices, that are then published. “Learning” refers to the aim to support peer learning through learning labs which explore in depth a specific TVET project or policy. There is also an expert group that includes experts from all three regions and type of TVET stakeholder (policy makers, practitioners, labour market partner and researchers), and it will be focused on the hospitality for the tourism sector, specifically on responses to digitalisation and greening. UNESCO launched a TVET Strategy 2022-2029.

6. Proposal of the Work Plan 2022-2026

The ASEM Secretariat presented the proposal for the Work Plan 2022-2026, in order to review, comment and then approve it.

The Head of the AES, Mr. Luca Lantero, recalled the AES responsibility to organize SOM1, SOM2 and the Ministerial Conference (ASEMME9) and mentioned that the proposal of the Work Plan was previously sent via e-mail to read and discuss it in plenary. The participants were invited to recommend changes to the proposed structure and process, with a specific reference to the new “Expert Groups” and the suggestion to maintain the Standing Working Group (SWG) composition, as it was permanently established by in the last Ministerial Conference, and to open it to calls of interest by AES members willing to participate in it. Thailand and the European Students Union expressed their interests in joining the SWG before the event.

Once the presentation of the Work Plan was concluded, many participants took the floor. While one participant suggested that each Expert Group should define its own ToR and asked for more precise guidelines, the outgoing Belgian ASEM Education Secretariat recommended to have a balanced presence of members between Asia and Europe, and to build an efficient data collection methodology, also stating that the Standing Working Group can be involved in processing and the analysis of the collected data. It was also questioned whether it would be easier to formally reconfirm participation as a country in the Standing Working Group (SWG). On this topic, Mrs. Cuschieri agreed in opening the SWG to expressions of interest from new countries and the current ASEM Education Secretariat proposed to include Malta in it. Already existing members in the groups don’t

need to formally re-confirm their availability. Some delegates observed that there would be the need to gain the endorsement from the government before formally confirming their interest in the Expert Groups. After discussion, the participants agreed to postpone the decision to after the return of each member to their institutions, considering that the AEP is based on voluntary cooperation. The discussion moved on to the names of the four Expert Groups. It was noted that the already active Expert Group on Digitalization would continue to work. Austria advised to rename the proposed Expert Group on TVET with the labor market instead of Expert Group on TVET with civil society and pointed out that the proposed Expert Group on Ethics and Transparency could be changed in Expert Group on SDGs in Education.

Attachments:

ITEM6_ASEM_MT_2022_ISOM_ASEM Work Plan and Expert Groups_2022-2026.pdf

ITEM6_Work_Plan.pdf (presentation during meeting)

7. Closing of the Day

Mr. Lantero and Mrs. Cuschieri thanked the participants and closed the first day.

Opening of the 2nd day

The Maltese Chair of the ISOM welcomed the participants and proposed a change in the agenda regarding Item10: the result of each workshop will not be discussed during the conference, instead, it will be circulated via email once the ISOM is concluded.

8. Keynote speeches

The Maltese Chair introduced the first keynote speaker Dr. Thérèse Zhang, Deputy Director for Higher Education Policy, European University Association (EUA).

8.1 The role of FHEIs in building Research and Innovation Areas: The future skills for a sustainable world

Dr. Thérèse Zhang started by informing the participants that, although her colleague, Mr. Stephane Berghmans, Director for Research & Innovation of the European University Association was not able to take part in ISOM, he has contributed to making the following presentation. Subsequently, she introduced the general features of the European University Association and discussed the role of institutions in research and innovation areas, the EUA perspective on the new European Research Area (ERA) and a concrete example on reforming research assessment.

After her speech a participant asked if there was a vision of the quality assurance sector regarding the revision of the Research Area. Dr. Thérèse Zhang answered that the quality assurance framework in the European context is mainly dedicated to education illustrated by the European Standard and Guidelines. As regards the quality assurance for research, it is this reform of research assessment that is taking it forward. Quality assurance agencies usually focus on processes rather than outputs. Although there are already examples of quality assurance agencies that do both, the dialogue between the EHEA and ERA is needed to be continued.

Another participant highlighted the importance of the global approach and hence the international cooperation adopted among European partners to operate in an open environment and to address common challenges, such as climate change and digitalization. He asked how to involve more Asian partners in this approach. Dr. Thérèse Zhang answered that continuing dialogue between EUA and sister organizations across the world is a way to achieve a greater involvement of Asian partners. She added that Stakeholder participation in education and research policy processes can be different depending on the region. For example, at the EU level there is the historical commitment to the

Bologna Process in which Stakeholders are highly involved, as the European Standard and Guidelines demonstrate.

Attachment:

ITEM8.1_Keynote_EUA_and_the_European_Research_Area.pdf (presentation during meeting)

The Maltese Chair introduced Mr. Andreas Snildal, Senior Programme Officer and Secretary to the Global Recognition Convention, UNESCO.

8.2 Global Convention on Recognition and Regional Conventions in the ASEM area: Lisbon and Tokyo Conventions

Mr. Andreas Snildal mentioned the Lisbon and Tokyo Conventions as the two Regional Conventions on the recognition of qualification in the ASEM area and highlighted the connection between these Regional Conventions and the Global Convention by showing a map of the UNESCO's global ecosystem for recognition of foreign qualifications. He affirmed that the five Regional Conventions within UNESCO's ecosystem were concluded to facilitate the mobility of students around the world. After an introduction of the history of the Lisbon, Tokyo and Global Conventions and their implementation and monitoring, he stressed the importance of having a Global Convention that guarantees the respect of fairness, transparency and non-discrimination for the recognition on a global scale.

Once he finished his speech, seven participants took the floor.

The first participant asked Mr. Snildal's opinion regarding some challenges that might remain uncovered despite the entrance into force of the Global Convention. Mr. Snildal answered that this Convention has been designed in a way that is broad enough to allow a kind of evolution linked to the future shifts on recognition. He also added that, on the one hand, the text of the Convention is concrete enough to be useful. On the other hand, it is open to the evolution coming from countries.

The intervention of the second participant regarded the implementation of this Convention, wondering if networks like ENIC-NARIC existed in other regions as it exists in Europe. Mr. Snildal answered that in the Asia-Pacific area there is a similar network called APNNIC (Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres), that was created just four years ago. Regarding the African network, it was launched in September 2022 consisting of those countries that have already ratified the Addis Convention. As for the Buenos Aires Convention adopted in 2019, there is still no network in Latin America and the Caribbean Region to implement the convention.

The third participant asked if the Global Convention applied only to its members. He also wondered whether a country that has ratified the Global Convention should apply its principles to a student who comes from a country not adhering to this agreement. Mr. Snildal clarified that this agreement has effect only within its members. Therefore, the principles of the Global Convention apply only to countries that have ratified it.

The fourth intervention asked what the benefit for a country was to sign a Regional or the Global or even both Conventions at the same time. He also asked what the added value was for those countries that have already ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to also ratify the Global Convention. Mr. Snildal claimed that the ratification of a Regional Convention is not a prerequisite of adhering the Global Convention, even if the regional networks are key pieces of the well-functioning of the Global Convention. The recommendation of UNESCO is to ratify both agreements. Regarding the added value for European countries to ratify the Global Convention is to facilitate the recognition of their European citizens' studies abroad once they are back in their European countries.

The fifth person asked what is exactly covered in the treaty in terms of recognition, hence she wondered whether this Convention dealt with levels. Mr. Snildal answered that all kind of HE diplomas are not necessarily following the European model but at least qualifications within the

national system are considered part of the HE system, and all qualifications give access to higher qualification.

The sixth intervention asked for suggestions to make the ratification process of the Tokyo Convention quicker in his country. Mr. Snildal remarked that there are benefits from the ratification of the treaty, such as the legally binding effect, the possibility of taking part in the decisions and in the committee at global level. Therefore, signing the Convention is more an expression of a political view, whereas ratifying it implies concrete commitments.

The last intervention was on the fact that most European students that enjoyed the Erasmus programme have never heard about the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Mr. Snildal agreed on this aspect and added that not only, did the Lisbon Recognition Convention give an overarching principle, but also produced concrete tools for recognition within the region. According to Mr. Snildal, wider participation and membership to this Global community will take time and establishment of consensus is necessary to carry on this process.

The Head of the ASEM Education Secretariat intervened by giving the Italian position regarding this topic. He informed the participants that Italy is ratifying the Global Convention. He also added that Italy has ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention and applies its provisions to all countries in the world. Nevertheless, it is important for Italy to conclude the process of ratification successfully since, the more countries become member of the Global Convention, the more Lisbon's principles are recognized in non-European countries. Moreover, the first 20 Countries that ratified the Global Convention are those States that will decide the rules for everyone on a global scale. Mr. Snildal thanked Mr. Lantero for his intervention and stressed again the importance for countries to become a member of this Global agreement.

Attachment:

ITEM8.2_Keynote_Lisbon_Tokyo_Global_Conventions.pdf (presentation during meeting)

9. Parallel workshops:

Three parallel workshops took place. Each group discussed open questions and a rapporteur summarised the main outcomes in a report made available after the meeting.

9.1 Educational institutions and civil society: ethics, integrity, and transparency

Moderator: Dr. Adam Liwak, Officer at Mutual Recognition Coordinator and EU Affairs

This workshop's report can be found under *ITEM9.1_Workshop1_Report.pdf*.

Attachments:

ITEM9.1_Workshop_on_Educational_Institutions_and_Civil_Society.pdf (presentation during meeting)

ITEM9.1_Workshop1_Report.pdf

9.2 ASEM Higher Education Mapping: policies and practices working towards SDGs

Moderator: Ms. Reka Tozsa, Acting Director Department, ASEF

This workshop's report can be found under *ITEM9.2_Workshop2_Report.pdf*.

Attachments:

ITEM9.2_Workshop_on_Higher_Education_Mapping.pdf (presentation during meeting)

ITEM9.2_Workshop2_Report.pdf

9.3 Lifelong Learning approaches and flexible learning pathways

Moderator: Ms. Mandy Mifsud, Education Officer Lifelong Learning, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta

This workshop's report can be found under ITEM9.3_Workshop3_Report.pdf.

Attachments:

ITEM9.3_Workshop_on_Lifelong_Learning_and_flexible_learning_Pathways.pdf
(presentation during meeting)

ITEM9.3_Workshop3_Report.pdf

10. Wrap up on Workshops Plenary

The workshops' reports will be sent via e-mail to all the ASEM members.

11. Work Plan 2022-2026

11.1 Structure of the Work Plan and analysis of ToRs

Mr. Lantero opened this section by presenting the previous Working Groups and Expert Groups. The purpose of this section was to reach unanimous agreement on the structure of the new Work Plan, that is to say the total number and the title of each Expert Group. In doing so, he explained how the new Expert Groups proposed by the Italian AES are linked to the four thematic priorities and the two transversal themes of the ASEM Education Process. Mr. Lantero also proposed that the draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the new Expert Groups will be under the responsibility of their members, so they could directly establish the purposes of their groups. The discussion of the Work Plan took into consideration what it had already been jointly approved, during Item 6. Therefore, the decision to set up one Expert Group on SDGs and Education and continue the one on Digitalization was confirmed by participants. Subsequently, they were invited to exchange their opinions regarding the title and purposes of both, the Expert Group on Recognition of Qualifications and Study Periods and the Expert Group on TVET and Engagement with Civil Society. After a short introduction on the topics of the Expert Groups, Mr. Lantero invited participants to start the debate on this issue.

One participant proposed to connect the ToRs to the Strategic Objectives so that each Expert Group would work on those aims identified in the Strategy 2030 and its Action Plan. The proposal was accepted unanimously. After various interventions to change the name and hence, the purpose of the Expert Group on TVET and Engagement with Civil Society, participants agreed on establishing a new Expert Group titled Lifelong Learning including TVET and on highlighting in its ToRs the engagement with business and industry. During the discussion, Mr. Lantero pointed out the fact that, the task of the Expert Groups is, not only, to produce documents, but also, to talk about the existing differences and difficulties between countries.

Another participant mentioned the ASEM Compendium produced by the previous Expert Group on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems and asked who would follow-up the Compendium if this Expert Group became inactive. She suggested having a broader approach to the topics analysed by new Expert Groups in order to include all the issues addressed in the Strategy 2030. Moreover, she said that it was very important to establish the title of the Group carefully as Ministries decide which Expert to appoint and send to the group based on its title. Therefore, Mr. Lantero proposed to change the title of the new Expert Group on Recognition of Qualifications and Study Periods into the Expert Group on Recognition and Balanced Mobility. This Expert Group will oversee the follow-up of the ASEM Compendium.

All attendees unanimously approved the title of the four new Expert Groups:
Expert Group on SDGs and Education
Expert Group on Recognition and Balanced Mobility
Expert Group on Lifelong Learning including TVET
Expert Group on Digitalization

11.2 Composition of the Expert Groups

Mr. Lantero opened this section recalling that the membership in Expert Groups does not have a legally binding effect. He asked participants to express their interest in joining the new Expert Groups but also the already existing Expert Group on Digitalization. Some participants said that they could not sign up in that moment as they would have to inform their Ministries before binding their country to a specific group. Mr. Lantero agreed and proposed participants to send their expressions of interest in becoming members of one or more of the Expert Groups via email to the Secretariat in the following days. He further added that the Secretariat will inform every country and Stakeholder about the final composition of the new Expert Groups, once all expressions of interest have been received. The whole procedure will be supported by the help of the Standing Working Group. This proposal was unanimously accepted. Moreover, one participant asked to clarify the role of the Expert Groups. He wondered whether they were a pool of expertise that could be called on sometime or whether they were part of the ASEM Process that meet regularly to feed the Strategy and its Action Plan 2030. Mr. Lantero answered that the Standing Working Group is surely part of the structure whereas the Expert Groups are considered a pool of expertise that support all the ASEM Education Process by producing reports and documents and collecting data. One participant added that the Expert Groups are used as a peer-learning tool, and they need to be based on flexibility to achieve their goals. Therefore, Mr. Lantero remarked the fact that the Secretariat and the SWG are the structure of ASEM Education Process, whereas Expert Groups are supportive bodies that help the ASEM process to go forward. Everyone agreed on this note. One participant mentioned the importance of the Chair of the Expert Group and asked if the appointment of the Chair would be discussed in that moment. Mr. Lantero proposed two options, namely appointing the Chair during that moment or giving this responsibility to the members of the Expert Groups. The attendees unanimously agreed on the second proposal.

The AES repeated the structure of the Work Plan that was presented during this item and asked the participants for comments. No further questions were raised and Mr. Lantero declared the item closed.

12. Looking towards SOM1

The AES plans to organize the SOM1 in spring 2023 and the SOM2 and ASEMME9 in November 2023. As no Asian country has announced its availability to host these meetings, Malta expressed its interest in hosting the next SOM1, SOM2 and ASEMME9. Some participants thanked Malta and Mrs. Cuschieri mentioned that the best period would be at the beginning of May for SOM1, whereas at the end of November for SOM2 and ASEMME9. The AES will send a communication to all ASEM members asking for their already scheduled events in order to avoid overlapping with ASEM Meetings. The structure of the SOM1 will be the same as the ISOM, hence it will be structured in two days. In the future, the AES will endeavour to have an alternation of Asian and European hosts for the ISOMs, SOM and ASEMME and suggested that the Standing Working Group and the Expert Groups could organize their meetings in Asian countries. He closed this item by thanking everybody for the cooperation.

13. AOB

No other business was raised.

14. Closing Remarks

Mrs. Rose Anne Cuschieri thanked all the participants, the ASEM Education Secretariat and her Maltese team for their cooperation. She expressed her pleasure to have hosted this ISOM which has produced important outcomes. Mr. Lantero thanked everybody and closed the Intermediate Senior Officials Meeting.