Asia-Europe Meeting

the ASEM Education Secretariat

REPORT (DRAFT)

The 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7)

"Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals"

15-16 May 2019

Bucharest, Romania

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On the 15ᵗʰ and 16ᵗʰ of May 2019, the **7ᵗʰ ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME7)** *took place in the Palace of the Parliament, I.C. Bratianu Hall and was* **chaired by Mrs Ecaterina ANDRONESCU, Minister of National Education, Romania**. *On the 15ᵗʰ of May, the minister was assisted by Mr. Sorin Cîmpeanu (President of the National Council of Rectors and Member of the Romanian Parliament) and Mr. Remus Pricopie (Rector, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania) and on the 16ᵗʰ of May, the minister was assisted by Ms. Irina Kovacs (Secretary of State) and Mr. Adrian Curaj (Former Minister of National Education).*

The preparatory documents received by the participants were:

- *The Draft agenda*

- *The [Discussion Paper](#) that outlined the themes of the meeting under the overarching title ""Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals" and provided discussion questions as input for the presentations or speeches of the Ministers.*

- *Draft [Ministerial Statement](#)*

- *Draft [Chair's Conclusions](#) finalised during the SOM2 meeting on the 14ᵗʰ of May).*

*All meeting documents and presentations can be found on **[this webpage](#)**.*

This report has been developed by the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) based on the presentations and the records of the contributors. We would like to thank all participants of ASEMME7 for their valuable contributions to the meeting.

Wednesday, 15 May 2019

1. Welcome Speech

Mrs Ecaterina ANDRONESCU, Minister of National Education, Romania

In her speech, the Minister **welcomed** all participants of the 7th Asia-Europe Education Minister's Meeting (ASEMME7). She stressed the importance of the event as it took place during the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and highlights the importance of education in promoting people-to-people connectivity between the two continents.

Under the **overarching theme** of 'Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals', the Romanian Minister of National Education proposed to continue building on the major pillars of ASEM Education process, in order to **enhance ASEM** connectivity and sustainable development, as outlined also in the outcomes of the ASEM12 Summit held in October 2018 in Brussels, Belgium.

Furthermore, the Minister stressed the **importance of the ASEM Education Process to contribute to the Agenda 2030 and the SDG4** as all ASEM partner countries are facing similar challenges (demographic trends, technological developments and digitalisation, climate change,...) which need similar answers. Therefore, a common vision should be transposed into policies and into reality.

Considering the importance of enhancing the dialogue between ASEM partners and stakeholders, Romania has also hosted **the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum** in close cooperation with Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) from the 11th to the 14th of May 2019.

Finally, the Minister whished the participants a **fruitful meeting and an enjoyable stay** in Bucharest.

2. Introduction Speeches

Mr Tibor NAVRACSICS, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, European Commission

In his opening speech, the EU Commissioner confirmed that the ASEM Education Process is a **fundamental forum for the EU** for informal dialogue and the exchange of best practices. The priorities of the process are deeply intertwined with the overall developments in education in Europe. There is a **growing cooperation between Asia and Europe** in this field. The European Commission has promoted a large array of opportunities created by EU funding instruments such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020. He underlined that these direct contacts between people are crucial: they help to foster **cross-cultural dialogue** and to develop **cross-cultural awareness.**

Therefore, the Eu-Asia collaboration has been put at the heart of the EU's international strategy by the endorsement of the **EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy**. Known as "Connecting Europe and

Asia – Building blocks for an EU strategy," this policy document further underlines the importance of connectivity and mobility amongst students, academics, and researchers.

Regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, the commissioner underlined the importance of the **Education Agenda 2030** to provide a common language for identifying and working on priorities in education. The EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree programmes and capacity-building projects are directly contributing to the realisation of the SDG's.

The commissioner concluded with a **future perspective on the EC's global approach to education**. In May 2018, the EC has proposed doubling the budget of the future Erasmus programme after 2020. Furthermore, the future Erasmus programme will be even more international – the same applies to the next generation of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The EU is working hard to make sure that both programmes become more inclusive and forward-looking.

➘ **Link to Speech**

Assoc. Prof. Sophon NAPATHORN, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Education of Thailand

First, the Vice Minister **expressed his appreciation to the government of Romania** and the National Ministry of Education for hosting the ASEMME7 as well as the AES for the support provided. Thailand welcomed the theme 'connecting education…' to reinforce global commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education learning.

Thailand believes that *reciprocity is crucial* to achieve balanced mobility between Asia and Europe. The Vice-Minister proposed that ASEM partners organise **consultative meetings** to issues such as comparable quality assurance systems, regional credit transfer systems, transparency and accessibility of relevant information. Learning and sharing aspects of QA, NQF's and educational assessment is one of the approaches to pave the way to recognition of degrees and qualifications between countries in Asia and Europe and to increase the movement between both regions.

Thailand is currently **contributing in the ASEM Education Process** to the agenda on QA, Recognition and Engaging Business in education by active participation and coordination in the Expert Group on Credit Transfer Systems and Leaning Outcomes as well as on the ASEM Work Placement Programme (WPP) as a co-coordinator.

Thailand has put **high priority to become an inclusive society** and education became a key factor in eliminating exclusion, marginalisation, disparities and inequalities by increasing access and participation, and improving learning outcomes. Many activities under ASEM Education such as WPP are preparing professional skills of students. Thailand **encouraged more initiatives to link education to the world of work.**

The Vice-Minister concluded his speech by expressing the **continuous support of the Royal Thai Government for ASEM Education Process**. He announced that **Thailand will host the SOM2 and ASEMME8 in 2021** and will communicate on the date and venue soon. Everyone is welcome to Thailand to attend both meetings.

Mr Remus PRICOPIE, former Minister of National Education of Romania, Rector of the National University of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA) – ARC7 Policy Recommendations

- ↘ **Link to Recommendations of the Rectors.**
- ↘ **Link to Recommendations of the Students.**

SNSPA is the National Ministry of Education's partner for organising and hosting the 7th ASEF's Rectors Conference and Students Forum in close collaboration with ASEF.

The ARC7 was organised with a strong cooperation between SNSPA, the National Ministry of Education and ASEF but also with the European Commission and partners such as European University Association (EUA), International Association of Universities (IAU), Erasmus Student Network (ESN), ASEAN University Network (AUN), Erasmus Mundus Association and the Romanian National Council of Rectors.

Mr. Remus Pricopie presented the conclusions and policy recommendations developed by the Rectors during this conference during this session.

The participants of ASEMME7 agreed that universities have a responsibility to contribute to the implementation of SDG's. SDG's should therefore clearly be underlined in policy documents and strategies of the institutions. It is also the responsibility of the institutions to contribute to Lifelong Learning. The institutional framework has to be built to contribute to SDG's and LLL.

The six recommendations of ARC7 are as follow:

1. Orient the ASEM Education Process towards the Agenda 2030: this process is ongoing *(theme of ASEMME7, Sustainable development as transversal theme in AEP);*
2. Support higher education institutions to engage with the Agenda 2030;
3. Incentivise and support education and research collaboration among universities and with other societal actors, at national and international levels;
4. Develop research and knowledge-based policy agendas and informed decision-making in democratic societies;
5. Acknowledge and support the role of higher education in contributing to equity, inclusion and lifelong learning; and
6. Support higher education internationalisation in line with the goals of the Agenda 2030

Dr. Pricopie suggested to add a 7th recommendation in the field of recognition. In order to promote mobility, we need a very strong instrument with a list of accredited institutions and programmes at the global level ('modernised' World Higher Education Database) based on the work already done by UNESCO.

3. Plenary Session 1: 'Mobility for everyone: balanced and inclusive mobility in the digital era'

Ms. H.E. Mr Park Baeg Beom, Vice Minister of Education, Republic of Korea - Education policies in Korea for inclusion and innovation

The presentation of the Korean Vice Minister of Education focused on the Korean Education policies in 2019, the efforts of the Korean government for greater mobility and on the promotion of mobility with the use of ICT.

➤ **Link** to Presentation

H.E. Mr Ainun Na'im, Secretary General, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Republic of Indonesia

The presentation of the Secretary General of the MoRTHE of the Republic of Indonesia focused on the Indonesian Higher Education System in relation to mobility and recognition as well as the preparation of the Indonesian Higher Education System for Lifelong Learning (reskilling and upskilling).

➤ **Link** to Presentation

H.E. Mr Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment Malta

Malta is **one of the smallest countries of the world** with less than half a million inhabitants. Malta has some strengths like a **strong economic growth** of about 6% per year and a very strong job creation rate with 11.000 jobs created per year and workforce has to be imported. Mr. Bartolo reminds that he's Minister for education and Minister for employment. For him, being minister for Education and Employment means being aware about the limits of education and that education needs the support of other sectors of the society, such as financial and social economic policies. However, there is one public university and another technical university college in Malta. Tuition is free in public higher education and Malta also financially encourages students to enroll in higher education. Malta sees **education as a strategic investment** and not only as budget expenditure.

Malta recently increased public investment despite financial challenges. **Lifelong education becomes a central theme and the future** of the country may depend on Lifelong education. Malta also introduces free child care for those who are employed or those who are studying. The Minister is proud to say that 97% percent of the graduated students find a job immediately after their studies. However, there are a **lot of challenges** to face and education could be describes as a building that is never finished. Concerning **inclusion**, it is important to know what is meant by it. For instance, a strong student's voice is relevant for the life of institutions, as solutions rely on what students express and what they want. Maybe in the future **ASEM ME should consider the participation of students**. In fact, the definition of inclusion is very wide for students. The Minister quotes that international surveys on education are part of the international industrial complex, but they do not show how inclusive societies are. The Minister also points out the **complex relation between inclusive education and quality of education**. Another issue is the internationalisation of workforce, as 10 percent of the workforce in Malta comes from different parts of the world. For Malta, this is a **multicultural challenge** that should be in line within the framework of the declaration of human rights. Commitment to LLL should also be taken seriously. In this perspective, HEI should change more and work with other parts of the society to contribute to the economy. **HEI should be encouraged to interact with the society** and close to the reality in terms of organization and curricula. The higher education landscape is changing deeply as also **companies** have to become research organisations itself. Thus, the boundaries of learning organisations and employment organisations are less and less sharp. **Reality based learning needs** support work experience for students during their studies. Malta passed a work experience act to send students abroad and which are credited. HEI should be ready to engage in the real world and to engage in society.

Interventions and comments from Ministers and heads of delegations

- ❱ **Belgium (Flemish Community):** experiences from Flemish Community to stimulate inclusion in mobility. In the strategy for Inclusion, Flemish Community has set a **benchmark for inclusion** to have a higher participation of underrepresented groups in mobility: 33% of all mobile students in Flanders should come from these underrepresented groups (students with lower socio-economic background, disabled students and working students: data are available for these groups to link to financial system). Different **actions have been taken to reach this goal of 33%** (communication, extra scholarships, stimulate institutions, extra projects (E+),). Flanders wants to further explore within ASEM Education how other forms of mobility (virtual or blended mobility, short term mobility, ...) can serve the different needs of different groups of students. Flanders proposed to organise a **Peer Learning Activity on Inclusion through virtual and blended mobility** in spring 2020 as an initiative of the ASEM Education Process.

- ❱ **Cambodia:** mutual understanding between our societies should be promoted among our students. Apart from mobility of students, we also need to better cooperate related to credit transfer mechanisms and mutual recognition of degrees and programmes. Therefore,

comparable quality assurance systems are very important. Finally, Cambodia supports the proposal of Malta to make the university as a centre of problem solving. Knowledge is to have problem solving skills and to make universities responsive to the challenges of society. Therefore, universities should create platforms for young people to solve problems also in collaboration with business sector.

↘ **India**: The Higher Education System in India, with its 1000 universities, almost 50 000 higher education institutions and 40 million students has been inward-looking for a very long time. However, the system has embarked on changes in the last 3 years, transforming the HE-system tremendously. In the last years, there is also increased collaboration between Indian higher education institutions and foreign universities. A new international strategy has been launched to **promote India as a destination of knowledge**. India will also launch short-term courses with financial aid for students from across the globe which are unique for India such as Yoga, Religion, Philosophy. In this context, India **proposed active collaboration within ASEM**. India is pleased to announce **a grant of 1million euro/year for providing 100 students and 50 teachers the opportunity to participate in the ASEM DUO Fellowship programme** starting from the coming academic year. India also thanks the ASEM Education Secretariat and ASEM partners for accepting their offer **to host the next Intermediate Senior Officials meeting in April 2020** in Shimla, North-India. India thanks the AES for building up so much activity. ASEM Education is a multilateral platform that is very active with a good follow-up. These efforts are needed for building up a new world which is open, accepting and tolerant. Finally, India thanks Romania for hosting this meeting and making everyone so comfortable in this glorious building.

↘ **Italy**: Italy expressed its gratitude for the organisation of this meeting and apologised that the Minister could not lead the delegation. The Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research strongly believes that **mobility** has incredible affects not only on employability but also on **personal development, active citizenship** and the development of **transversal skills**. Therefore, Italy is investing a lot in mobility. At the same time, it is important to increase number of people doing an **internship** or work placement in order to develop both professional compete and intercultural learning. Major **benefits of Asia-Europe cooperation** could come from mobility to make education systems more inclusive, more Lifelong Learning based and more innovative. **Equity and Inclusion** should be an important transversal in ASEM Education. ASEM Education should also make use of digital platforms instead of physical mobility only. **Digitalisation** could play an **important role in the enhancement of equal opportunities in education.**

↘ **EQAR:** all participants know that there is still a huge potential for mobility, but recognition is still an issue that needs to be tackled. EQAR has a **new information tool** on all accredited universities and programs in the Bologna area, with the support of the EC, which could **help in recognition and in finding information** (**DEQAR**: Database of External Quality Assurance Results https://www.deqar.eu/), more background info on the ASEM Education Website.

↘ **Erasmus Student Network (ESN):** ESN has been working for 30 years now to improve mobility and its quality by **increasing impact** in society. With 13 000 volunteers (students) ESN is present in every European country and ends op supporting 350 000 students. ESN

connects them with each other and with local students and communities (by activities on active citizenship and connecting to local communities for example).

ESN wants to **extent its experience and activities to Asia** now. ESN has launched a **pilot project** (cf. Chair's Conclusions) as a first ASEM Education project launched by students. With this project, ESN wishes to empower local Asian Students to set up their own local organisations and empower them, in ASEAN countries. One event has been organised in Singapore (with support of ASEF and local universities). ESN calls upon the ministers to allow their own students to participate and to be empowered by ESN and invites the participants to approach ESN if they are interested to participate.

- ⬊ **ASEF**: ASEF thanks the Romanian host for connecting the ARC7 and the ASEMME7 making ARC7 the official dialogue partner and official side event. ASEF also welcomes the idea to **invite students to the ASEMME** (cf. ASEM Summit and Meetings of Foreign Affairs Ministers) and hopes that this idea can be further elaborated with the host of ASEMME8 in Thailand.

- ⬊ **International Association of Universities (IAU):** IAU is pleased that they are invited to the ASEMME7 as they have been involved in the ASEF Student Forum and Rectors Conference (ARC7). IAU supports the idea to **bring together the ministers, rectors and students**. IAU does not agree with the idea that universities are maybe still too remote from reality. There is much evidence on international fora that HE's role in society is being widely discussed, and that there is progress in this field. There is **full awareness within HE of the need to address societal demands and global goals**. (cf. outcomes and conclusions of ARC7)

- ⬊ **Malaysia:** Malaysia expressed their appreciation to the Romanian government and to the AES for hosting the ASEMME7 and focused on the perspective of Malaysia on balanced and inclusive Mobility. It is very important to improve mutual recognition of HE qualifications between Asia and Europe to attract more students to study in Asia. During ASEMME4 in Kuala Lumpur (2013), the Minister agreed with the **Asia Europe Institute (AEI)** proposal to develop a strategy to overcome the imbalance between Asia and Europe. The AEI has organised **AEI Summer Schools Programme** in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and ASEM Partners and International Organisations. The Summer Schools provide a platform for intercultural understanding and social community development. This year the 5th Summer School will be held in Malaysia and Ireland. Malaysia calls upon the ministers to promote the participation of students and researchers in the AEI Summer Schools.

  The 4th Industrial Revolution will have an impact on the movement of students and lecturers**.** In line with this, Malaysia supports the ASEM MOOCs Initiative. Malaysian HE institutions have started to develop MOOCs towards balanced and inclusive mobility in the digital era. Malaysia welcomes the collaboration in ASEM regarding MOOCs towards mutual understanding and regional cooperation.

- ⬊ **United Kingdom:** UK thanks the ASEM Education Secretariat and the Romanian government for this gathering and for hosting us. UK wants to react on the presentation of the Minister of Malta, Mr. Bartolo regarding an apprenticeships program of the UK including **financial support for wages during apprenticeships**, also in Higher Education (launch of degree apprenticeships). The result is that almost every university now offers

degree apprenticeships programs and that big business-university partnerships have been developed embedded within the needs of the developments within the economy. The government is only facilitator in this process.

➘ **Bangladesh:** Thanked the host for the excellent arrangements. Bangladesh's student population is 37 million (4.2 million are university students). HE Institutions in Bangladesh are open to foreign students mostly from South Asia, Middle East and Africa. Bangladesh students with disadvantaged social economic background receive **scholarships to study abroad**. Bangladesh emphasises on STEM, on more engagement between universities and business, on soft skills, language skills, **enhancing the quality of education at all levels including lifelong learning and TVET**. Therefore, Bangladesh is happy to associate in the ASEM Education Process.

➘ **Belgium (French Community):** the French Community thanks the host and the AES for the organisation. The French community supports the presentation of the Korean Minister and expresses their support the **ASEM DUO programme**. The French community participates in this programme that supports balanced mobility and their stakeholders provided positive feedback on this programme. It would be good if more institutions and partners would support the ASEM DUO Programme. The French Community recently changed the name of the department, which is now 'Department of Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Scientific Research'. **Lifelong Learning** is definitely the future.

➘ **European Commission:** EC shared with the participants information on the following initiatives. **Inclusion in the EC mobility programmes i**s also one of the main preoccupations, also in the Erasmus Programme. Currently students with disadvantaged background are still underrepresented in these mobility programmes. EC has launched a **series of initiatives to tackle this problem**, in view of the new Erasmus programme from 2021 such as:

- o **External study** by the end of the year: to map barriers to mobility, what are obstacles for students with disadvantaged background to feed into the new Erasmus programme;
- o **Development of inclusion strategies**:
  - Increase funding opportunities for students with disadvantaged background
  - possibility of shorter mobility periods
  - blended mobility (mix of virtual and physical)
  - awareness raising and sharing good practices
    - platforms such as E-Twinning
    - work of students and alumni (ambassadors)

Regarding Balanced mobility, the SHARE-Project in the ASEAN area should be broader promoted which is based on the Bologna principles.

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4. Chair's Conclusions: presentation

Final draft of the Conclusions of the Chair was presented by the ASEM Education Secretariat with a focus on the changes discussed during the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting the day before.

- §25 – 'China' and 'Ireland' **added**
- §26 – **Added**: 'The Ministers welcomed the interest of Austria and India to join the Expert Group'
- §30 – **Added**: 'The Ministers welcomed the interest of India and Netherland to participate in the ASEM WPP.'
- §32 – **Deleted**: 'invited expressions of interest from ASEM Partners to organise the 5th ASEM University Business Forum'. No partners have shown interest.
- §33 – 'Encouraged the organisation of a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on Inclusion through virtual and blended mobility by Belgium (Flemish Community) in spring 2020'. **Moved**: to priority theme 'Balanced Mobility'
- §36 – **added** 'and regional seminar's, **added**: 'Students and alumni associations also play a crucial role in promoting mobility programmes and contributing to the modernisation of higher **education systems'**
- §41 – **added** Welcomed the Russian Federation' STIpot (stipot.com) initiative establishing the ASEM educating process information framework for students and young scientists and digitalization of academic mobility.
- §42 - **Added**: 'The Ministers appreciated the willingness of the Russian Federation to continue the initiative and interest of India to join the seminar'.
- §51 – **Added:** 'The Ministers welcomed the interest of India to join the network.'
- §54 – **Reformulated**: 'To establish a permanent Standing Working Group with Terms of Reference (ToR) to support the ASEM Education Secretariat in the strategic work of the ASEM Education Process (development of strategy paper and action plan including the monitoring of the action plan). The Ministers believed that this permanent Standing Working Group can assist the ASEM Education Secretariat in preserving coherence and a result-oriented approach within the ASEM Education Process. The Ministers also encouraged the Standing Working Group to provide the support needed to the ASEM Education Secretariat to meet comprehensive challenges in a long-term perspective in order to avoid loss of expertise and to ensure sustainability and continuity. All ASEM partners and stakeholders will be invited to become a member of this SWG.'
- §55 – **Added**: 'To establish an expert group on the transversal topic on digitalisation in order to foster dialogue and synergies on activities in the field of digital learning and teaching. The Ministers thank Germany for the initiative. '
- §57 – **Reformulation**: 'To establish an expert group on the transversal topic on digitalisation in order to foster dialogue and synergies on activities in the field of digital learning and teaching. The Ministers thank Germany for the initiative.'

- §65 – **Added**: To establish an expert group on the transversal topic on digitalisation in order to foster dialogue and synergies on activities in the field of digital learning and teaching. The Ministers thank Germany for the initiative.
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- §67 – **Added**: 'To establish an expert group on the transversal topic on digitalisation in order to foster dialogue and synergies on activities in the field of digital learning and teaching. The Ministers thank Germany for the initiative.

Thursday, 16 May 2019

5. Parallel sessions

5.1. Working meeting for ministers/ vice-ministers/ state secretaries/ deputy state secretaries/ European Commission

Informal discussion on the Bucharest Ministerial Statement: The ministers and representatives of Education ministries adopt the **Bucharest Ministerial Statement** which can be found **here**.

Subsequently, the work of the ASEM Connectivity Portal has been presented by Mr. William Becker, European Commission - Joint Research Centre. The presentation discusses how to measure connectivity and sustainability in the ASEM context.

Furthermore, the ASEM Connectivity Portal shares its conference website, which might attract researchers from many different ASEM countries, and use it as a platform to spur further research in connectivity and sustainability in the ASEM context.

5.2. Panel Discussion 'Digitalisation and Sustainable Development as Transversal Themes in the AEP: from idea to practice'

↘ Please find the detailed report of this discussion **here**.

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Alexandra Angress (Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences)

Panellists:

↘ **Martin Schifferings** (Head of Section Erasmus+ Policy Support, DAAD German Academic Exchange Service)
↘ **Seamus O'Tuama** (Director ACE, University College Cork, New host ASEM LLL HUB)
↘ **Prof. Dr. Houngphet Chanthavong** (Vice President, National University of Laos)
↘ **Dr. Chantavit Sujatanond** (Centre Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED)):
↘ **Amir Piric,** Chief Programme Coordinator, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

The ASEM Education Process has developed a lot of strengths and initiatives, within the four priority areas. However, global challenges and changes forced us to rethink the thematic focus of the ASEM Education Process. Therefore, the ASEMME7 has brought in 'Digitalisation' and 'Sustainable Development' as transversal themes within the ASEM Education Process. During the session, the moderator focussed on the opportunities that **Digitalisation could bring to realise SDG4 on 'Lifelong Learning for all'** with a focus on inclusion. It was also analysed if and how digitalisation can contribute to **more balanced and inclusive mobility.**

During this panel discussion, experts with experience at policy and practice level have brought in their expertise and knowledge regarding these themes.

The detailed report of the panellist's contribution and the feedback and comments of the partners and stakeholders can be found **here.**

The conclusions of the panel discussion are summarised as following:

- Digitalisation can **improve the quality of mobility and increase its impact**, but it should not be considered as the solution to reach out to 'other' (more disadvantaged) target groups. Digitalisation should rather be considered as a tool to support and prepare/follow-up physical mobility;

- Many ASEM partner countries have good experiences in virtual mobility: the AEP provides opportunities **to learn and exchange** related to virtual mobility. Therefore, Germany will set up **an expert group on Digitalisation;**

- Open Educational Resources and E-learning provide many opportunities to **increase accessibility to HE and Lifelong Learning.** A big issue that was acknowledged during the panel discussion was the issue of **Recognition** of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through E-learning and **quality frameworks** of E-learning. There is still a huge potential to learn from each other and to find solutions to these issues by dialogue.

- Digitalisation and digital learning **need a strategic framework and the debate** needs to take place at all levels from practice to policy with a strong focus on dialogue between these levels: regarding recognition and quality (including the linkages with qualification frameworks) but also in regard to the changing role of teachers and changed teaching methodologies, to future skills and competences, etc.

- Digitalisation was considered as a catalyst for change or transformation in education but **virtual learning can never replace the physical space.**

- The **Concept of Learning Cities** is seen as a good framework or model to integrate lifelong learning at different levels of society and community to involve everyone. The Learning City-model provides opportunities to contribute to different SDG's not only SDG4 as Education and Learning are essential in most SDG's.

6. Plenary Session II: 'Towards the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: How can the ASEM Education Process contribute?'

H.E Dr. philol. Ilga Suplinska, Minister of Education and Science, Latvia

Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. Ms. Ilga Šuplinska stressed the importance of **closer collaboration between two processes – the ASEM Education Process and the Agenda 2030** for Sustainable Development. In the last decade, the ASEM Education Process has proved its role as a unique framework for facilitating and strengthening collaboration between the two regions - Europe and Asia, as a platform for informal dialogue, tangible cooperation and opportunities for synergies and establishing strong networks. It is important to promote its multipurpose, keeping it open to various topics and interacting with other education organisations, including UNESCO. **Latvia has been an active member** of the ASEM Education Process from the beginning, also has the host of the ASEMME5. The most recent event organised by Latvia was the TVET Seminar in April 2018.

It is important to bring the ASEM Education Process in the future, even closer to the Global Policy Agenda. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development has set comprehensive and explicit goals in various areas, calling for action by all countries to make the better future for our planet and society. **Comprehensive, holistic, and interdisciplinary vision of education and necessity and appreciation of multi-stakeholder involvement is what unites ASEM Education Process and the Agenda 2030**: through partnerships, inter-cultural dialogue and cooperation our goals can be achieved. We can reinforce each other in facing challenges of the future, such as demographic change, ICT and innovations, increased skills demand on labour market and climate change. The Minister concluded her speech with the contributions that Latvia is undertaking towards the realisation of SDG's. The national policy planning and implementation of Latvia is very explicitly linked to SDG's. The implementation of SDG4 is carried out through different educational strategies and instruments involving various stakeholders. The paradigm of Education for Sustainable Development is reflected in the Latvian competence-based curriculum.

The implementation of SDG's is a comprehensive process, which requires commitment from all partners involved. **The ASEM Education Process is a well-established platform that can make a significant contribution and have a positive impact on the implementation of SDG's.** The Minister believes that many of the ASEM Education initiatives are already contributing to SDG's for the benefit of both regions. ASEM Education cooperation can do even more as it has been shown by the recent Rectors Conference and Students Forum (HE Taking Action towards SDG's). In collaboration with stakeholders we can transform policy recommendations into policy results.

H.E. Mrs. Natalia Bocharova, Vice-Minister of Science and Higher Education, the Russian Federation

Mrs. Natalia Bocharova, Vice-Minister of Science and Higher Education provided a presentation on how the Russian Federation is contributing to the Agenda 2030. Globalization and the recent boost of digitalisation of learning creates new opportunities for regional education programmes. Russia has ambitions to increase the number of international students from 200 000 to 425 000 (2024), of which 77% are from Asia. Furthermore, the Vice-Minister provides an overview of the development of international conventions on Recognition. Finally, the participants got a clear overview on the challenges that the Russian Education Policy as facing but also on the process of tackling these challenges in regard to inclusion.

❋ **Link** to Presentation

H.E. Mr Nadhim Zahawi, Minister, Department for Education, United Kingdom - Towards the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: How can the ASEM Education Process contribute?

H.E. Mr Nadhim Zahawi, Minister, Department for Education, United Kingdom provided in his speech an overview of how the education system in the UK contributes to the realisation of the SDG's, in all educational levels from pre-school over compulsory school education to technical, vocational and higher education in all educational levels, reforms are ongoing through which the thread of inclusivity is running as a fundament of SDG4. Finally, Mr. Zahawi provides an overview of the running initiatives in the field of internationalisation and international cooperation, specifically in regard to Asia.

❋ **Link** to the Speech

H.E. Mr Undersecretary Revsee Escobedo, Vice Minister, Department of Education, the Philippines.

After the introduction of the educational system in the Philippines, the Vice-Minister provides detailed insights on how the education system in Philippines is contributing to SDG4. Furthermore, the Vice-Minister provides a clear overview on specific reform programmes and initiatives of the Philippines under the four ASEM Education Priority Areas.

❋ **Link** to Presentation

Interventions and comments from Ministers and heads of delegations

- **Spain**: On behalf of the Ministry of education and vocation training, Ms. Isabel Celaá, and the Ministry of science, innovation and universities, Mr. Pedro Duque, the Spanish delegation thanks the Romanian Ministry of National Education for the excellent organisation of this ASEM meeting which provides the opportunity to increase the mutual advertise and to learn about other countries' experiences. Spain **welcomes the suggestion to introduce sustainable development as a transversal theme** within the four priority areas in the ASEM education process. In relation with Discussion Question 6 of the Discussion paper, Spain believes that it is worth emphasising target point 4.4 of SDGs. Any step taken in the direction with strengthening TVET system would be a mayor advance. There is also a general consensus on the need to increase mobility as a way of contributing to the development of professional and soft skills, but also as a way of enhancing regional development. Thus, Spain would like work on the question on how the **TVET mobility programmes could be increased, especially on disadvantaged regions and on vulnerable groups**. The higher level of TVET System contribute best to the achievement of inclusiveness and equity, allowing disadvantaged students to get quality jobs.

- **Singapore**: On behalf of Singapore's Ministry of Education and his Minister Mr. Ong Ye Kung, the delegation would like to thank the Romanian Government and the AES for hosting the successful meeting. For Singapore, **education should stay an uplifting force and a lifelong enabler for all students** to progress regardless of their start point or background. Singapore is doing this by emphasising 21st century competencies, where opportunities are available to all, as well as multiple pathways for learners of different abilities. It is necessary to support better those from disadvantages backgrounds and upgrade quality, accessibility and affordability of early childhood education. Beyond formal that education, Singapore also want to create more avenues for people with upgraded skills so that they can access opportunities at all stages of life. There is national movement called "**skill future"** which supports Singapore's overall industry transformation for their future economy. This is seen as a whole society effort which requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Other recent developments included **digital work place programme** as well as a **national centre for workplace learning**. Singapore reaffirms its commitment to the ASEM Education Process and its collective vision of education that is inclusive and uplifting, that connects people and supports learning throughout life.

- **Malaysia:** Malaysia shares some recent efforts in line with SDG 4, especially standing accessed education for all. In Malaysia, 36,7 % of the preschool education is actually provided by the private sector. In order to host these coming from the B40 group (*ed. note : B40 refers to the 40% of households with the lowest monthly income*), Malaysia allocates a budget of 3.6 billion USD this year to subsidise **preschool enrolment for the B40 group.** Also starting from this year, Malaysia have started a "zero reject" policy, where students and children without school documents can now enrol into government schools. Malaysia created a special pathway for children and students from the B40 group. Malaysia is also **increasing compulsory education** from 6 years to 11 years. In

2018, the country amended its University and university college act in order to envolve students in politics whether inside or outside campus. Malaysia also sees the **potential of the LLL network between Asia and Europe** and expanding by attracting new members and partners including from business and industry. The importance of LLL could also be promoted as part of the SDG 4 across the ASEM Region. Malaysia is keen to be involved in the efforts **to intensify industry involvement** and improve coordination between ASEM countries.

➤ **Laos:** Laos expresses its sincere appreciations to the government of Romania and the Ministry of National Education for the warm welcome and the generous hospitality. During this meeting, Lao delegation have learned a lot from other countries concerning connectivity, inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of SDG. Laos would like to share some information on its education activities: in order to realise the 2030 agenda and to achieve SDG's, **Laos has integrated the education for all goals into their national education plans** and have successfully achieved universal access and gender parity in primary education and significant improvements in secondary education and TVET. To address imbalanced mobility and social imbalance, the Lao government has provided scholarships to **promote equal access to tertiary education** such as students from poor families, ethnic minorities, females and those living in poorest areas. However, it is still **difficult to get these groups in tertiary education**. Therefore, Laos needs to work closely with the EU Commission and the European universities for additional cooperation. For the moment, Lao students are studying in 27 countries, mainly in Asia in very few in Europe. Regarding ASEM Education Process **priority area C (balanced mobility), there should be some initiatives on disadvantaged students**, e.g. having some quota for disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities in the less advanced countries.

➤ **Finland:** Finland joins the other delegations and warmly thanks Romania for hosting and organizing ASEM ME7. Finland highly appreciate the ASEM Education Process (AEP) as a unique platform for dialogue and information exchange on themes of common interest between Europe and Asia. **Finland welcomes Sustainable Development and Digitalisation as transversal themes in the AEP**. In Finland, the key **approach in promoting sustainable development** has always been a **wide cooperation between various stakeholders of the society.** Networking and cooperation of experts and practitioners across different educational sectors have been a way of promoting sustainable development within the AEP. This will also create new opportunities for mobility which is still one of the key priorities of the AEP.

➤ **European Union:** SDG's has also become a priority for the EU which fully endorsed the agenda committed to SDG's. EU reminds **paper on "A Sustainable Europe by 2030"** where education and culture play a mayor role. Even though there is no specific reference to SDG's in Erasmus+ Programs, the activities the EU funds directly contribute to the implementation of the SDG's. Furthermore, the approach to SDG is more comprehensive in particular when it comes to education. The EU programmes move more than 40.000 students and staff in many different areas thanks to a bottom up approach. Looking at the cooperation programs, the EU tackles all areas from SDG like energy efficiency,

gender studies, urban development, increasing female participation or employability. The **work of the Alumni associations** should also be mentioned as they include SDG in their priorities. In many projects of the European Institute of Technologies for instance, ASEM Partners are participating.

↘ **China:** China has a student body of 260 million students and many of them are from poor families and remote areas. **Ensuring equal access is a real challenge** and task that China has been addressing for the last few years. Many of measures and policies have been taken in the latest national paper "Modernisation of Education towards 2035". China also tries to provide a **free secondary vocational education** to students from rural areas. In terms of **HE access**, China started special national program which recruited 100.000 students from rural and poor areas to universities and colleges in 2017. For future discussions, China suggests **sharing more on vocational education policies and dialogues** which colleagues from UK, Spain and Singapore also mentioned. China also encourage **discussions on how to equip teachers especially in terms of digitalization**. China takes the opportunity to convey its Minister's apologies for not being able to attend this meeting for domestic engagements and thanks the Romanian host for this event.

↘ **Cambodia:** Cambodia expresses its deep gratitude to Romania for its hospitality and the arrangement for the meeting. For Cambodia, the ASEM Education Process (AEP) could be a platform where partners can learn from each other, reshape and re-strategize their education policies. The AEP can contribute to the SDG each time education programs are reviewed. **Competency based curriculum** can be adopted, making the business and private sector working closer to ensure that technical training meets the needs of the private sector. **Platforms for digital education** must be created, e.g. online platform for LLL. Cambodia is reforming teacher education to how to become a learner. In pre-school education, Cambodia also focusses on non-cognitive skills like play-learning. In primary school, the focus lays more on reading and mathematics. Cambodia is working on **creating new digital schools** and on building a new system. Regarding HE, Cambodia must concentrate on upgrading few universities.

↘ **Brunei-Darussalam** is thanking the Romania for organising the meeting. The Minister of Education just have launched a **new strategic program** that covers all level of education under the auspices of globalisation and the fourth industrial revolution. The strategic plan focusses on **upgrading teachers and institutional management**. Regarding the curricula, the focus is on 21st century skills. The third point of the strategic plan focusses on the **stakeholder relationship**, especially with parents, industries and NGO's. All these strategies are in line with the commitment to SDG 4. Regarding on what could be discussed in the ASEM Education Process in the future, Brunei-Darussalam joins the **comments on technical and vocational education, especially on mobility**. This is crucial for countries who are not at the cutting edge of technology.

↘ **Belgium (French Community):** Regarding the agenda 2030, the French Community supports the idea of working closely with directors and students. **SDG's should be integrated in Higher Education at the institutional level.** The French Community always refers to two basic principals in all Higher Education policies: academic freedom

and institutional autonomy. Those two principals are essential to reach SDG. Finally, the French Community thanks the Romanian host to for the perfect welcome.

✎ **Bangladesh:** While net student enrolment on primary level is 97.7%, the enrolment at the secondary level is 67 % in Bangladesh. At both levels, girls outnumber boys. The inclusive education is gaining ground, **all education indicators confirm improvement**. Bangladesh believes that SDG 4 is the centre of all SDG's. Hence, **Bangladesh enabled the environment for implementing SDG's.** Key actions are identified and implemented by a SDG implementing committee. An action plan supports online SDG, data depositary is prepared and data gaps against SDG targets have been identified. A **sector wide approach for promoting LLL in non-formal education** is on the agenda: Enhanced enrolment of TVET from less than 1% ten years ago to nearly 16% nowadays and moving to 20 % by 2021. Digital programs are also in progress, preparing students for the 4th industrial revolution and in research in innovation.

✎ **Austria:** Austria supports the SDG and especially its implementation in higher education. The Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Research and the Alliance for sustainable universities have initiated in 2017 the project "**Uninet – universities and sustainable development goals".** This project aims the strengthening, cooperation and networking between universities to **integrate sustainable development as framed by the SDG's into research, education and university management**. In a first step, an SDG mapping was done. Projects related to SDG's were identified. At present, 16 universities take part of the Uninet and cover almost all SDG's. This project with its simple ratio could become a model for SDG networks between ASIA and Europe.

✎ **Vietnam:** Vietnam apologises for the absence of its minister who could not attend the meeting and thanks Romania for hosting this important event. The success of the student's forum shows that student mobility is really important, helping to illustrate different opinions and perspectives from students. The presentation of Mr. Becker from the sustainable connectivity portal this morning shows that **staff mobility and research is also a key element**. Vietnam considers that innovation is one of the most important issues. Since 2013, HEI in Vietnam try to improve its international profile. With more than 170.000 students studying abroad, **Vietnam is a significant sender country** in the international student flow. Furthermore, Vietnam is sending lecturers abroad to increase the number of PhD graduates at a foreign university from 7 % up to 10% between 2020 to 2030. Vietnam is looking forward to the collaboration of ASEM countries in receiving lecturers from Vietnam and in forming research teams.

✎ **Indonesia:** Indonesia within ASEAN has been doing an **ASEAN qualification framework.** This will support the implementation of the SDG concepts such as **LLL or credit transfer**. Indonesia would like to remind that it has been the host country of the AES – which is a challenging but enjoyable experience – and Indonesia **hopes that a country hosting the AES will be found**. Finally, Indonesia welcomes the initiative to include **sustainable development and digitalization as transversal themes.**

✎ **Chair:** Mr Remus PRICOPIE is convinced that this Ministers' meeting will leave a lasting impression to all attendees. The chair reminds the period when Romania hosted the Bologna Follow-up Secretariat from July 2010 to June 2012. At that time, it has been

decided that the Bologna Process should be more inclusive, inviting also researchers to the Bologna process. Since, researchers from over 40 countries participate by contributing their ideas. The experience in the Bologna process could inspire other meetings around the world. The number of downloads of the meetings' documents shows the relevance of the work and that data is shared and comparative studies are used. Regarding the upcoming ASEM events, it might be **useful to include the voice of science and innovation by putting it high on the agenda**. The Chair thanks the audience for its attention.

7. Adoption of the Chair's Conclusions and presentation of the Bucharest Ministerial Statement

The Chair presents the final draft of the Chair's Conclusions with one amendment.

➤ § 35 – **Added**: 'The Ministers welcomed the announcement of commitment by India to join the ASEM-DUO as a contributing member for 5 years from 2020 to 2024. India will support exchanges of 100 pairs of students and 50 pairs of professors each year, and the total amount of contribution each year will be 1,200,000 Euros. The ASEM-DUO Secretariat assures full cooperation with India so that DUO-India will be launched as scheduled from the year 2020.'

The Chair congratulates India for its strong commitment to ASEM-DUO. **The Chair's Conclusions are adopted at unanimity including the amendment on § 35.**

The Chair announce that the **'Bucharest Ministerial Statement' has been adopted by Ministers and heads of delegation during the working meeting**. The Chair thanks the delegations for their kind support and their contributions.

8. Closing remarks

➤ The Chair expresses gratitude to Ministers, delegations and colleagues for joining the ASEM ME7 in Bucharest to discuss the future of the educational cooperation in ASEM. During two days, participants discussed good practices, visions, relevant policy actions, available instruments and the needed measures to ensure balanced and inclusive mobilities in the digital era. The contribution of the AEP to sustainable development. The adoption of the Chair's conclusions and the Bucharest Ministerial Statement represents a **significant step towards our vision of cooperation for 2030**. The Chair also thanks the participants of ARC7 and students' forum for their policy recommendations.

➤ The AES expresses its congratulation, sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Ministry of National Education and especially to the ASEM ME7 team for their hard work and the impressive practical organisation of ASEM ME7. The AES would also like to thank them for their very pleasant, constructive and effective cooperation to make ASEM ME7 such a success.

➤ The Chair closes the Meeting by thanking the audience and wishing success to India, Germany and Thailand for organising the next ASEM Education meetings.