

## ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM)

### Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)

#### “Asia and Europe: Reboosting Interregional Cooperation on Education”

**Location:** Radisson Blu Resort, Malta, St Julian's STJ 3391, Malta

**Dates:** 22 - 23 May 2023

Draft Minutes

#	Delegation	First Name	Last Name
1	Austria	Reinhard	Nöbauer
2	Belgium – Flemish Community	Marie-Anne	Persoons
3	Belgium – French Community	Caroline	Hollela
4	Brunei Darussalam	Pg Zainal Yusri	Pg Hj Johari
5	Brunei Darussalam	Siong Shi	Tang
6	Estonia	Janne	Pukk
7	France	Axel	Leisenberg
8	Germany	David	Akrami Flores
9	Germany	Stefan	Schneider
10	Greece	Maria	Dimou
11	Hungary	Laura	Sinóros-Szabó
12	India	Aniruddha	Das
13	Ireland	John	Murphy
14	Ireland	Aoibhín	O'Malley
15	Italy	Alessandro	Boero
16	Italy	Michele	Mazzola
17	Latvia	Anita	Vahere-Abražune
18	Lithuania	Aurelija	Sirkaitė
19	Lithuania	Simona	Dzikauskaitė
20	Malaysia	Afiq	Mohd
21	Malaysia	Wan Baharudin	Wan Mahmood
22	Malaysia	Khairul Salleh	Mohamed Sahari
23	Malta	Rose Anne	Cuschieri
24	Malta	Gabriella	Mallia
25	Malta	Valerie	Attard
26	Malta	Jana	Kazarjan
27	Netherlands	Gonneke	de Ridder
28	Poland	Małgorzata	Piątek
29	Romania	Florentina	Inceu
30	Romania	Cristina Liana	Olteanu
31	Switzerland	Marco	Scruzzi

#	Delegation	First Name	Last Name
32	Thailand	Supranee	Khamyuang
33	Thailand	Duriya	Amatavivat
34	Thailand	Bundit	Thipakorn
35	Thailand	Nongnuch	Chunbandhit
36	ASEF	Reka	Tozsa
37	ASEM LLL Hub	Séamus	Ó Tuama
38	ASEM LLL Hub	Nghia	Mai
39	ASEM-DUO Secretariat	Keuk Je	Sung
40	CEDEFOP	Zelda	Azzara
41	EQAR	Magalie	Soenen
42	ETF	Manuela	Prina
43	EUA	Thérèse	Zhang
44	SEAMEO RIHED	Supansa	Kajavong
45	SEAMEO RIHED	Nutthamon	Sitaprasertnand
46	SEAMEO RIHED	Philip	Masterson
47	UNESCO Bangkok	Libing	Wang
48	UNESCO	Katerina	Ananiadou
49	UNESCO-UNEVOC	Kenny	Muscat
50	ASEM EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility (Italy, Co-chair)	Marina	Malgina
51	ASEM EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility (Italy)	Giannandrea	Guglielmi
52	ASEM Education Secretariat	Luca	Lantero
53	ASEM Education Secretariat	Vera	Lucke
54	ASEM Education Secretariat	Sibeles	Chiari
55	ASEM Education Secretariat	Teresa	Morales de la Fuente

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

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

### 1.1 Welcome by Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)

The MFHEA Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. Rose Anne Cuschieri welcomed all participants. She opened the session remarking the importance of fostering cooperation in an interconnected world between Asia and Europe. By joining forces, the young generation will have a major opportunity to develop the needed skills to live in the increasingly interconnected global landscape. She remarked the necessity to strengthen the political dialogue to make relations sustainable. There has been an increasing focus on ethics and integrity, considered as fundamental aspects to ensure quality of

education systems and the effective functioning of education institutions. Sustainability has gained significant importance in terms of addressing the economic, social and environmental concerns in a balanced and integrated manner. Higher Education institutions play a crucial role in shaping the future of society and the economy, while equipping students with the skills and competencies needed in a constantly evolving world. She also underlined the importance of sharing knowledge in an increasingly evolving technological environment, placing the culture of innovation at the heart of every society. Moreover, she stated that the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) is committed to ensuring that education providers operate ethically and with integrity as well as contributing to developing comprehensive standards and guidelines for higher education. Finally, she remarked the need to collaborate and work together to create a world where education and sustainability go hand in hand.

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

The Head of the Italian AES, Mr. Luca Lantero, thanked Malta for hosting this meeting and recalled the importance of these types of events for international cooperation in the education sector. He stressed the relevance of this Senior Officials' Meeting in terms of paving the way to the Ministerial Conference that will take place in January 2024, and recalled the ASEM Education Secretariat functions to support both the multilateral and bilateral dialogues. He encouraged partners and stakeholders to actively participate in the meeting by intervening every time they wish. Only by active and inclusive attendees' participation, will the ASEM Education Process continue going forward.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted without modification.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM2\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_Agenda.pdf](#)

## **3. Adoption of the minutes from the ISOM 2022**

Mr. Luca Lantero informed participants that the minutes of the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting held on 24-25 November in Malta were integrated with all comments received by partners and stakeholders via email. As there were no comments on the latest version of the ISOM minutes, the document was adopted without modification.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM3\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_ISOM\\_Minutes.pdf](#)

## **4. Keynote Speech: “Asia and Europe: Leveraging the digital transformation for inclusive quality higher education” by Mr. Libing Wang, UNESCO Bangkok**

Mr. Libing Wang, Chief of Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development (EISD) and Senior Programme Specialist in Higher Education at the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, Thailand called the powerful ASEM Process a good platform to discuss and work together. He pointed out that the world has gone through the stage of digital awareness to digital responsiveness, as it has been confirmed by the Transforming Education Summit of the United Nation held in New York in September 2022. In fact, he considered very encouraging that digitalization was included as a second transversal theme, along with sustainability in the ASEM Education Process and

added that international cooperation between Asia and Europe is linked to the ASEM four priority areas in the context of digital transformation.

Firstly, Mr. Wang talked about quality assurance and recognition, saying that recognition should be rooted in the quality of learning and that comparable quality standards could facilitate the recognition of the qualifications across different countries. He recalled the importance of the Tokyo Convention as well as the Sydney Statement as a guiding document in the field of recognition issued in August 2016. Then he referred to the necessity of focusing more on digital skills and on the digital transformation process which enables people to incorporate digital technology into the management and the delivery of higher education programmes. As a result, ensuring quality assurance and the recognition of online and blended learning has emerged as challenging for countries in Asia and Europe. Asian and European countries should leverage various multilateral and bilateral platforms, like for example the ASEM Education Process, to promote greater mobility of students.

Secondly, he drew attention to the second ASEM priority, that of engaging business and industry in higher education. As higher education systems are expanding globally, it becomes crucial to establish shared ownership of systems between supply and the demand to achieve engaging business in higher education. Industry can be a viable solution that amplifies the voices of the demand side in the planning and implementation of higher education programmes. He highlighted how much the improvement of business and industry can be crucial in developing and implementing national policy standards frameworks. In this regard, he pointed out the fact that digital technologies offer a branch of tools that are fundamental to enhance the relevance and the quality of higher education programmes and to improve the increasing accountability of the higher education sector to various stakeholders, for instance taxpayers, students, and employers.

Subsequently, he focused on the third ASEM priority, namely balanced mobility recalling the high number of students that travel from Asia to Europe and vice-versa, according to the UNESCO UIL. He remarked the crucial role of digital transformation in higher education as a tool that shapes shared priorities for mobility programs between Asia and the Europe. In effect, with the support of digital technology, new forms of mobility have emerged, including virtual campuses, online classrooms, virtual mobility for students and professionals' courses between regions causing an expansion of the opportunities for cross-border education. He pointed out the fact that, on the one hand, being a public good, higher education needs public investments. On the other hand, being a service sector, it is subjected to the WTO's market access. Therefore, to promote international mobility among students and professionals, public and private scholarships, private providers in both regions should collaborate.

Lastly, he mentioned the existing link between digital transformation and the fourth ASEM priority: Lifelong Learning including TVET. He highlighted the evolution of the concept of lifelong learning, as it no longer refers only to adult learning, but has also become a fundamental principle that extends to various levels of education types, including TVET and higher education. It can facilitate access to lifelong learning through online and blended learning opportunities, particularly for individuals from underserved communities and it can promote equity. In fact, digital skills and their competencies are evolving rapidly. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate these changes into national digital competency frameworks. He also recalled the UNESCO commitment to promoting the use of national qualification frameworks.

In conclusion, UNESCO's collaboration with Member States on transforming education in society follows up on and explores the shared priority of digitalization in education across regions. Mr. Wang underlined UNESCO's strong belief that digital transformation in higher education creates a critical opportunity for systems to improve their accessibility and inclusivity and called for collective strive to achieve the SDG4 goal for 2030 and beyond. UNESCO stands ready to provide support in this process.

Once he finished his speech three participants took the floor:

By referring to the importance of reconciling divergent views on higher education from UNESCO and WTO members, Ms. Marie-Anne Persoons from Belgium Flemish Community, stated that the European Union has strongly advocated the non-application of WTO rules on education to avoid the application of commercial principles to the education sector. She, instead, highlighted the crucial role that regional conventions on recognition play in the higher education field, as well as the UNESCO Global Recognition Convention, once the latter will be ratified by countries. They put the focus on the quality of education, unlike the WTO agreements that remain silent on this aspect. Then, she asked for more clarification on the UNESCO support on the ASEM process. Mr. Wang answered that it is important to avoid the commercialization of higher education and to prevent that the parallel WTO framework negatively impact on education. In this regard, UNESCO supports ASEM as an informal platform for dialogue that contributes to strengthening the internationalization of education. The second intervention came from Mr. Keuk Je Sung from the ASEM-DUO Secretariat. He recalled his past as a trade negotiator at the WTO in Geneva and briefed participants on the absence of further WTO engagement over the past 30 years, as well as, on the very little role played by the WTO in liberalizing higher education.

Finally, Mr. Luca Lantero, Head of the AES, updated attendees on the activities of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee concerning Higher Education in the European region, informing on the drafting of a new chapter focused on quality assurance aspects of recognition. He also pointed out the connection between recognition and quality ensured by the European Standards and Guidelines and recalled that the first session of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education will take place on 4-5 July 2023 in Paris. As a conclusion of this session, Mr. Libing Wang remarked the importance of the just above-mentioned Convention, stating that recognition should be based on information competency and transparency.

## **5. Updates from the ASEM Expert Groups (EGs), initiatives and projects**

The three new Expert Groups have started their work and the already existing EG on Digitalisation has continued with its activities. The participants were reminded about the possibility to join the groups, as membership is still and will always be open for those who want to take part in the EGs' activities.

### **5.1 EG1 on Sustainable Development Goals and Education**

Ms. Gabriella Mallia, Maltese Co-chair of this group, shared the updates from the Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals and Education (EG1). Firstly, she thanked the Co-chair Ms. Duriya Amatavivat (Thailand) and then explained the composition of it. She gave an overview of what was discussed during the first and second meetings held online respectively on 20 February 2023 and 28 March 2023. Moreover, she presented the EG1 Terms of Reference by underlining the purposes and intended outcome of the group. Therefore, she stressed the importance of fostering dialogue on SDGs in education, promoting peer learning, strengthening collaboration in SDGs and connectivity by identifying, sharing, and promoting good practice at national, regional and interregional level. Ms. Gabriella Mallia outlined the EG1's contribution to outcome documents of the ASEM meetings (ASEMME and SOM) to advance the implementation of the SDGs in Asia and Europe and to stimulate further integration of the SDGs in education systems. In conclusion, she shared the timeline and next steps that the Expert Groups is intended to take.

### **5.2 EG2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility**

Once Ms. Marina Malgina (Italy) thanked her Co-chair Ms. Pankaj Mittal (India) for working together, she briefly reported on the progress made by this group. In fact, having 22 countries and 8 stakeholders as members of this Expert Group, this variety makes the work challenging as common vocabulary is needed to be established. Considering that not everyone is moving in the same direction in the field of recognition, she emphasized the opportunity to carry out activities that should have relevance for both stakeholders and countries involved in this Expert Group. After recalling the two meetings held in February and April, she informed participants on the third meeting that will be held online at the end of May. Regarding the fourth meeting, she informed participants on the intention to organize it in person in New Delhi, India in November 2023 in order to involve more experts from the countries that are geographically closer to India. Subsequently, she focused on the Terms of Reference by recalling the documents this Expert Group is based on, and secondly, she presented the purposes of it. Among these, she stressed the group's efforts to foster dialogue between the regions bearing in mind the attainability and feasibility to achieve something that should have a relevant impact on all countries. Moreover, sharing experience on the existing conventions on recognition, such as the Global Convention, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Tokyo Convention was presented as one of the main aims. Understanding how experts from Asia and Europe can cooperate and establish synergies on the work done in different contexts and in different regions is a crucial point, as well as how to make sense of all the activities that take place in the respective countries. Concerning the ASEM Compendium, Ms. Marina Malgina pointed out the intention to further develop what was already done in the past. Finally, she shared the intended outcomes, such as peer learning activities and the establishment of a pool of experts in the field of recognition with a focus on the ASEM context. She invited the participants to check if information on their countries is updated on the [ASEM Compendium, available online on ASEM Education website](#), and to inform the ASEM Education Secretariat in case something needs to be changed.

### 5.3 EG3 on Lifelong Learning and TVET

Mr. Séamus Ó Tuama (ASEM LLL Hub), Chair of the Expert Group on Lifelong Learning and TVET, briefed attendees on the stalemate this group has been in since its kick-off meeting in February. By recalling the meeting in February and its usefulness, he underlined the effort made to find a Co-chair from Asia with the intention to have a geographically balanced chairing. Furthermore, he expressed his will to organize a meeting in person with EG3 members in 2024, during the Global Lifelong Learning Week.

### 5.4 EG4 on Digitalisation.

Considering that digitalisation was introduced as one of two transversal themes within the ASEM Education Process, Mr. David Akrami Flores (Germany), remarked that digitalisation creates opportunities to support connectivity and collaboration between Asia and Europe. The respective Expert Group on Digitalisation was established in 2019 and has been coordinated by the DAAD ever since. The objectives of this group are the promotion of exchange on the potential as well as challenges of digitalisation in education with specific regard to the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process. Mr. Akrami also emphasized the group's role as a platform for dialogue and exchange on digital transformation in the ASEM Education Process, ensuring that the dialogue between the two regions addresses current and future innovations and transformations in education. He also shared the timeline of the past meetings and recalled that during 2020-2021, several virtual meetings took place to draft the working paper on digitalization, which was presented at the SOM2 and ASEMME8. It analyses the challenges and opportunities of the digital transformation in the ASEM Education Process and also provides recommendations to policymakers. The last meetings in 2022/23 took place in a virtual format and focused on peer learning exchanges on micro-credentials, digitally enhanced learning and teaching and the most recent meeting (May 2023) addressed the

impact of Artificial Intelligence on learning and teaching. The next meeting will probably take place in October 2023 during which it will be important to talk about the future activities for the biennial 2024-2026.

### 5.5 Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks

Ms. Katerina Ananiadou (UNESCO) presented the fifth edition of the Global Inventory as a collaborative production, covering the globe together with UNESCO, UIL, CEDEFOP, ETF. She explained that the Global Inventory consists of two separate volumes, and it focuses on the aim to inform on decisions by ministries, authorities and other actors, and to share knowledge with international networks of experts and officials implementing national qualifications frameworks. Then she presented the thematic chapters that constitute the programme. She emphasized the new aspect of this edition, that of having used the information they had in the country chapter to do a comparative analysis to find out whether it is possible to identify any similarities or differences among qualifications frameworks around the world. Afterwards, Ms. Katerina Ananiadou explained the methodology used to do the cross-country analysis. She quoted that this presentation is focused on some of the latest findings, in fact in order to share these findings she firstly presented the aspects addressed during the cross-country analysis and then the National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) by stage of development of the 93 countries reports.

Ms. Zelda Azzara (CEDEFOP) drew attention to the objectives of NQFs, which were grouped into four main categories and pointed out the fact that NQFs are designed to integrate diverse education and training sectors into education and training systems. Moreover, the NQFs interact with non-NQF legislation and with several other policies, developments and initiatives, including validation of informal and non-formal learning and quality assurance mechanisms. On the one hand, there might be some commonalities in terms of characteristics, on the other hand, when it comes to the governmental aspects there are many differences across countries.

Ms. Manuela Prina (ETF) spoke about the types of qualifications included in the analysis, the barriers and enablers of NQF development and implementation. She identified the engagement of stakeholders as the biggest challenge, and the benefit of having a supportive policy environment, as one of the enablers. The first edition of the Report was done in 2013 and since then there has been an evolution of the Global Inventory. The current version shall reach end-users and there is still much to do to transfer the value of qualifications to the end-users. Moreover, the use of learning outcomes and the support in quality assurance were listed as some of the main contributions. After presenting the key findings, Ms. Manuela Prina turned to the participants with a few questions to start the discussion with them.

Some participants took the floor:

According to Ms. Laura Sinóros-Szabó (Hungary), the presented findings resonate with her experience and then she asked if there were plans to increase the visibility of the value of NQFs. Ms. Zelda Azzara answered by recalling the already existing cooperation in this area and quoting the role of the European Qualifications Framework Group. Ms. Manuela Prina added that the actual barriers to end-users do not come from the framework itself but instead from the actual translation of it.

Ms. Marie Persoons (Belgium – Flemish Community) recalled the trends of having transparency instruments in the QF and on linking up transparency to quality assurance and mobility. She also underlined that, the increasingly blurred boundaries between higher education and adult education and the ongoing change linked to the use and implementation of microcredentials have an impact on the structure of NQFs. Ms. Katerina Ananiadou quoted the important role that UNESCO UIL plays in the field of lifelong learning.

The participants were informed that an online session for consultation will be organised and that the ASEM Senior Officials will be informed on the date. Finally, the Head of the ASEM Education

Secretariat proposed to organize a webinar on this Global Inventory to help spread these interesting findings.

#### 5.6 Mapping the relationship of HE and SDGs in the ASEM countries

Ms. Reka Tozsa, briefly introduced the *ARC9 Research Report on Asia-Europe Higher Education Mapping: Working Towards the SDGs*. The choice to have focused on sustainable development was due to the introduction of sustainability into the ASEM Education Process as a transversal theme in 2019. This project is based on two years of research and it aimed at mapping how higher education contributes to the achievement of the SDGs from two complementary perspectives, that of national policies and institutions. The contributions received from the survey and focus group discussions with 31 ASEM countries, as well as the survey in partnership with the International Association of Universities (IAU) with 42 ASEM countries. Moreover, she presented the ARC Research team and recalled the launch of ARC Report in March 2023. Subsequently, she looked at the five points she considered the main aspects people would discuss most as a result of this study. She concluded by underlining the existing differences between States. However, in order to bring prosperity and peace in the world, everyone should commit to implementing the SDGs, at local, national, regional and global level. Finally, she informed participants on two policy dialogue events to be held online in July 2023 and in Italy in September 2023.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM5 ASEM SOMI Updates EGs initiatives projects.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

### 6. Updates from the ASEM partners

ASEM countries were invited to orally present the current state of play of their relevant activities, projects and initiatives carried out and implemented since the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME8, 2021)

1. **Belgium Flemish Community** stated that after the interruptions due to Covid-19 the relations with Asian countries have restarted gradually, including for the ASEM programmes between Asia and the Flemish Community of Belgium.
2. **Estonia** highlighted some aspects linked to recognition and informed that Estonia has ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1998 and is State party to the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, which entered into force on 5 March 2023. It will participate in the First Session of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to the Global Convention on 4-5 July 2023 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.
3. **France** recalled the importance of the ASEM Strategy 2030 as a tool to better structure the whole ASEM Education Process. France was engaged in this process being part of the Standing Working Group since it was established in 2019 and contributing to the development of the Strategy paper. It was also involved in the development of the ASEM Compendium and in the Expert Group on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanism and Recognition of Qualifications. France is one of the countries hosting most international students in the world. According to data, in 2020- 2021, China, Vietnam, and India were among the countries from which most of the students came from. The first strategic aspect of the ASEM 2030 Action Plan, inclusive and balanced mobility, is a domain in which France has been particularly active. Indeed, the French attractiveness plan "Bienvenue en France" pursues among others the goal of welcoming half a million international students by 2027. France is also very engaged in ensuring the quality of education through the prism of interdisciplinarity. France supports this perspective through its active support to the *European Universities* initiative, including its international dimension.



4. **Hungary** gave updates on the latest news regarding the introduction of microcredentials in the Hungarian Education Act, as a pilot programme for higher education institutions that tests microcredentials is being prepared currently and it will start in summer 2023. Another update regarded the introduction of automatic recognition for bachelor's and master's degrees coming from the European Higher Education Area at the end of December 2022. Moreover, the strong relation with South Korea and the intensive cooperation with some of the Korean universities that has led to the approval of scholarships in the field of artificial intelligence was mentioned.
5. **India** is Co-chair of the Expert Group on Recognition and Balanced Mobility and it will host the members of this group in November 2023 in New Delhi. India continues working directly with other countries in the field of higher education cooperation to enhance the exchange programmes and mobility of students. Since December 2022, India has been hosting the G20, and hence, the third meeting of the Education Working Group held in Bhubaneswar aimed at ensuring the betterment of learners with respect to skilling, upskilling and reskilling.
6. **Ireland** reported on the *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy* published in May 2022 by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Ireland has strengthened the collaboration and consultation with the education providers as well as with international student representatives and other important stakeholders. It has been working on improving the relationship with the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland on this topic.
7. **Italy** emphasised its interest in strengthening cooperation with Asian partners to increase and improve the mobility of students between different universities. Italy has been highly involved in the discussion on microcredentials in higher education as they are important for the Italian government. A stronger relation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area needs to be built to create new pluralism at global level.
8. **Malaysia** recalled the Malaysian Qualifications Framework 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition published in 2021 and the high attention to digital skills and microcredentials. Quality assurance plays an important role in the verification of microcredentials.
9. **Netherlands** pointed out its strong commitment to the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and the great value ASEM plays as a platform where countries and stakeholders can share their insights, strengthen their relations and work towards the SDGs. The Netherlands remarked the expectations of the SOM1 meeting, that of to achieve concrete outcomes and to pave the way for the future Ministerial Meeting 2024.
10. **Thailand** informed that there were no updates closely related to ASEM. However, intensive work was done at national level to improve the Thai Qualifications Framework and its higher education over the past three years, and hence to make the recognition process easier. There has also been a major focus on microcredentials to be included in the operating education system that hopefully will increase the mobility among ASEM countries' students.

## 7. Parallel workshops

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

### Workshop A: Why recognition matters?

The report from this workshop can be found here:

[ITEM7\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_WorkshopA\\_FinalReport.pdf](#)

Moderator: Ms. Marina Malgina, Co-chair of Expert Group 2 on Recognition and Balanced Mobility (Italy);

Rapporteur: Mr. Giannandrea Guglielmi (Italy)

*Attachment:*

[ITEM7\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_WorkshopA.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

#### Workshop B: Learning Cities: leaving no one behind

The report from this workshop can be found here:

[ITEM7\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_WorkshopB\\_FinalReport.pdf](#)

Moderator: Mr. Séamus Ó Tuama, Co-chair of Expert Group 3 on LLL and TVET (ASEM LLL Hub);

Rapporteur: Ms. Nghia Mai (ASEM LLL Hub)

*Attachment:*

[ITEM7\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_WorkshopB.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

#### Workshop C: Approaches on digitally enhanced learning and teaching at higher education institutions with a focus on the use of microcredentials

The report from this workshop can be found here:

[ITEM7\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_WorkshopC\\_FinalReport.pdf](#)

Moderator: Ms. Reka Tozsa (ASEF);

Rapporteur: Ms. Caroline Hollela (Belgium – French Community)

*Attachment:*

[ITEM7\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_WorkshopC.pdf](#)

### **8. Summary of the day and closing remarks**

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

### **9. Opening of the 2nd day with welcoming words**

The Maltese Chair of the SOM1 welcomed participants and remarked that the result of each workshop will be uploaded on ASEM SOM1 webpage once the event is concluded.

### **10. Updates from the ASEM stakeholders**

Stakeholders were invited to orally present the current state of play of their relevant activities, projects and initiatives carried out and implemented since the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME8, 2021) in 5 minutes.

1. **ASEM LLL Hub** developed and launched a new website for its Hub and revitalized the 6 research networks. Among the many activities, it has contributed to the World Higher Education Conference and partnered with ASEF on the Summer University 2022. ASEM LLL Hub has been very active and present in the Southeast Asian region, in fact a chair networking tour took place from November to December 2022. As for the main goals, this organization will continue expanding networks to include more ASEM members, as well as creating higher visibility in Asia. Regarding the headline plan 2023-2024, the Research Network 7 will be

launched in June 2023 and the Global Lifelong Learning Week will be taking place in Cork, at the UCC on 27-31 May 2024.

2. **ASEM-DUO Secretariat** recalled the principles that have established the ASEM Process, among them Balanced Mobility and presented the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme as an initiative for university students and teachers in ASEM countries who engage in educational exchange between Asia and Europe. This programme was launched in 2000 and it aims at promoting balanced exchanges of students, teachers and professors in these two regions. ASEM-DUO contributes to the overarching ASEM objectives of people-to-people connectivity confirmed at the highest political level by all ASEM partners. Also, he called for the need of increased financial contribution from the European members.
3. **ASEF** has carried out many projects and initiatives in the field of sustainability and digitalization, listed as the two transversal themes of the ASEM Education Process. Among the projects that have already taken place, there are the capacity building project called ASEF ClassNet School Collaboration in 2022, the webinar on Digital Learning and Teaching in HE: a new era of Inequality in 2022, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEF HE Innovation Laboratory focused on the role of universities in teaching skills and entrepreneurship from March to July 2023. Moreover, attendees were informed on the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEF Young Leaders Summit that will take place from August to December 2023 and it will be held online but with a physical meeting foreseen for September in Salamanca, Spain. The Model ASEM Activities 2022-2023, and some projects for the next year 2024 focused on climate change and digitalization in secondary school teaching. In terms of HE projects, there will be a policy dialogue together with the EHEA Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue to be held in September in Italy.
4. **CEDEFOP** informed the participants on its responsibility of reporting on EU developments on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), saying that this information will be released at the end of 2023. New projects will examine EU and national initiatives of the last two decades focused on transparency of learning outcomes, as well as on initiatives related to quality assurance, national qualifications frameworks, and the development of policy scenarios for 2024. The second edition of the *European handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes* was published in 2022. Moreover, in February 2023 a 3-years-project on microcredential has just concluded with the publication of a research paper named *Microcredentials for labour market education and training*.
5. **EQAR** attends for the first time a ASEM event and presented itself. The European Quality Assurance Register aims at enhancing transparency and trust and promotes international recognition. It focused over the last couple of years on the three key commitments of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), namely the three-cycle system compatible with the QF-EHEA and ECTS, the compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), and on quality assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015). These three key commitments are not fully implemented by every EHEA country. The database of external quality assurance results (DEQAR) was launched in 2018 to ensure public access to the assessments made by QA agencies listed on EQAR and the new initiative to introduce alternative providers and microcredentials into DEQAR was mentioned.
6. **ETF** has received many requests for cooperation with Asian countries over the last years. In fact, ETF has recently implemented a training seminar on VET and employability opportunities in Laos from 28 to 30 March 2023. ETF has also cooperated with the Ministry of Thailand in the field of education and training, and it will host a Thai delegation in June in Turin (Italy) to strengthen the relations and work on the improvement of the transition from school to labour market. ETF will participate at the event held in Manila in October 2023 to share its work with the Asian region. Moreover, a new cooperation between ETF and the Philippines has started with a focus on integration on mutual and extended reality in skills

development including both, VET and HE, and the use of virtual and extended reality for accreditation and certification.

7. **SEAMEO RIHED** shared the regional progress made with the ASEAN Secretariat to increase synergies and partnerships through a redefined Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education. SEAMEO RIHED has also taken part in a series of policy dialogues on ASEAN higher education in the framework of the Roadmap on the ASEAN Higher Education Space 2025. The SEAMEO RIHED's new project with the British Council on Strengthening Leadership with Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity in HEIs in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and Timor-Leste from 2022 to 2023 was mentioned, as well as the First Regional Leadership Forum in Research Governance on Supporting Sustainable Research Ecosystems in HEIs in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and Timor-Leste that took place on 12-14 September 2022 as part of the Project Horizon Southeast Asia: Pushing the Frontiers of Research and Sustainability, supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Osnabruck University of Applied Sciences. In addition, the development of the RIHED SHARE online Knowledge platform was reported.
8. **UNESCO** stated that the UN Secretary General's Transforming Education Summit (16-19 September 2022) has confirmed that education must be transformed to respond to the global climate and environmental crisis. A new Greening Education Partnership was launched aimed at delivering strong, coordinated and comprehensive action that will prepare every learner to acquire the knowledge, to tackle climate change and to promote sustainable development. This new concept of Greening Education Partnership includes greening schools, greening learning, greening capacity and readiness and greening communities. The Director-General of UNESCO will convene a World Conference on Culture and Arts Education to be held in December 2023 in the United Arab Emirates. It will help further develop and revise the UNESCO framework on this topic.
9. **UNESCO BANGKOK** recalled the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2022) held in Barcelona, Spain in May 2022, that aimed at reshaping ideas and practices in higher education to ensure sustainable development for the planet and humanity. This Conference was informed by the submission of a new Roadmap, *Beyond Limits: New Ways to Reinvent Higher Education*. Flexible learning pathways, promoting social mobility and internationalization of higher education are some of the many aspects that were included in the roadmap. The Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister's Conference had taken place in Bangkok in 2022 and the policy brief on digital transformation in education in Asia Pacific.
10. **UNESCO-UNEVOC** presented Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BUILT) as a peer learning platform for TVET providers in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe. The BUILT focus areas are entrepreneurship, greening, digitalization, migration and new qualifications and competencies. Moreover, UNESCO launched a new strategy for TVET 2022-2029 on 25-26 October 2022 and informed on the development of a medium-term strategy 2024-2026 aligned with the UNESCO Strategy for TVET.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM10\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_Updates\\_Stakeholders.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

## **11. ASEM Education Process**

### **11.1 Stocktaking report**

After briefly explaining the characteristics of the Stocktaking Report, Mr. Luca Lantero (AES) presented the future steps to be taken in next months to draft this document. The ASEM Education Secretariat will send a form to collect initiatives and projects from the countries and stakeholders. He asked the Co-chairs of the Expert Groups to help with the collection of the partners' and stakeholders'

initiatives linked to the topic of their groups and to send such updated information to the Secretariat. The final version of the Stocktaking report will be concluded by January 2024, before the Ministerial Meeting, as it will be presented during the ASEMME9.

### 11.2 Chair's Conclusions

Mr. Luca Lantero (AES) recalled the features of the Chair's Conclusions and informed participants on the intention to change the format of this document by shortening it. The final version should give a vision and a clear message to be endorsed by Ministers during the Ministerial Meeting ASEMME9 in January 2024. Therefore, the Chair's Conclusions need to be considered as a document through which Ministers can transmit their political visions, and hence, influence the ASEM Education Process. Moreover, he invited the Co-chairs of the Expert Groups to send information on their topics of interests to the Secretariat by 15 September. He also pointed out the fundamental contribution of ASEM countries and stakeholders with their feedback on the draft versions. The final version will be presented during the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) and be endorsed during the Ministerial Conference. The decision to shorten this document to a few pages was approved by all attendees.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM11\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_StocktakingReport\\_ChairsConclusions.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

## 12. Looking towards SOM2 and ASEMME9

In order to prepare and raise awareness of the Ministerial Meeting 2024 (ASEMME9), Mr. Luca Lantero (AES) presented two ASEM Education activities that will take place during these months before the Ministerial Conference. The first one consists of ASEM Education webinars organized by all four ASEM Expert Groups on topics of their interest. The intention is to inform the ASEM community about what is happening within the ASEM Education Process and to raise awareness. These webinars are expected to take place in autumn 2023. The second activity will be a meeting between AES, MFHEA and the Embassies in Malta to inform them on the ASEM Education Process, but especially on the next Ministerial Conference. In fact, this was thought as a strategy to involve more ASEM Ministers. Although governments will become aware of this ASEMME9 by using diplomatic channels, Mr. Luca Lantero remarked the important role of Senior Officials to actively engage their Ministries. Then, the Head of the Secretariat informed that the **Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) will be held in Malta on 24 January 2024, and the ASEM Ministers Meeting (ASEMME9) will take place in Malta on 25-26 January 2024.** Moreover, he proposed the title "Leaving no-one behind" which was accepted by all participants. He briefly presented some preliminary ideas regarding the Ministerial Meeting, chaired by the Maltese Minister, such as having one keynote speech and giving 3 minutes of speech to every Minister. It is foreseen that stakeholders can sit in the same room as the Ministers. More detailed information on ASEMME9 will be given in the next months.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM12\\_ASEM\\_SOM\\_towards\\_SOM2\\_ASEMME9.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

## 13. Outlook: ASEM Education Initiatives for the next biennial 2024-2026

Partners and stakeholders were invited to present projects, initiatives and activities that are intended to be implemented during the next biennial 2024-2026.

1. **Italy** briefly presented the project "MICRO-credentials for Life-Long Learning and Employability: Building Capacities for Developing Agile Educational Interventions in Southeast Asian Universities". This project engages eleven partners among HEIs in Europe

and the Southeast Asian region as well as experts in recognition of qualifications and in the implementation of international projects in the field of research and education. From the Asian side, it engages universities in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, whereas from the European side, Germany, Italy and Spain are involved. Currently, this project is investigating about the perception and awareness of microcredentials in Southeast Asian countries and on capacity building for academic staff. This project started in March 2023 and it will last until 2026.

2. **SEAMEO RIHED** presented the SEA-Europe Mobility Programme for Sustainable Development which aims at maximising the contribution of higher education to Sustainable Development through learning mobility. This project involves both, Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand) and European countries to explore and co-create innovative models of learning mobility to empower learners with skills and competencies to become active global citizens, including contributing to a collective learning space where knowledge and expertise can be shared across the regions. The expected outcomes were presented and the duration of the project is from 2023 to 2025.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM13\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_Initiatives\\_2024-2026.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

#### **14. Call for ISOM (2024), SOM1 (2025), SOM2 and ASEMME10 (2026) host**

Ms. Vera Lucke (ASEM Education Secretariat) stated that the ISOM 2024 will most probably be hosted in India in late 2024. She also informed participants on the fact that the Secretariat has received other informal expressions of interests to host the other meetings, but there is still nothing concrete. Therefore, she invited countries, especially from Asia, to inform the Secretariat should they want to host one of the future events making it clear that the SOM1 will be held in late 2025 and the SOM2 and ASEMME10 in 2026. After that, Mr. Luca Lantero emphasised the Secretariat's intention to organize all meetings of the next two-years cycle in Asia.

*Attachment:*

[ITEM14\\_ASEM\\_SOM1\\_CallforHosts\\_NextMeetings.pdf](#) (presentation during meeting)

#### **15. AOB**

No other business was raised.

#### **16. Closing remarks**

Mr. Luca Lantero thanked everybody and recalled the Secretariat's commitment to support and strengthen relations between Asia and Europe. Mrs. Rose Anne Cuschieri thanked all participants, the ASEM Education Secretariat and her Maltese team for their work and expressed her pleasure to have hosted this meeting and closed the Senior Officials' Meeting.