

## 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9)



### 9<sup>th</sup> ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education Asia-Europe Higher Education Mapping: Working Towards the SDGs

#### BACKGROUND

The [ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education \(ARC\)](#) is the “Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEMME)” and the only bi-regional multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for university and student leaders, policy makers and ministers to discuss higher education issues and shape the education landscape in Asia and Europe. For the past 15 years, ARC has continuously evolved and contributed with various outputs (policy recommendations, research, and events) to the ASEM Education Process, and created opportunities for key Asian and European stakeholders to connect.

The 9<sup>th</sup> edition of ARC was dedicated to the theme of sustainable development in higher education, in line with the ASEM Education Process priorities, and collected evidence on sustainable development policies and practices in higher education across 42 ASEM countries. The findings were presented in the [ARC9 Study on Asia-Europe Higher Education Mapping: Working Towards the SDGs](#), followed by policy dialogues to discuss the results of the ARC9 Study:

- Policy Dialogue Workshop with ASEAN+3 students and university leaders titled “Working Towards the SDGs: Mapping University and Student Perspectives in ASEAN” on 18 July 2023, Online  
Policy recommendations emerging from the workshop are available [here](#).
- Policy Dialogue Workshop with ASEM Policymakers and Stakeholders titled “Asia-Europe Higher Education Mapping: Working Towards the SDGs”, 27-29 September 2023, Rome, Italy  
Policy recommendations emerging from the event are available [here](#).
- Policy Dialogue with Student and Youth Leaders titled “Asia-Europe Higher Education Mapping: Working Towards the SDGs”, 2-5 November 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia  
Policy recommendations emerging from the event are available [here](#).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

ASEF combined the policy recommendations emerging from the above events and highlighted the key areas for the consideration of the ASEM Ministers of Education below.

##### **Better Access to Resources for Better SDG Initiatives**

Stakeholders believe in the importance of having the right and adequate resources to successfully pursue and build initiatives on sustainable development.

Ministers are recommended to:

- **Facilitate** access to internal and external fund sources and provide financial and non-financial incentives to broaden engagement with universities and civil society with the SDGs, keeping in mind the differing national and regional contexts that affect access to resources; and
- **Align** funding priorities and pool capacity and resources, especially at the macro-regional level.

### Stronger Together: Building Capacity and Partnerships for a Sustainable Future

Enhancing collaboration between Asian and European higher education institutions (HEIs) through the expansion of exchanges aimed at enhancing sustainable development awareness and capacity for students, staff, and faculty would contribute greatly to the pursuit of the SDGs at the stakeholder level.

Ministers are recommended to:

- **Provide** a venue for government, private companies, and civil society organisations to work with higher education stakeholders on building partnerships and increasing awareness for implementing SDGs at the institutional, national, and international levels;
- **Support** capacity-building for university officials and staff to assist in accessing and building partnerships through trainings, participation in international associations, and building collaboration with strong coordination mechanisms; and
- **Foster and facilitate** interregional education between Europe and Asia towards greater balanced mobility and less inequalities through ways including but not limited to:
  - Continuing and strengthening cooperation on the recognition of degrees and alignment of accreditation systems, and
  - Empowering and supporting a virtual discussion platform for active engagement in the promotion and creation of Asia-Europe joint research projects on sustainable development.

### SDG Policymaking: Holistic, Empowering, Meaningful

Stakeholder consultation and engagement is critical to the success of higher education initiatives focused on the SDGs; and holistic, meaningful participation in these processes are key to building ownership of the SDGs. In policymaking and strategising for the achievement of the SDGs, policymakers must work closely with stakeholders at all levels given the widely encompassing nature of the Goals.

Ministers are recommended to:

- **Appropriate** the SDGs for their national contexts, which requires explicit and precise strategies and indicators that are contextualised based on national needs and goals;
- **Encourage** university experts to take a proactive role in national and international consultations on sustainable development; and
- **Explore** the role and contribution of other partners in policymaking, especially associations based in the higher education area and other sectors.

### Youth at the Forefront of a Sustainable Future

Students and youth are a key driving force in our collective pursuit of the SDGs. Empowering them to meaningfully participate in the policymaking, implementation, and monitoring stages is an important priority that stakeholders emphasise.

Ministers are recommended to:

- **Allocate** an earmarked budget for youth and student initiatives regarding sustainable development in higher education, insofar as such budgets are not yet implemented; and
- **Enable** students' active and meaningful involvement in all levels all stages of policymaking, implementation, and monitoring through ways including but not limited to:
  - Initiating the student parliament and adopting the input from students given in these meetings, and
  - Recruiting students for expert panels that bring about decisions that directly affect them and lowering the barriers for students' participation in such panels.

### Exploring Good Practices on SDGs in Higher Education

Various recommendations on possible Ministry-spearheaded good practices in implementing SDG-related initiatives in higher education were gathered from our stakeholders with the aim of harnessing the contributions of higher education in achieving the SDGs.

Ministers are recommended to:

- **Address** gaps in data and information through the establishment of a data collection and analysis platform, streamlining document compilations (e.g. the ASEM Compendium), and creating an ASEM comparative framework on the SDGs;
- **Facilitate** more exchange- and practice-sharing on gender equality in education and lead the work in improving data collection and assessment in this area; and
- **Strengthen** dialogue between the education and economic sectors through an annual academe-industry forum through the efforts of relevant associations.

### CONCLUSION

As the SDGs are comprehensive in nature, these proposals and suggestions also encompass a wide range of areas such as access to resources, partnerships and collaborations, policymaking, capacity-building, youth empowerment, and number of good practices to be shared and sustained.

This document carries the voices of our stakeholders and the collective hope that these recommendations will encourage and enable Asians and Europeans to work together for a better, brighter future.

Success of ARC9's activities is made possible with the support of these partner organisations:



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