

6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME6)

21-22 November 2017

Seoul, the Republic of Korea

Collaboration for the Next Decade: From Common Perspectives to Effective Fulfillment

Conclusions by the Chair

1. The 6th ASEM Education Minister's Meeting (ASEMME6) was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 21-22 November 2017 and brought together 216 participants from 44 ASEM partners and 10 stakeholders. The meeting was chaired by Kim Sang-kon, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education of the Republic of Korea. Lee Nak-yon, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea made a congratulatory speech to welcome all participants to the ASEMME6.
2. The Meeting thanked the Republic of Korea for their warm hospitality and excellent organisation for the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting and ASEMME6. The Meeting acknowledged the Republic of Korea's continuing contribution to the ASEM Education Process in a wide array of initiatives that foster the cooperation between both regions through enhanced dialogues and connectivity amongst partners to bring people from Asia and Europe closer.
3. The purpose of the Meeting under the theme *Collaboration for the Next Decade: From Common Perspectives to Effective Fulfillment* was to seek more effective ways to enhance cooperation between Asia and Europe under the ASEM Education Process. The meeting was expected provide an ample opportunity to utilise the cooperation in a way that unleashes the potential of the ASEM education collaboration. The theme was crafted following the results of a survey conducted by the Republic of Korea that aimed at capturing the ASEM partners' aspirations for the future development of the ASEM Education Process. It was concluded that the ASEM Education Process should focus on producing outcomes and inducing a tangible cooperation in the coming years by encouraging more Asia-Europe partners to concentrate on global issues and enable societal changes to address challenges such as employability and development of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) in education.

In their meeting, the Ministers:

4. Thanked the Republic of Korea for its contribution to the proposal of the Seoul Declaration, the first ministerial declaration in the ASEM Education Process and supported the Seoul Declaration that reaffirmed the commitment of the ASEM partners in the future direction of the ASEM Education Process in the coming decade, recognising the growing importance of connectivity amongst Asia and Europe through the promotion of tangibility and visibility within the ASEM Education cooperation.

5. Agreed on the importance of enhancing connectivity between Asia and Europe through all dimensions, including political, economic, digital, institutional, socio-cultural, and people-to-people in all ASEM activities, as underlined by the ASEM Leaders at the ASEM11 Summit held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 15-16 July 2016 and as reflected in the Ulaanbaatar Declaration.
6. Reaffirmed the significant role of education collaboration in building people-to-people connectivity between both regions, highlighting the roles of vocational education and training, higher education and lifelong learning in human resources development.
7. Reiterated the importance of building the ASEM Education Process based on a two-pillar system as introduced during the ASEMME5. The First Pillar focused on dialogue-oriented cooperation to allow mutual learning and exchange of experiences. The Second Pillar is built upon result-oriented cooperation to produce tangible activities and measures. The Ministers further reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting the cooperation in the four priority areas as introduced during the ASEMME3: (1) quality assurance and recognition; (2) engaging business and industry in education; (3) balanced mobility and; (4) lifelong learning, including technical and vocational education and training. The Chairs' Conclusions are structured based on the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process as was the case of the previous Conclusions by the Chair.
8. Expressed gratitude to the Russian Federation, which hosted the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) on 13-14 April 2016. The meeting aimed at exchanging information on the ASEM Education Process, including analysing the results of the process, identifying barriers in implementing activities as well as proposing strategies to overcome them. The meeting affirmed the need to synergise and enhance coherence amongst the four priority areas of collaboration to increase tangible results.
9. Welcomed Germany's initiative to establish the ASEM Education Task Force, announced during the ISOM in 2016. The Task Force aims to foster transparency between actions taken and strengthen the visibility of the ASEM Education Process. Through enhanced needs assessment and reciprocity between the two pillars, the efficiency of the ASEM Education Process will be strengthened.
10. Conveyed gratitude and appreciation to Indonesia for hosting the ASEM Education Secretariat from 2013 to 2017, having carried out an excellent coordination and facilitation of the implementation of the ASEM initiatives and programmes, providing the ASEM partners and stakeholders with an inclusive stocktaking report as the reference for policy-making and future direction of the ASEM Education Process. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation to the outgoing Secretariat for managing a smooth transition of the rotating Secretariat to the next country. The Ministers thanked Latvia, Malaysia, Belgium and Bristol University (the United Kingdom) as the ASEM stakeholder, for sending their officials for secondment to the ASEM Education Secretariat Jakarta.

11. Welcomed Belgium (Flemish Community and French Community) as the next host of the ASEM Education Secretariat (2017-2021) and appreciated Belgium's efforts in working together with the outgoing host country to ensure the continuation and development of the Secretariat's work and contribution to the ASEM Education Process.
12. Congratulated the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the only permanently established institution of the ASEM process, to its 20th Anniversary in 2017, and expressed their appreciation to ASEF for its long-term and sustainable work portfolio that facilitated and encouraged dialogues, exchanges and collaborations for over 25,000 individuals and organisations across ASEM during the past two decades.
13. Expressed gratitude to the ASEM partners and stakeholders for their consistent contributions to the implementation of the ASEM Education Process. The Ministers encouraged ASEM partners and stakeholders to contribute to ASEM's visibility by leveraging on communication platforms like the ASEM Education Secretariat website or the ASEM InfoBoard website (www.ASEMinfoboard.org) to publish information about the ASEM Education Process.

Priority A: Quality Assurance and Recognition

Quality assurance and recognition have been high on the agenda since they were first introduced at the 2nd ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME2) in Hanoi 2009. A number of activities and dialogues involving governments and experts have been organised to deepen information exchange and understanding of the differences between education systems in both regions. Building trust among higher education systems to promote attractiveness, transparency, comparability and permeability of each system is the common objective to set forth in ASEM education cooperation. Therefore, tangible cooperation, activities and more synchronised efforts involving relevant parties need to be put forward to make education systems in ASEM partners more comparable.

The Ministers:

14. Underlined the contribution made by Working Group on Implementing the ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration, coordinated by China and contribution by Austria, Belgium (French Community), Brunei Darussalam, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and the United Kingdom. The three action plans of the Working Group have been making notable progress as follow: a) establishment of the Cross-Border Quality Assurance Network (CBQAN) in Haikou, China, on 20 December 2016; b) establishment of the Asian National Information Centre Coordinating Website (ANICCW); and c) Handbook of Guidelines, Principles and Good Practices on Recognition is in the process of developing. The Ministers invited ASEM partners to make use of the tools produced by the Working Group to facilitate qualification recognition. The Ministers thanked Estonia and Malaysia for organising the 4th Working Group, on 14- 15 April 2016 in Tallinn and the 5th Working Group on 20-21 April 2017 in Kuala Lumpur.

15. Noted the contribution of Japan in organising the Working Group on Mobility of Higher Education and Ensuring Quality Assurance of Higher Education amongst Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEN) Plus Three (APT) Countries and congratulated the formal approval of the *Guideline on Student Exchange* at the 3rd APT Education Ministers Meeting. The Ministers thanked Thailand, the Philippines and Viet Nam for hosting the 3rd, the 4th and the 5th Working Group meetings on 11 June 2015 in Bangkok, 1-2 December 2016 in Cebu and 20 October 2017 in Ho Chi Minh respectively. The Ministers encouraged the Working Group to finalise the *Guideline on Transcripts for Exchange Students*.
16. Noted the progress made by the Expert Group on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems. The Expert Group is open to all ASEM partners and stakeholders. So far the following ASEM partners have committed: Australia, Belgium (French Community and Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, China, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Portugal, Romania, Thailand and United Kingdom, as well as ASEM stakeholders that include the ASEAN University Network and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED). Meetings were organised on 24-25 March 2016 in Beijing, China; on 26-28 April 2017 in Ghent, Belgium; and on 29-30 August 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand, respectively. The Ministers invited the Expert Group to regularly provide information to ASEM partners on the progress of their work. It is also recommended to review the 'Terms of Reference' for the future work of the Expert Group. The Ministers appreciated the joint effort of the Expert Group and the ASEM Education Secretariat in revising the 'Compendium on Credits and Learning Outcomes' with the support and contribution of all ASEM partners to enhance the applicability and user-friendliness of this tool. The Ministers acknowledged that this tool will help to further facilitate interregional mobility and cooperation.
17. Noted the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (EU-SHARE) project, which aimed at improving regional cooperation, quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students. Funded by the European Union, the project is implemented by the British Council, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education (Nuffic), Campus France, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the ASEAN Secretariat and the European University Association (EUA). The Ministers invited the European Union to present the outcomes of the project to ASEM partners in 2018.
18. Encouraged a wider participation of ASEM partners in the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on qualification frameworks for higher education in relation to quality assurance and recognition. Belgium (French Community and Flemish Community) hosted the PLA on 26-28 April 2017 with the participation of Brunei Darussalam, France, Germany, Lithuania, Romania, Norway, Thailand, SEAMEO RIHED, the European Commission and speakers of the SHARE-project, the European Quality Assurance Register for

Higher Education (EQAR) and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The PLA aimed at determining the relationship between qualification frameworks, quality assurance and recognition as well as implementation strategies.

19. Took note of the fact that Belgium (Flemish Community) has downsized the scope of the Joint ASEM-European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Conference on the impact of reforms and challenges that higher education has to address in academic work. The action took the form of a policy seminar for higher education researchers and policy makers at national and institutional level. The seminar took place on 26-27 October 2017 in Ghent, Belgium.

Priority B: Engaging Business and Industry in Education

Employability took centre stage in the ASEM Education Process over the past few years. Close cooperation between higher education institutions and the business sector plays a main role in increasing graduate employment and cultivate entrepreneurship which will bring positive impact to the economic growth of countries in both regions. The ASEM Education Process continues to devise concrete steps and creates innovative strategies to better address employability issues.

The Ministers:

20. Reiterated the role of the ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC) as the official dialogue partner of the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting, and appreciated the tangible and intangible outcomes of the 5th ASEM Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC5) on "Employability: Asia and Europe Prepare the New Generation on 4-8 April 2016 in Prague, Czech Republic, and the 6th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC6) on "Future-ready Universities and Graduates: Quality Education beyond the Horizon" on 9-14 October 2017 in Singapore. The Ministers welcomed Romania's readiness to host the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) in 2019 in conjunction with the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7).
21. Supported the collaboration of Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Indonesia and Thailand in implementing the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme (ASEM WPP) for a three-year period ending in December 2017. The Ministers thanked Indonesia for hosting the 3rd Working Group of ASEM WPP on 27-28 May 2016 in Bali, Germany for hosting the 4th Working Group on 25 November 2016 in Berlin (in which Romania also participated) and Thailand for hosting the 5th Working Group on 28 August 2017 in Bangkok. It was proposed to continue this highly beneficial and concrete ASEM WPP initiative in a more structured and accessible way. The creation of a corresponding permanent ASEM WPP support structure is proposed to upscale the ASEM WPP and to address the practical obstacles that have been encountered so far more systematically. The coordination will be undertaken by both Belgium (Flemish Community) and Thailand.

22. Invited expressions of interest from ASEM partners to organise the 5th ASEM University Business Forum, building on the success of the 4th ASEM University Business forum held in Brussels on 4 March 2015. The 5th Forum would continue the dialogue on University-Business cooperation, paying attention to the education side of this cooperation. The Ministers suggested the forthcoming ASEM University Business Forum to collaborate with the ASEF Rectors' Conference to enhance their synergy in promoting business' engagement in education.
23. Recognised Brunei Darussalam's contribution in hosting the Workshop "Entrepreneurship in Higher Education" held at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam from 18-26 May 2016. The Workshop aimed at equipping undergraduate students with skills and knowledge on sustainable entrepreneurship practices for economic diversification in Asia and Europe.
24. Encouraged a wider participation of ASEM partners in the PLA on Employability and on the Contribution of Higher Education to Innovation, which will be organised by Belgium (Flemish Community) in 2018. The activity aims to share knowledge and understanding, as well as to explore the distinctive employability policy contexts, cultural differences, ideas and best practices as well as cross regional collaboration in order to foster employability and innovation.
25. Appreciated the contribution of the Russian Federation in organising the project "Students' teambuilding as an instrument of engaging business in education" with aims to build collaboration amongst universities, businesses and industries in Asia and Europe through teambuilding in order to foster student employability.
26. Underlined the importance of facilitating industry-university cooperation at the global level, as reflected in the 1st and 2nd Global Industry-University Cooperation Fora, hosted by the Republic of Korea on 28 October 2015 and 9 November 2016 in Seoul. These fora have enabled discussions on best practices and policy directions on the cooperation between university and industry, attended by representatives from governments, industries, universities, researchers and media. It was noted that the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions of the EU enable organisations located in any ASEM country, including businesses and government bodies as well as academic institutions, to participate in the exchange or training of researchers with European partners.

Priority C: Balanced Mobility

The imbalanced mobility of students and staffs from Asia to Europe and vice versa has drawn attention to the ASEM Education Process. Current estimates indicate that the number of Asian students going to Europe for full-time degrees is 15 times higher than number of European students heading to Asia. To encourage more balanced mobility, numerous programmes and activities such as joint curriculum, development, interregional exchange programmes of students and staff as well as camp activities have been developed. Thus, the dynamics and sustainability of mobility programmes and activities in mobility frameworks shall be further supported by ASEM partners and stakeholders.

The Ministers:

27. Expressed appreciation to Malaysia and its Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya and Maastricht University, Brussels Campus, Belgium for their contribution to foster balanced mobility by organising the 3rd AEI-ASEM Summer School 2017 from 24 July to 4 August in Malaysia and from 7 to 11 August in Belgium. The AEI-ASEM Summer School 2017 provided opportunities for students from Asia and Europe to obtain knowledge and experiences in multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity in both regions. Participants also took part in the inaugural Asia-Europe Conference (AEC) with the theme “Is it Time for Europe to Play a Broader Role in Asia?” held in Kuala Lumpur from 3-4 August 2017. The Ministers supported the continuation of the initiative and invite ASEM partners and stakeholders to support and collaborate on the 4th AEI-ASEM Summer School in 2018 and beyond to develop and foster better balanced mobility of students, academicians and researchers between Asia and Europe.
28. Thanked the EU for promoting and raising awareness on the international opportunities available to ASEM partners under the Erasmus+ programme. Information events and contact seminars for the Asia region were held in Riga in April 2015, Bangkok in November 2016 and Ho Chi Minh City in May 2017, to share information about scholarship and cooperation opportunities financed through the programme. These meetings had a particular focus on involving less-developed countries from Asia. In 2016 and 2017, the European Commission (EC) organised Higher Education Fairs in a number of ASEM countries including South Korea, Japan, Russia, the Philippines and Indonesia, providing a high-visibility platform for individual study opportunities. Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 are by far the largest programmes for Europe-Asia cooperation and mobility in higher education and research, with numbers rising each year. The Ministers encouraged greater dissemination of information on opportunities for balanced mobility of individuals in Asia and Europe amongst all ASEM partners and stakeholders.
29. Emphasised the importance of continuously supporting existing programmes enabling two-way mobility between students and academics, with particular reference to the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme. The Programme is currently supported by 6 contributing members namely the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Sweden, and Belgium (Flemish Community and French Community). The success of the programme that has enabled more than 3,400 students and academics throughout the seventeen years of its existence has been noteworthy and helped to build understanding between both regions through people-to-people links. The Ministers encouraged ASEM partners to participate as contributing members of the programme having recognised the effectiveness of the programme to enhance balanced mobility.
30. Noted with interest the progress of the ASEM Joint Curriculum Development Project, by Germany, Indonesia, and Romania. The Ministers appreciated Indonesia for hosting the 3rd Expert Meeting of the ASEM Joint Curriculum Development Project on 27-28 May

2016 in Bali. Indonesia and Germany started this pilot programme in 2016. Selected students from both countries participated in an exchange scheme under this project. The Ministers invited other interested ASEM partners to participate in the project.

31. Appreciated Germany's initiative in creating the ASEM Studies' Curriculum Module. Through this initiative, a curriculum module has been developed which strengthens the scientific relations between Europe and Asia. The ASEM Summer School called "Europe Asia Dynamics" was organised in Germany in July 2016, in partnership with universities from Denmark, India and Latvia. The Ministers welcomed the initiative and underlined the importance of this scientific cooperation. ASEM partners are called for the development of similar activities to reach more students and lecturers.
32. Commended ASEF for its added value to student, academic and university staff mobility across ASEM through its education projects in the field of education policy and youth leadership. These include the ASEF Young Leaders Summit in conjunction with ASEM Summits, Model ASEM in conjunction with ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meetings, the ASEF Summer University or the ASEF Classroom Network Conference, amongst others. ASEF projects have been repeatedly acknowledged by the ASEM Leaders for providing youth and the ASEM education stakeholder perspectives into the official ASEM process. In this regard, the Ministers also thanked ASEM partners that hosted innovative ASEF's projects such as the 19th ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU19) on "Sustainable Urbanisation in Heritage Cities" in 2015 in India, the 20th ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU20) on "Gateways to Asia and Europe: Connectivity by Land, Sea and Air" in 2016 in China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation, the 1st ASEF Young Leaders Summit on "Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment" in 2015 in Luxembourg or the 12th ASEF Classroom Network Conference on "<Coding_4_Education>" in 2015 in Bulgaria.

Priority D: Lifelong Learning including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The role of lifelong learning including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in addressing educational issues has been long acknowledged. The ASEM Education Process recognised the lifelong learning opportunity as the key element to ensure employability of people in both regions, equipping them with skills needed to thrive in a globalised world. With the spirit of inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values, lifelong learning within the framework of the ASEM Education Process is continuously supported through numerous programmes and activities jointly organised and participated in by ASEM partners and stakeholders.

The Ministers:

33. Appreciated the efforts of the Republic of Korea for coordinating the implementation of the 2nd Phase of the Working Group on Innovative Competences and Entrepreneurship Education (2015-2017) and for organising the 1st Working Group on 14-16 December 2015 in Seoul. The Working Group has put efforts into diagnosing the status of

entrepreneurship education in the participating countries, by conducting a survey to obtain the information on how policymakers, teachers, employers were perceiving innovative competence and entrepreneurship education in their respective country. The Ministers thanked Indonesia, Romania and Malaysia for hosting the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Working Group meetings on 21-23 March 2016 in Jakarta, in Bucharest on 26-28 October 2016 and in Putrajaya on 14-16 March 2017 respectively. The Ministers further appreciated the participation of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Malaysia, and Romania in the ASEM Innovative Competences and Entrepreneurship Education International Survey. Considering the growing needs of sharing best practices of entrepreneurship education and forming a cooperative system amongst the ASEM partners and stakeholders, the Ministers suggested the Working Group to continue its work.

34. Welcomed Latvia's initiative to promote a dialogue on sharing best practices and future perspectives in TVET in order to encourage collaboration and partnership between ASEM partners in the TVET framework in close cooperation with Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, Indonesia, the Philippines and the Russian Federation. The Ministers invited other ASEM partners and relevant stakeholders to participate in this initiative.
35. Thanked the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub (ASEM LLL Hub), which organised the ASEM Forum on Lifelong Learning on 3-5 October 2016 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Under the theme "21st Century Skills" the Forum discussed how to develop skills for lifelong learning and examined supporting policies in Asia and Europe. The Ministers recommended the ASEM LLL Hub to follow up the results of the Forum and move forward the collaboration in lifelong learning amongst ASEM partners to equip the workforce with 21st century skills.
36. Expressed appreciation to the ASEM LLL Hub for organising the Conference "Lifelong Learning and Resilience in Disaster Management: Asian and European Perspectives" on 8-10 November 2016, in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. The conference produced several recommendations on how to implement lifelong learning as a key to promote resilience in disaster management, strengthen networks in and amongst countries facing disasters and to involve more institutions dealing with disasters.
37. Noted the ASEM LLL Hub's production of the ASEM Desktop Studies on National Policies for Lifelong Learning (previously known as the ASEM Reviews on National Policies for Lifelong Learning). The Ministers encouraged ASEM partners to contribute to these studies and utilise them to promote sustainable lifelong learning. Commended the ASEF and the ASEM LLL Hub for their joint conference "Theory Meets Practice: Teacher Training in the Digital Era" on 8-11 September 2017 in conjunction with the World Education Leadership Summit in Zug, Switzerland. The conference focused on teacher professionalisation and training in the face of ever-advancing educational technology, with further recommendations being captured in an ASEM research study commissioned by ASEF and the University of Teacher Education Zug.

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38. Appreciated the joint efforts of the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in updating the global inventory on regional and national qualifications frameworks. The inventory is an important reference document for Regional Qualification Frameworks (RQFs) and National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs), which supports global monitoring by interested actors, provides policy analysis, identifies the latest issues and contributes to peer-learning. The Ministers underlined that qualifications frameworks as an established instrument in many countries around the world, are significant in recognising all forms of learning, formal or informal, in facilitating lifelong learning across education sectors, in linking qualifications and education systems to labour market needs, and enabling comparison of qualifications between countries and world regions. Ministers called upon all ASEM partners to make use of this inventory and to enhance, develop or implement fully their existing RQFs and NQFs. Ministers also encouraged development of the World Reference Levels, led by UNESCO, which will, on completion, support RQFs and NQFs, by providing a global reference system. Ministers further requested the agencies which developed the Global NQF Inventory to proceed with producing an updated edition in time for dissemination at the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7).
39. Welcomed the Republic of Korea's initiative in cooperation with other ASEM partners of following countries and stakeholders that include Malaysia, France, Belgium (Flemish Community), Thailand, the Philippines, ASEM Education Secretariat and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to create the ASEM Network of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). The network would provide peer learning opportunities on MOOCs with ASEM partners and stakeholders through the organisation of MOOCs stakeholders' forums and case studies on MOOCs learning outcome recognition. The Network would also contribute to increasing connectivity between Asia and Europe through the joint development of ASEM MOOC contents and the guideline on MOOCs content development. The Ministers attached high importance to the development of the network of MOOCs as a foundation to transform education within ASEM, making it more open, flexible, accessible and accountable.
40. Welcomed the initiative from the UIL which aims at strengthening cooperation between cities and national governments from Asia and Europe to implement lifelong learning through three fields of cooperation namely cultivating decent work and entrepreneurship through lifelong learning; embedding education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and enhancing inter-sectoral linkages between academia, government and the private sector to implement lifelong learning. Considering the rapid development of ICT in education system across Asia and Europe, the Ministers supported UIL's proposal on contributing video tutorials and knowledge materials on Lifelong Learning to the ASEM MOOCs initiative started by the Republic of Korea.

Minister encouraged Senior Officials:

41. To foster tangible and effective collaborations amongst ASEM partners and stakeholders to achieve desirable results under the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process.
42. To expedite the implementation of activities, programmes and initiatives proposed by ASEM partners and stakeholders into measurable actions.
43. To meet at the ISOM in 2018 to be hosted by Indonesia in close cooperation with the ASEM Education Secretariat to review the implementation of the ASEM education activities and to deliberate on the on-going and future initiatives of the ASEM Education Process.
44. Invited the ASEM partners to host the ASEM Education Secretariat for period 2021-2025. Following the tradition of rotating the ASEM Education Secretariat between Asia and Europe, Asian member states are highly encouraged to host the Secretariat.
45. To explore how the Policy Recommendations of the 5th ASEM Rectors' Conference and the 6th ASEM Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum could be integrated into the deliberations and work of the two pillars of the ASEM Education Process (ANNEX 2).

Ministers mandated the ASEM Education Secretariat:

46. To continue effective coordination and assist ASEM partners and stakeholders in implementing programmes, activities and initiatives under the four priorities of the ASEM Education Process.
47. To reorganise the stocktaking of the ASEM Education Process for each priority area towards process reporting and to improve effectiveness of (I)SOM according to the proposal elaborated by the ASEM Education Task Force. For this purpose, a workshop format for the first day of SOM meetings is proposed. Each workshop can compile concrete proposals for discussion in the SOM and be co-chaired by senior officials from Europe and Asia. The ministers believed that the biennial stocktaking report being further developed/optimized with a view providing a detailed and standardised collection and analysis of results without duplicating existing reports on OECD, UNESCO, EU level etc. can provide valuable input to the Senior Officials' Meetings.

Ministers thanked:

48. Indonesia for its commitment to host the ISOM in 2018.
49. Austria for its commitment to host the SOM1 of ASEMME7 in 2018.
50. Romania for its commitment to host SOM2 and the ASEMME7 in 2019.

51. The Republic of Korea for successfully hosting the SOM2 and the ASEMME6 as well as building a common goal for the ASEM Education Process for the next decade as documented in the Seoul Declaration.

ANNEX 1
Initiatives within the ASEM Education Process 2017-2019
A. Quality Assurance and Recognition
Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	The 6 th Working Group on Mobility of Higher Education and Ensuring Quality Assurance of Higher Education among ASEAN Plus Three Countries	Myanmar 2018	ASEAN Plus Three countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam)
2	The 6 th Working Group Meeting for Implementing the ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration	TBC	Austria, Belgium (French Community), Brunei Darussalam, China, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Philippines, Romania, the United Kingdom.
3	The 4 th Expert Group of Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanism and Learning Outcomes System	TBC	Australia, Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Brunei Darussalam, China, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Romania, Portugal, Thailand, UK, AUN, SEAMEO RIHED
4	EU-SHARE Project	2015-2018	European Commission, ASEAN Secretariat, British Council, DAAD, Nuffic, Campus France, ENQA, EUA

B. Engaging Business and Industry in Education
Pillar 1

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	The 5 th ASEM University	TBC	TBC

	Business Forum		
2	Peer Learning Activity on Employability and on the contribution of higher education to innovation	2018	Belgium (Flemish Community)
3	7 th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) In conjunction with the 7 th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7)	Romania 2019	ASEF, Ministry of National Education of Romania, National Council of Rectors (CNR), National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA)

Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	ASEM Work Placement Programme	Second phase 2018-2020	Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany, Indonesia and Thailand
2	Project "Students' teambuilding as an instrument of engaging business in education"	TBC	Russian Federation

C. Balanced Mobility

Pillar 1

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	3 rd ASEF Young Leaders Summit In conjunction with the 12 th ASEM Summit (ASEM12)	October 2018	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners
2	9 th Model ASEM In conjunction with the 14 th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM13)	2019 Madrid, Spain	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners
3	Model ASEM Spin-offs	2017 -2019 Singapore, Chengdu, China Dublin, Ireland (tbc) Other ASEM countries	ASEF, Sichuan University ASEM and local partners

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
4	14 th ASEF Classroom Network Conference on “Gender Equality: Reprogramming Technology Education”	November 2018 Finland	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners
5	15 th ASEF Classroom Network Conference	May/June 2019 Asia	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners

Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	ASEM Joint Curriculum Development Project in Tourism and Hospitality Education	Academic Year 2017-2018	Germany, Indonesia, Romania
2	ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme	2016-2020	The Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Sweden, Belgium (Flemish Community and French Community)
3	21 st ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU21) on “Youth with Disabilities: Shaping Inclusive ASEM Societies”	27 January – 10 February 2018 Melbourne, Australia and Christchurch, New Zealand	ASEF, Swinburne University of Technology, University of Canterbury
4	22 nd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU22) on “Green Economies: Creating Employment Opportunities for the Youth through Sustainable Tourism”	August/September 2018 Croatia, Slovenia	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners
5	23 rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU23)	2019 Asia	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners
6	4 th Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)-ASEM Summer Schools (AEI-ASS)	2018	AEI, University of Malaya, Malaysia
7	European Higher Education Fair 2018 (EHEF 2018)	Tokyo (19 May 2018), Osaka (20 May 2018)	Japan, the European Union

D. Lifelong Learning (LLL) Including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Pillar 1

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	Latvia's initiative to promote a dialogue on sharing best practices and future perspectives in TVET	April 2018 Riga, Latvia	Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, Indonesia, Latvia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation
2	ASEM Forum on Lifelong Learning	TBC	ASEM LLL Hub, ASEM partners
3	Conference on "Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Part 1: Teacher Professionalization & Training	2018 Asia	ASEF, ASEM and local partners
4	Seminar and Training: Lifelong Learning and SDGs: Adult Education	2018 Hanoi, Viet Nam	ASEF, Ministry of Education of Viet Nam, ASEM and local Partners
5	Seminar and Training: Lifelong Learning and SDGs: Vulnerable Groups	2018 Portugal	ASEF, ASEM LLL Hub
6	Forum and workshop: i. Cultivating decent work and entrepreneurship through lifelong learning. ii. Embedding education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. iii. Enhancing inter-sectoral linkages between academia, government and the private sector to implement lifelong learning.	Shanghai, China April 2018	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) through the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities East China Normal University of Shanghai

Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	ASEM Network of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)	Republic of Korea (TBC)	Indonesia, Malaysia, France, Belgium (Flemish Community), Republic of Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and DAAD
2	Update version of Global Inventory National Qualification Frameworks	ASEMME7 2019 Romania	UNESCO, ETF, Cedefop, UIL
3	Developing World Reference levels of learning outcomes		UNESCO
4	Research Project: Lifelong Learning and SDGs - Part 2: Teacher Professionalisation and Leadership	Throughout 2018 and early 2019 Several ASEM countries	ASEF, Teacher University of Zug, Switzerland, ASEM and local partners
5	ASEF Capacity Trainings	Throughout 2018 India, Poland, Japan, United Kingdom, Other ASEM countries	ASEF, ASEM and local Partners
6	Contributing with video tutorials and knowledge materials on Lifelong Learning for the ASEM MOOCs initiative (RoK)	2018 UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) Partners of the ASEM Network of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

ANNEX 2**Policy Recommendations developed by the Rectors and the Students during
the 5th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC5) and Students' Forum****ARC5 Students' Forum****Policy Recommendations for the****6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME6)****21-22 November 2017, Seoul, Republic of Korea**

The ARC5 Students' Forum on "Employability: Asia and Europe Prepare the New Generation" took place on 4-7 April 2016 at Charles University in Prague, the Czech Republic. On this occasion, 51 student representatives from all 51 ASEM partner countries developed Policy Recommendations on how governments, higher education institutions, businesses and the third sector can better cooperate to equip students with employability skills. The students convey the following recommendations for consideration of the ASEM Ministers for Education at the upcoming 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6) in 2017 in Korea. Four student representatives personally handed over these Policy Recommendations to the Vice-Minister of Education of the Republic of Korea, Professor LEE Young, in Prague, at the Closing Ceremony of the 5th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC5). The students also address these Recommendations to the stakeholders in ASEM partner countries.

The participants of the ARC5 Students' Forum reiterate the Recommendations of the ARC4 Students' Forum in 2015 in Hangzhou and have identified the following issues as priorities and commit themselves to promoting and finding ways of applying them. They call upon the ASEM members to engage them in working towards delivering tangible outcomes. ASEM students believe that both the new economy and its workforce need to be dynamic and adaptive to global phenomena, such as globalisation, technological development and innovation, service sector growth, sustainable development and inclusive change. Therefore, both tertiary education and lifelong learning should recognise formal, informal and non-formal learning and include transferable skills¹ in higher education curricula. ASEM Students encourage the cooperation and funding in the field of employability between governments, universities, and business and the third sector, particularly across three key areas. These are:

A) Developing a Continuous Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

To ensure employability and progress to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, there is a need for a multi-stakeholder approach. In particular, there is a need to identify best practices in the fields of employability, employment-friendly curricula and work-study balance. Towards this goal, ARC5 students call upon ASEM partners to:

1. Create a multi-stakeholder framework that encompasses an interactive platform for information and best practice sharing, as well as feedback mechanisms on matters of employability and lifelong learning.
2. Encourage a curriculum design that takes the demands of students, academia, business and the third sector into consideration.

B) Work Experience in the New Economy

Given the changes in the economic landscape, it is important to highlight the importance of work experience in the new economy. This is a two-fold approach that includes cross-sector approaches, as well as recognition by the higher education institutions.

To accommodate these approaches, ASEM partners can:

1. Work with higher education institutions to address the recognition of prior learning, extracurricular, exchange and work activities, including but not limited to summer schools, internships, research projects and volunteer work. A framework for the accreditation of curriculum-relevant activities should be taken into consideration.
2. Promote the inclusion of transferable skills in the curricula of higher education institutions.
3. Enable and direct universities to address the issue of work-study balance through the enactment of more work-friendly curricula, including flexible academic schedules.
4. Encourage the provision of internships and practical training for students in businesses and the public sector, in line with the 4th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4) Policy Recommendations.
5. Work with higher education institutions to ensure lifelong learning contributes to an increasing recognition of non-formal and informal learning in addition to formal education.

C) Mobility, Accessibility and Financing

There is a need to remove barriers to mobility and to increase accessibility for extracurricular activities, work experience to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In order ASEM partners should:

1. Establish a comprehensive platform to improve access to information on exchanges and career opportunities for students in order to address the limitations of prevailing stand-alone platforms. This should incorporate the collective expertise of governments, academia, businesses and the third sector.
2. Work with businesses and the third sector to improve and standardize working conditions, including but not limited to, the adoption of policies to ensure safe working environments, working hours, and where applicable - equitable remuneration.
3. Cooperate for the removal of barriers to international mobility of students and recent graduates and act upon the ARC4 Rectors' Policy Recommendations "*for study and internship purposes, including those linked to visa matters*". This includes improving the access to mobility for under-represented groups in both Asia and in Europe;
4. Address the inclusion of underrepresented groups in higher education, in particular gender and ethnic minorities, in order to increase their employability and provide better opportunities in the new economy.
5. Support free and/or affordable courses for international students on the topic of cultural awareness, local languages and provide necessary assistance where required.

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6. Act upon the ARC4 Rectors' Recommendation on financial and service roles, especially with regard to the allocation of funding for the enhancement of Asian-European mobility, and tackling employability through seed grant financing, academic and student-led educational projects or quality talent pools for professionals.

Higher education must continue to adapt to the changes in the new economy, as well as work towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. In light of this, ARC5 students propose that the agenda of the upcoming 6th ASEM Education Ministers Meeting encompasses employability, sustainability and life-long learning amongst its priorities. Higher education students are a key stakeholder in this discussion, and therefore we recommend student involvement in relevant activities and meetings of the ASEM Education Process.

5th ASEM Rectors' Conference
Policy Recommendations for the
6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME6)
21-22 November 2017, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Society and the economy are facing rapid changes driven by on-going digitalisation and globalisation, which create an increasing need for adaptability within the private, public, and third sectors. In order to prepare students for the future, these developments call for stronger relations and interactions between all sectors and higher education institutions. Possible solutions entail the deliberation of curricula towards a better quality of employability for students, opportunities for students to have work-study as well as work-life balance, and open platforms for dialogue between universities, businesses, third sector, government, and students. The different perspectives, concerns, needs, ideas, and innovations from all sectors are crucial towards preparing students to succeed in the new economy and contribute as responsible citizens to sustainable development.

To this aim, the participants of the 5th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC5) that took place on 6-8 April 2016 at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, propose recommendations for consideration by the ASEM partners. These recommendations were formed in several working groups on the topic of "Employability: Asia and Europe Prepare the New Generation," while taking note of the priorities voiced by students of the ARC5 Students' Forum and Policy Recommendations put forth at the 4th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4) in 2015 in Hangzhou, China.

An overarching need expressed by the ARC5 participants is the strengthening of existing, or development of new, platforms for interaction between Asia and Europe on the concerns, barriers, opportunities, and best practices related to employability and sustainable development. ASEM partners should encourage interactions involving actors from higher education institutes, industry, public sector, third sector, and students, and invite all stakeholders to engage in the ASEM policy recommendation implementation process.* The recommendations below are founded on the ability of all stakeholders to engage in mutual

exchange across the two regions and across sectors.

To encourage an “employment-friendly” curriculum, ASEM partners should:

1. Support and facilitate frameworks/models for universities to:
 - a. engage in mutual exchange with industry, NGO, public sector, students, alumni, and other relevant stakeholders on curriculum matters for employability;
 - b. raise awareness of employability and related transferrable and soft skills and competencies amongst faculty to encourage reflection and co-development of programs and curricula to address student employability (including attention to student-centred pedagogy)*;
 - c. develop or maintain and ensure equal opportunity is offered to all students to undertake internship and other work-integrated learning opportunities in ways that are relevant within various disciplines (e.g., engagement in joint research collaborations).
2. Decrease bureaucratic and financial barriers to student engagement in work-integrated learning opportunities;
3. Support and encourage universities to offer recognition to collaborating partners that provide work-integrated learning experiences for students.

To acknowledge the importance of work-study balance, extracurricular activities, and exchanges, ASEM partners should:

1. Facilitate the development of new models/frameworks that:
 - a. strengthen intercontinental mobility (e.g., by addressing barriers to obtaining visas, issues around labor laws, providing financial support when appropriate)*;
 - b. advocate and support flexibility of learning paths (e.g., internships, work-study, volunteer/community service, intercontinental exchange, cross-/interdisciplinary exchange, and other extracurricular activities);
 - c. build in equity considerations.
2. Support existing, and facilitate development of new, programs for intercontinental mobility, for example, the ASEM DUO Fellowship Program, activities by the Asia-Europe Foundation such as the ASEF Summer University, and others;
3. Create pathways to increase opportunities for collaboration between universities and other sectors (corporate, SME, public, NGO) (e.g., facilitate mutual awareness, incentivize partnerships)*;
4. Support and facilitate the development and/or maintenance of monitoring systems that involve feedback from students, university faculty, and respective (private, public, third) sector partners to assure quality and assess outcomes of work-integrated learning experiences;
5. Stimulate research on employability, for example, as initiated by the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub).

To better address the challenges of the New Economy, ASEM partners should:

1. Support education systems that offer pathways that create more connectivity, mobility, and a greater public recognition of the value of the full diversity of higher education institutes and across various disciplines, for example, by creating a good balance between social sciences and technology research.
2. To provide adequate funding and incentives for higher education policy initiatives and the creation of awareness for sustainable development goals including poverty alleviation.
3. Leverage on instruments offered by the New Economy to facilitate and support the mobility of students, academic staff and recent graduates between Asia and Europe, e.g., the usage of data-driven approaches to better match students to the labour market.
4. Support stakeholders in seizing the opportunities by the New Economy to better access knowledge and information platforms.

**Policy Recommendations developed by the Rectors and the Students during
the 6th ASEF Rectors' Conference (ARC6) and Students' Forum****ARC6 Students' Forum****Policy Recommendations for the****6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME6)****21-22 November 2017, Seoul, Republic of Korea**

The ARC6 Students' Forum on “*Future Universities and Graduates: Quality Education Beyond the Horizon*” took place on 9-12 October 2017 at Singapore Management University in the Republic of Singapore. On this occasion, 51 student representatives from all ASEM partner countries developed Policy Recommendations on how governments, higher education institutions, businesses and the third sector can prioritise interdisciplinary education and research, collectively promote lifelong learning and ensure inclusive access to quality education. Two student representatives personally handed over these Policy Recommendations to Mr Liviu Pop, Minister of National Education of Romania, and Dr Janil Puthuchery, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Education of Singapore at the Closing Ceremony of the 6th ASEF Rectors' Conference (ARC6) in Singapore. ARC6 students will also convey the following recommendations for consideration to the ASEM Ministers of Education during the upcoming 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6) on 21-22 November 2017 in Seoul, Korea and stakeholders in ASEM partner countries.

We, the participants, call upon the ASEM partners to take into account the future needs of society and learners in the fields of access to quality education, lifelong learning and interdisciplinarity in education and research. These areas are considered the key aspects in ensuring a sustainable, future-ready education system. The ASEM students are cognisant that the following policy recommendations will allow ASEM partners to leap beyond future horizons.

Access to Quality Education

Access to quality higher education is essential for shaping sustainable societies. Education empowers people and functions as a great social equaliser. As students, we call upon the ASEM partners to:

1. Implement a student-centred learning paradigm that involves students in curriculum design and assessment of courses and programmes.
2. Support the UNESCO initiative aiming to establish a global recognition convention for education.
3. Promote the use of open educational resources and offer support to make all research publications freely available.
4. Provide easily and readily accessible one-stop student guidance and career services before, during, and after studies.
5. Ensure that quality education is accessible to all, regardless of disadvantages or background.

- a) Use evidence-based policymaking to identify barriers and disadvantaged groups, and to effectively combat discrimination and inequality.
- b) Empower these groups by removing financial barriers, prioritising funding allocation, implementing subsidies and/or non-financial schemes such as technology training, mentoring networks, and vocational training.
6. Gather large-scale student, institutional, and governmental data concerning access, persistence, graduation, and transition to the labour market. Support and evaluate innovative and evidence-based policies that feed into future policy development.
7. Create safe and universally accessible educational environments. Enforce legislation that bans discrimination on all grounds.

Lifelong Learning

Recognising that lifelong learning is an ongoing process of creating opportunities and engaging in formal, informal and non-formal learning for all, for the purpose of personal and societal development, we urge for the following recommendations to be implemented:

1. Create a national strategy for Lifelong Learning to provide a single approach to all educational processes, connecting general, higher and adult education, as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), to streamline the implementation of policy programmes associated with education.
2. Increase funding for individuals, educators and institutions to participate in and/or provide quality lifelong learning programmes at any level and any form, through contributions from the business sector, NGOs, education institutions and governments.
3. Encourage education institutions to increase access and equity to lifelong learning opportunities by exploiting new technologies thus enabling open access and online learning
4. Ensure that curricula throughout the formal educational pathway comprise a programme which goes beyond the traditional subjects (e.g. mathematics and sciences) and demonstrates the value of, and contributes to, lifelong learning
5. Empower participation in adult education by defining recognition mechanisms for non-formal learning opportunities and provide support (e.g. financial incentives, mentorship) to both employed and unemployed individuals to increase job-readiness and performance, as well as encourage community building.
6. Implement minimum standards for employers for education leave as well as offer employers early adoption incentives (such as tax breaks and training subsidies) to ensure that employees remain future ready.

Interdisciplinarity in Education and Research

To enhance interdisciplinarity in higher education and research and to respond to current needs of academia and the workforce, we urge for the following recommendations to be implemented:

1. Encourage leaders in higher education and in research to prioritise interdisciplinarity by emphasising it in institutional strategy and budgetary allocations.
2. Develop mechanisms to support cross-collaboration and to encourage interdisciplinary courses and programs among academic stakeholders. This can be achieved by creating

collaborative spaces, including but not limited to online platforms and providing continuous training to educators and researchers to enhance interdisciplinarity.

3. Incentivise higher education institutions to establish knowledge transfer through cross-discipline mobility programmes, and to create interdisciplinary centres to foster interdisciplinary education, knowledge and research.
 4. Implement more interdisciplinary modules that address real-world issues by using phenomenon-based teaching methods. These modules and interdisciplinary research should be integrated into the academic curriculum.
 5. Encourage and support student involvement in the field of interdisciplinary education and research by strengthening channels of communication.
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ARC6 Rectors' Conference
Policy Recommendations for the
6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6)
21-22 November 2017, Seoul, Republic Korea

The 6th ASEM Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC6) took place at Singapore Management University from 9 to 13 October 2017. ARC6 brought together about 110 university leaders, higher education experts, business representatives, government officials and student leaders from 51 Asian and European countries, to connect, exchange good practices, and explore opportunities of cooperation for both regions. Areas of focus were: (a) Interdisciplinary research and education, (b) Lifelong learning, and (c) Access to Education. The Students' Forum took place from 9-12 October 2017, followed by the Rectors' Conference from 12-13 October 2017.

The ASEM Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC) was established in 2008 to support the deliberations and preparations of the biennial ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings. It is now recognised as the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEM MEs).

Future-ready universities and graduates – challenges for quality

Over the past decades, higher education systems in Asia and Europe have witnessed unprecedented growth and diversification of growing importance for individual learners, for governments and for society. As key drivers of national and regional economic and social development, as well as major contributors towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), national higher education systems are also subject to on-going discussions on continuous enhancement, related to today's and tomorrow's needs and challenges. Despite different environments and conditions, similar challenges and trends can be experienced by institutions in both Asia and Europe:

- Given the importance of higher education for society and the high investment, there is an on-going quest for the quality of education and research. Current measuring and

benchmarking, through methods and indicators used in national and international rankings and classifications, are subject to controversial debates. Overall, there is a concern that such measurements may actually stifle creativity and innovation, hence depriving higher education of one of its key assets. The importance of all academic disciplines and interdisciplinary skills also needs to be emphasized, against criteria targeting immediate research impact.

- Discussions on quality go in hand with discussions on quantity. Increased levels of higher education participation have become a strategy for economic and social development, and higher education attendance can be seen as a means of fostering or reshaping economies and the life of local or global communities. As a consequence, over the past decades, the higher education sector worldwide has experienced massification and a diversification of the student body. This has resulted in diversified needs and demands towards the education offered.
- Higher education is under pressure to respond to demographic developments and evolving societal demands, in terms of relevant skills and competences *vis-à-vis* the labour markets, needs for innovative knowledge and know-how, and educating graduates to take up professions, including those that do not exist yet.
- Higher education needs to educate students to become active citizens, in an era of post-factualism characterised by distrust towards, and disengagement from, established institutions.
- Given the on-going, relatively unpredictable and the fast transformation of social and economic environments, lifelong learning is a key priority. Universities have to ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills to learn and adapt to new tasks and situations, and also provide a learning offer for lifelong learners with their specific learning demands and socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Digital developments open new models for delivering LLL.
- The digital age is not only changing the ways people communicate or work, but also how education is delivered and the education goals themselves, as well as how research is being undertaken. Higher education institutions have to consider both: how to deploy digital technology in education and research, and how to prepare graduates for this changing environment.
- Methods and modes of knowledge production and dissemination are also in transformation, with a strong emphasis on open access to research results, interdisciplinarity and lifelong learning.

Universities have to respond to these, at times seemingly contradictory, demands. Discussing these trends among university representatives and students from both Asia and Europe at the 6th ASEM Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC6) undoubtedly facilitated mutual understanding and learning, and laid ground for strategic cooperation within, and between the two regions.

The Rectors' Conference resulted in the following ARC6 Policy Recommendations, which will be conveyed to the Ministers at their 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6) on 21-22 November 2017 in Seoul, Korea, for consideration and further action. The

policy recommendations are complemented by conference reports that captured working group discussions,

ARC6 conclusions and recommendations to ASEM ME6

1. Forward-looking institutional missions

ASEM Ministers are called upon to:

- Renew their commitment towards the missions of universities, which should be envisaged in a holistic way, that would allow education, research, and service to society to be interconnected, to the benefit of students, staff and societies, and would be in line with the principle of academic freedom;
- Acknowledge and support the diversity of institutional missions and profiles, by granting institutional autonomy, and by acknowledging the role that all types of institutions are called upon to fulfil in national societies and economies;
- Ensure sufficient and sustainable funding for institutions to fulfil their missions;
- Set up appropriate national and regional external quality assurance frameworks and implement qualification frameworks with an appropriate balance between accountability and autonomy of institutions;
- Support higher education institutions in developing their own internal quality assurance – according to the institutional missions, in their specific local, national, and regional contexts, and in line with the principle that the primary responsibility for quality and quality assurance lies with the institutions themselves.

2. Connecting learning and teaching, research and service to society in response to local and global challenges

ASEM Ministers are called upon to:

- Support and promote the role of higher education in educating future graduates as active and responsible citizens and creative and technically proficient graduates, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners;
- Set up or further develop national frameworks that enable development and implementation of a diversity of learning and teaching approaches;
- Set up or further develop national frameworks that valorise all aspects of academic work (research, teaching, and community service), and incentivise academic staff to invest time in teaching enhancement and building up relations with the wider community;
- Enable higher education institutions to develop knowledge creation and curriculum in a way that takes into account interdisciplinary approaches, the indispensable connection between research, education, and society demand;
- Support frameworks that encourage universities to involve students as co-creators of knowledge, actors in their own learning, and full members of the university community;

- Promote and stimulate collaboration and networking between universities and the wider society, as a way to foster connections between learning and teaching, research and community service;
- Support higher education institutions in their endeavours towards the implementation of the SDGs.

3. Lifelong learning as a key mission of future-ready universities

ASEM Ministers are called upon to:

- Develop and valorise inclusive national strategies and policies of lifelong learning, that emphasise the value of lifelong learning in all stages of life, and provide possibilities for both first-time and returning learners, and for a diversified student body;
- Recognise the contribution of higher education to lifelong learning, through mechanisms that are appropriate to the institutions' contexts;
- Promote and support national and transnational measures and initiatives that enable an appropriate recognition of prior learning, which is indispensable to develop lifelong learning provision. This could be done through embedding lifelong learning into national qualifications frameworks; addressing flexibility in education pathways (including barriers in accessing to, and progressing in learning paths); and recognising formal, non-formal and informal learning altogether as complementary and integral parts of lifelong learning. Such measures would also contribute to foster intra- and inter-regional mobility, and collaboration between institutions and national authorities, in a mutual trust perspective;
- Support the university staff's continued professional development;
- Include lifelong learning objectives in the missions and work of national quality assurance and funding agencies and authorities;

4. Towards a quality education for all

ASEM Ministers are called upon to:

- Acknowledge the contribution that higher education makes towards a more inclusive society, and incentivise institutions to develop strategic approaches to fulfil this role. This could be done, for instance, through financial incentives, valorising inclusiveness-related initiatives in the national external quality assurance framework, or developing national supportive schemes for fostering the participation of specific student populations; Encourage, facilitate, and support the implementation of an inclusive learning environment at institutions, so that the heterogeneity in students' prior attainments or condition does not transform into factors of disengagement.

Conclusive words

The participants of the 6th ASEM Rectors' Conference convey their recommendations for consideration to the ASEM Education Ministers and for their deliberations at the 6th ASEM Education Ministers Meeting on 21-22 November in Seoul, Korea.

The university leaders from Asia and Europe will continue to develop partnerships at inter-

institutional, local, national and international levels, in order to provide attractive and relevant curricula, which provide active learning outcomes, cross-cultural experiences in a mutual understanding perspective and through mobility, and opportunities to cross-fertilize good practices in teaching and research. Asian and European higher education institutions reaffirm their willingness to continue an active and sustainable dialogue process with the ASEM Ministers responsible for Education. They call upon ASEM Ministers to continue supporting and encouraging higher education cooperation initiatives within the ASEM Education Process, through the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and key education stakeholders like the European University Association (EUA), the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the European Students' Union (ESU) and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN).