

7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7)

15-16 May 2019

Bucharest, Romania

“Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Conclusions by the Chair

1. The 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7) was held in Bucharest, Romania, on 15-16 May 2019 and brought together 165 participants from 39 ASEM partners and 11 stakeholders.
2. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Ecaterina Andronescu, Minister of National Education of Romania. The Romanian authorities made an opening and congratulatory speech to welcome all delegates and participants to the ASEM ME7.

In their meeting, the Ministers:

3. Thanked Romania and its Ministry of National Education for their warm hospitality and successful organisation of the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) held on the 14th of May 2019 and ASEM ME7.
4. Conveyed their sincere appreciation to Romania for the initiative to foster meaningful close collaboration among the ASEM partners in the framework of the ASEM Education Process which was initiated in 2008 in Berlin and continued in Hanoi (2009), Copenhagen (2011), Kuala Lumpur (2013), Riga (2015) and Seoul (2017).
5. Welcomed the theme of the meeting ***“Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals”*** which emphasizes the continuity of the ASEM Education Process and its link to the overarching ASEM Process. The main aspiration of the meeting was to explore and create opportunities to better connect education and to develop an inclusive and adequate avenue for the mobility of students, teachers, academics, researchers and staff while contributing to the Sustainable Development Agenda. The Ministers further explored the overarching theme of the meeting within two plenary sessions which included presentations and discussions on the following sub-themes: (1) *“Mobility in the digital era: virtual mobility as a strategy for inclusion?”* and (2) *“Towards the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: How can the ASEM Education Process contribute?”*.

6. Acknowledged the contribution of Romania to the consolidation and the development of the ASEM Education Process, especially for enhancing dialogue between ASEM partners and stakeholders and disseminating policy recommendations by hosting the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) from the 11th to the 15th of May 2019 as the official side event of the ASEM ME7.
7. Reaffirmed the outcome of the ASEM12 Summit held on the 18th and 19th of October 2018 in Brussels, Belgium, where the leaders of the ASEM partners reiterated that the ASEM Education Process aims at ensuring inclusion and equality in education by building comprehensive education systems that are accessible to all. The Ministers acknowledged that the ASEM leaders emphasised the link between the ASEM connectivity and sustainable development for achieving the UN 2030 Agenda and recognised the importance of access to quality education as a basic human right and a tool for responsible citizenship, economic prosperity and the resilience of society. Furthermore, the Ministers highlighted the value of involving the business and industry sectors in education and the role of lifelong learning including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). They also recognised that education deserves the special consideration as formulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims at "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all".
8. Thanked Romania for the opportunity to organise an informal political discussion among Ministers, Vice-Ministers, State Secretaries, Deputy State Secretaries, the European Commission and the representatives of stakeholders to develop the Bucharest Ministerial Statement, which seeks to emphasise the commitment of the ASEM partners, and stakeholders in developing the cooperation between both Asia and Europe, in the field of education.
9. Reiterated the significant role of the ASEM Education Process in strengthening education by means of cooperation and dialogue on common perspectives between the two regions, especially in the field of higher education.
10. Reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting and sustaining the ASEM Education Process cooperation in the four priority areas as agreed by Ministers during ASEM ME3: (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.
11. Reiterated the significance of the two-pillar system as agreed during ASEM ME5 in Riga, Latvia; (1) the first pillar emphasises the dialogue-oriented cooperation for mutual learning, sharing of best practices and exchanges; and (2) the second pillar emphasises the result-oriented cooperation to produce tangible results and outcomes.
12. Underlined the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on SDG4 and agreed that the ASEM Education Process can contribute to realising the SDGs. Therefore, the Ministers confirmed their commitment to contribute to the

implementation of the SDG4 in order to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Ministers welcomed the suggestion to link the ASEM Education Process more explicitly to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 by introducing “Sustainable Development” as a transversal theme within the 4 priority areas of the ASEM Education Process.

13. Underlined that “Digitalisation” can create opportunities to support connectivity and collaboration between Asia and Europe, but also that the ASEM Education Process should adapt itself to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation and the 4th Industrial Revolution. Therefore, the Ministers welcomed the suggestion to include “Digitalisation” as a second transversal theme (besides Sustainable Development) within the 4 priority areas of the ASEM Education Process.
14. Acknowledged that education is an important area of focus in multilateral cooperation like the ASEM Education Process, the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Leaders and Education Ministers, the European Union (EU) and the Higher Education Ministers in the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process/Global Policy Forum). Mobility, recognition and quality assurance in higher education are key elements to strengthen regional, inter-regional and international cooperation and exchange. The Ministers conveyed a need for systematic exchange of information and closer cooperation between the ASEM Education Process, ASEAN Plus Three (APT) initiatives and the Global Policy Forum of the Bologna Process to accelerate the development of strategic partnerships in education and higher education among ASEM partners.
15. Highlighted the importance of the EU’s strategy to better connect Asia and Europe by strengthening exchange and cooperation in education and especially higher education between both regions via existing and future education and research programmes. The Ministers recognised the importance of the ASEM Education Process to serve as a platform to identify and to encourage Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 partnerships, particularly for establishing and developing Asian-European partnerships.
16. Conveyed gratitude to the Ministry for Research, Technology and Higher Education of Indonesia for successfully hosting the Intermediate Senior Officials’ Meeting (ISOM) on 3-5 June 2018, in Jakarta. In this meeting, with almost 150 participants from Asia and Europe, the new workshop format for (I)SOM meetings was tested, as agreed in the Conclusions by the Chair of ASEM ME6. The new format was well received by the ASEM partners and stakeholders. It provided a valuable platform for the ASEM partners and stakeholders to discuss and suggest ideas and recommendations which enhance the cooperation and collaboration in the field of higher education under the four priority areas of the ASEM Education Process.
17. Thanked the ASEM Education Secretariat Belgium for organising the ASEM Task-Force Meeting on the revision of the Stocktaking Report, on 17th and 18th September 2018 in Brussels, Belgium, as agreed in the Conclusions by the Chair at ASEM ME6. The meeting with representatives of ASEM partners from Austria, Belgium, Germany, India,

Malaysia, Vietnam, the European Commission, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), Southeast Asian Education Ministers (SEAMEO) Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED), the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the European Students' Union (ESU) and the European University Association (EUA) recommended a revised Stocktaking Report including well-structured and target group related information, thematic analysis, policy recommendations, follow-up activities, etc. presented in a user-friendly digital format. The Ministers congratulated the ASEM Education Secretariat Belgium for having successfully prepared the Stocktaking Report from Seoul to Bucharest, with guidance and assistance from Dr. Siegbert Wuttig, former Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat Germany.

18. Expressed gratitude to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research for successfully hosting the First Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) in preparation of the ASEM ME7, on 17th and 18th October 2018, in Krems, in collaboration with the Danube University of Krems. Introduced at the ISOM Jakarta, the workshop format was further implemented at the SOM1 focusing on three themes. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the outcomes of SOM1, which affirm the contribution of the ASEM Education Process to the Sustainable Development Goals from a lifelong learning perspective.
19. Conveyed gratitude and appreciation to Belgium (Flemish and French Community) for hosting the ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) Belgium starting from ASEM ME6 in 2017 until 2021. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation to the Republic of Indonesia for ensuring a smooth transition of the rotating ASEM Education Secretariat from Jakarta to Brussels by secondment of two staff members. The Secretariat with two permanent officers each one from the Flemish Community and French Community have managed the Secretariat effectively and developed the ASEM Education Process. The Ministers thanked the Asia-Europe Institute of the University of Malaya, Malaysia, for providing the secondment of a PhD candidate to the ASEM Education Secretariat Belgium in 2018 and 2019.
20. Invited the ASEM partners to host the ASEM Education Secretariat for the next 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 from 2021 to 2025.
21. Recognised the importance of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), established in 1997, as the only permanent institution of ASEM. The Ministers conveyed their sincere appreciation to ASEF for the strong and valuable commitment in supporting the education pillar of the ASEM Process by implementing various educational programmes and projects that strengthen collaboration between education institutions and exchanges among young people, academics and educators across all ASEM countries.

22. Underlined the significance of the visibility of the ASEM Education Process in the ASEM partner countries and in the international fora. In this context, the Ministers encouraged ASEM partners to improve the visibility of the ASEM Education Process by maximising the usage and promotion of the ASEM Education Secretariat Website (www.asem-education.org) and of the ASEM InfoBoard website (www.ASEMinfoboard.org), the official information platform of the ASEM Process, as well as of the distribution of ASEM Education Leaflets and digital Newsletters developed by the AES. The Ministers also encouraged ASEM partners and stakeholders to provide regular input for communication purposes such as best practices, information on initiatives, programmes, publications and events.
23. Conveyed gratitude and appreciation to the editors, Prof. Dr. Alexandra Angress and Dr. Siegbert Wuttig of the publication “Looking Back and Looking Ahead: The ASEM Education Process – History and Vision (2008-2018)” and to the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for the funding. Furthermore, the Ministers thanked all contributors and authors of this publication for their valuable input. The Ministers acknowledged that this book contains not only a historical and reflective overview of the first 10 years of the ASEM Education Process but also provides valuable recommendations and directions for the further development of the ASEM Education Process. The Ministers encouraged the ASEM partners and stakeholders to use this publication as a source of inspiration as well as a resource and reference document to further develop the education process.
24. Expressed gratitude and appreciation to all ASEM partners for their efforts and support to implementing initiatives under the four priority areas of the ASEM Education Process as specified in the following sections.

Priority A: Quality Assurance and Recognition

Quality assurance and recognition are playing a significant role in multilateral collaboration since they were first introduced at the 2nd ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting (ASEM ME2) in Hanoi, in 2009. The main purpose of this priority area is to build mutual trust amongst higher education systems to promote attractiveness, transparency, comparability and permeability of each system. One of the most tangible outcomes of improving quality assurance and recognition is supporting mobility, which has always been at the core of ASEM Education. Many initiatives under priority area (A) directly or indirectly encourage mobility and facilitate understanding on different practices in education especially higher education in Asia and Europe.

The Ministers:

25. Underlined the contribution made by the Working Group for Implementing the ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration. Committed ASEM partners and stakeholders are Austria, Belgium (French Community), Brunei Darussalam, China, Estonia, Germany,

Ireland, Indonesia, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the United Kingdom, and ASEAN University Network. The Ministers thanked Ireland and China for co-organising the Asia-Europe Forum on Quality and Recognition in Transnational Higher Education and the 2nd General Assembly of Cross-Border Quality Assurance Network (CBQAN) on 18th-19th December 2018 in Dublin, Ireland. The Ministers encouraged the efforts of CBQAN to build Asia-Europe Higher Education Excellent Quality Assurance Programme Platform for showcasing excellent QA cases and excellent programmes on the webpage of CBQAN, and to draft Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Education by CBQAN. The Ministers noted that the guideline is not mandatory or legally binding, but to provide recommended principles on cross-border education, academic and student mobility.

26. 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. Committed ASEM partners and stakeholders are Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, China, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Thailand, United Kingdom and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED). The Ministers welcomed the interest of Austria and India to join the Expert Group. The Ministers invited the Expert Group to facilitate dialogue, enhance understanding, strengthen mutual-trust, and promote cooperation in the areas of credit transfer mechanisms and learning outcomes systems. Since ASEM ME6, three Expert Group meetings have been organised: on the 6th of June 2018 in Jakarta, Indonesia; on the 20th of November 2018 in Cologne, Germany and on the 28th of March 2019 in Phuket, Thailand. The Ministers appreciated the newly developed Compendium on higher education as well as the input collected from more than 20 ASEM partner countries through the country template and encouraged more partners to contribute to the Compendium. The Ministers acknowledged the work of the AES on the setup of an online interactive tool to publish this compendium and realise that this tool will need constant updates. The Ministers highly encourage the review of additional country pages by the Expert Group in the future, as this compendium serves as a unique tool to present a comprehensive collection of information on all higher education systems represented within the ASEM Education Process. They also encouraged the efforts of the Expert Group to work on a framework of grading systems to support ASEM student mobility and mandate the Expert Group to start up cooperation on learning outcomes.
27. Noted that UNESCO will be adopting a Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in November 2019 as a response to the increasing mobility between countries and continents. The Global Convention will be the first United Nations treaty on higher education with a global scope, and establishes universal procedures for the fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

28. Noted the European Union’s support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region through the EU-SHARE project, which aims to strengthen regional cooperation and mobility, to enhance quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and student mobility, to enhance cooperation between the EU and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and harmonise higher education across the ASEAN countries. The Ministers appreciated the cooperation of the European Commission, ASEAN Secretariat, British Council, DAAD, Nuffic, Campus France, ENQA and EUA. The Ministers also acknowledged that the project carried out 9 large-scale Policy Dialogues attended by a total of 1,178 participants and concluded by 4 baseline studies and 8 Policy Briefs; 4 batches awarding 400 Intra-ASEAN Scholarships. The Project was “piloted” credit transfer intra ASEAN and from ASEAN to Europe. The Ministers appreciated the launch of the second phase of the project (2019-2021) which will be conducted beyond ASEM ME8.
29. The Ministers appreciated the proposal made by the International Association of Universities to start a cooperation on the use of data published in the IAU UNESCO World Higher Education Database (www.whed.net) to present and map higher education systems in Asia and Europe. The aim is to help enhance mutual understanding and transparency, through access to recognized and validated information. The IAU WHED is developed both in online form, as WHED Portal and e-publication, and in print on demand, under the title “International Handbook of Universities” (IHU - see: <https://iau-aiu.net/International-Handbook-of-Universities-58>). It is published every year; the next edition is due to be released in the second half of 2019.

Priority B: Engaging Business and Industry in Education

Employability took centre stage in the ASEM Education Process over the past years. Close cooperation between higher education institutions and the business sector plays a crucial role in increasing graduate employment, cultivating entrepreneurship and training highly skilled people necessary to the economic growth of countries in both regions. The aim of the priority area is to intensify dialogue and collaboration (including learners’ mobility for placements) between education, business and industry sectors within and between Asia and Europe to improve knowledge and innovation interchange. Currently, the main objectives are to identify and to remove obstacles to learners, teachers, and staff mobility for work placements between Asia and Europe and to advocate experiences that combine professional competence development with intercultural learning.

The Ministers:

30. 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 7th ASEF Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forum (ARC7), in particular the ARC7 Policy Recommendations by Rectors and Students. The Ministers thanked Romania for hosting ARC7 from 11th – 15th May 2019 in

Bucharest as the official side-event of the ASEM ME7 and appreciated the theme of ARC7: “Higher Education Taking Action Towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Perspectives from Asia and Europe”. The Ministers also recognised the organisation of the ARC6 side events in 2018 and 2019, namely “Flexible Learning Pathways: Asia-Europe Conference on Lifelong Learning and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” on 13th -14th December 2018, in Hanoi, Viet Nam; as well as ASEF’s support to both the “1st World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED) Conference”, held on 28th November 2018 in Birmingham, UK, and the ASEAN Regional International Student Engagement (ARISE) Conference & Training on “Internationalisation at Home” led by the Erasmus Students’ Network (ESN) on 2-4 May 2019 in Singapore. In preparation of the ASEM ME8 and ARC8 in 2021 in Asia, the Ministers also welcomed the organisation of further ARC related events in 2019 and 2020, for example the ASEF Capacity Training on “Taking Action on SDGs at home: Widening Access to Higher Education” in November 2019 in the United Kingdom, or the activities under the ASEF Innovation Laboratories (ASEFInnoLabs), planned to be held in China, Germany and Portugal.

31. Thanked Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Indonesia and Thailand for implementing the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme for a three-year period that ended in December 2017. The ASEM Work Placement Programme (ASEM WPP) initiative has evolved into a more structured and accessible programme since 2017. The Ministers welcomed the establishment of an ASEM-WPP secretariat as a support structure to upscale the ASEM-WPP and to address the practical obstacles that have been encountered more systematically. The coordination of the ASEM WPP Secretariat is undertaken by both Belgium (Flemish Community) and Thailand. The Ministers recognised the 6th working group meeting held on the 6th of June 2018 in Jakarta, Indonesia and the 7th working group meeting held on the 29th March 2019 hosted by the Thai Ministry of Education, in Phuket, Thailand. The Ministers also thanked the ASEM WPP Secretariat and the ASEM Education Secretariat for having jointly developed communication and promotion materials such as the ASEM WPP Website (www.asem-wpp.org) and a printed leaflet to distribute to ASEM partners and stakeholders. The Ministers acknowledged the progress of ASEM WPP and invited more ASEM countries to take part as active members in the programme. ASEM WPP member countries have decided not to limit the destination countries for their outgoing students to member countries of ASEM WPP anymore, but to open the programme to more countries in the other region. The Ministers welcomed the interest of India and the Netherlands to participate in the ASEM WPP.
32. Thanked the European Union for introducing traineeships (or work placements) under the Erasmus+ programme between Asia and Europe for students currently enrolled in higher education institutions. By doing a traineeship abroad with Erasmus+, students can improve their communication, language and inter-cultural skills, their soft skills highly valued by future employers, as well as become more entrepreneurial.

Priority C: Balanced Mobility

Internationalisation of higher education systems significantly changed higher education landscapes, especially higher education institutions and their commitment to various mobility programmes. Several studies show that mobility programmes have a strong influence on the personal development of students as well as their soft skills. In the case of ASEM, the flow of international students between both regions is heavily biased towards Asian students studying in Europe. Therefore, the imbalanced mobility of students, teachers, staff and researchers between both regions has motivated the ASEM partners to address these issues in all ASEM education meetings. Opportunities and new approaches to increase equal chances to mobility and stimulate inclusion in mobility should be discussed and implemented, such as the opportunities and possibilities of digitalisation in mobility programmes or virtual mobility. Moreover, mobility should take into account inclusive internationalisation strategies at both national and higher education institutions' levels and comprehensive cooperation between higher education institutions in both regions.

The Ministers:

33. Recognised the contribution of the European Union (EU) for creating awareness by promoting various international study opportunities to ASEM partners via international higher education fairs and regional seminars where the EU enables European universities or promotion agencies to take part. Over the course of the year, the European Commission or EU Delegations have organised or participated in study fairs in a range of ASEM partner countries: Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vietnam. The study fairs reach different target audiences, both individuals and institutions. They raise the visibility of European universities' programmes and courses, inform students about education opportunities in Europe and increase institutional cooperation and mobility between the EU and ASEM partners. Students and alumni associations also play a crucial role in promoting mobility programmes and contributing to the modernisation of higher education systems. 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 the ASEM partners to explore other opportunities in the EU such as the Erasmus+ including its new programme starting 2021 and Horizon 2020 programmes.
34. Conveyed appreciation to Malaysia, the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), the University of Malaya and the Ministry of Education Malaysia for their contribution to foster balanced mobility by organising the 4th Asia-Europe Institute's ASEM Summer School 2018 from 30th July to 10th August 2018 in Malaysia. 22 students from 11 ASEM partners attended the event, taking the opportunity to experience intercultural understanding between Asian and European participants. United Kingdom, Italy, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand,

Japan, Republic of Korea, China, Bangladesh, Laos and Singapore participated in the programme with more participants from Asia. The Ministers supported the continuation of the initiative and encouraged ASEM partners to support, cooperate and nominate students to participate in the upcoming 5th AEI-ASEM Summer School which will be organised in collaboration with the University of Limerick, Ireland, in the summer of 2019. The main purpose of the 5th Summer School is to overcome the imbalance of mobility of students, academics and researchers between Asia and Europe.

35. Underlined the significant role employed by the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme to promote balanced mobility of students, researchers and academics between Asia and Europe. Through six fellowship programmes, more than 200 participants have benefited from the initiative every year since 2000. The Ministers acknowledged that the six ASEM-DUO Programmes are in operation as planned and the 4th ASEM-DUO Fellows Alumni Meeting was held on 26th October 2018. The Ministers thanked Belgium (Flemish and French Community), Singapore, Sweden, Thailand and the Republic of Korea for continuing their financial contribution and for making this programme one of the most successful initiatives in the ASEM Education Process. The Ministers expressed specific appreciation to the Republic of Korea for hosting the ASEM-DUO Secretariat and welcomed the initiative of the ASEM-DUO Secretariat in persuading ASEM partners for more memberships and higher contributions. The Ministers took note of the imbalance of the contributions and expressed their hope that European countries contribute more to tackle this imbalance in financial contributions. The initiative carried out by ASEM-DUO is vital to enhance balanced mobility between both regions. Therefore, the Ministers encouraged more ASEM partners to participate in the programme. The Ministers appreciated the 11th ASEM-DUO Expert meeting in May 2019 and the planning of the 5th ASEM-DUO Fellows Alumni Meeting in October 2020. During 2018/2019, 210 students and professors were supported for their exchanges, while in 2019/2020, 202 are to be supported. 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.
36. Welcomed the initiative of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) to set up a pilot project on the creation of local students' organisations supporting international students in Asia. The main purpose of the project is to increase the attractiveness of mobility experiences in Asia for European students, to enhance support to international students in Asia as well as internationalisation at home opportunities for non-mobile Asian students, and to encourage exchange of knowledge and good practices between higher education institutions, students and civil society organisations. The Ministers welcomed the organisation of a conference and training event scheduled for May 2019 and underlined the importance of this project to enhance internationalisation at home. The

Ministers invited interested ASEM partners and stakeholders to join the pilot project to foster balanced mobility, to exchange good practices on how local student organisations can be created and sustained, and to join the Erasmus Student Network in organising meetings and training events gathering partners and stakeholders involved in the project.

37. Emphasised the continued significant achievements of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in enhancing people-to-people connectivity and balanced mobility between Asia and Europe for youth, students, researchers, academics and higher education institutions staff as well as teachers through various non-formal and formal educational and youth projects. Since ASEM ME6, ASEF carried out 15 projects & activities and engaged 1270 participants from all 51 ASEM Partner countries. The projects were, amongst others: the 21st ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU21) on “Youth with Disabilities: Shaping Inclusive ASEM Societies” from 27 January – 10 February in 2018 in Australia and New Zealand; the 22nd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU22) on the theme “Sustainable Tourism: Youth Driving Green Growth” from 12-23 September 2018 in Croatia and Slovenia. As official side events of ASEM Meetings, ASEF organised the 8th Model ASEM in conjunction with the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (ASEM FMM13) in 2017 in Myanmar and the 3rd ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS3) on “Ethical Leadership” in conjunction with the 12th ASEM Summit (ASEM12) in October 2018 in Brussels. Other projects conducted by ASEF under this priority include the 14th ASEF ClassNet Conference (ASEFClassNet14) on “Gender Equality: Reprogramming STEM Education” from 27th-30th November 2018, dedicated to the collaboration of teachers and researchers on secondary education. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the outcomes of ASEF’s initiatives in fostering strong networks between the youth, ASEM Education Process stakeholders and ASEM Leaders through the above-mentioned projects as well as the visibility created for ASEM across Asia and Europe. The Ministers also conveyed their sincere appreciation to the ASEM partners for hosting projects in collaboration with ASEF.
38. Welcomed the organisation of the following ASEF events, amongst others: the 15th Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet15), scheduled to take place in 2019, in Japan; the 23rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU23), scheduled in early 2020 in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Singapore, focusing on the theme “Developing Liveable & Sustainable Metropolitan Areas”; the 24th ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU24) in August 2020 in Finland, Norway and Sweden, covering the topic “The Arctic Region: A ‘Hot Spot’ for Asia-Europe Cooperation” the 9th Model ASEM scheduled in December 2019 in Spain; and the 4th ASEF’s Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) which will take place in conjunction with the 13th ASEM Summit (ASEM13) in Cambodia, in 2020.

39. Welcomed the initiative of Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) Belgium to develop an e-learning module on ASEM and the ASEM Education Process.
40. Encouraged the organisation of a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on Inclusion through virtual and blended mobility by Belgium (Flemish Community) in spring 2020.
41. 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.

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

Since the introduction of the ASEM Education Process in 2008, the agenda on Lifelong Learning (LLL) including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) gained importance. Promoting Lifelong Learning and enhancing Lifelong Learning policies are essential in coping with the impact of internationalisation and globalisation, demographic changes and rapid technological developments such as digitalisation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0.). This area aims at supporting policy development and initiatives that create learning opportunities including online education and digital forms of learning for all citizens throughout their lives in order to participate in continuing their professional development and enhancing their skills and competences for working life, personal fulfilment, active citizenship and social inclusion. The aims of this priority are in line with the SDG4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In this context, the ASEM Education Process should embrace the UN's 2030 Agenda on this priority for the benefit of citizens in Asia and Europe.

The Ministers:

42. Thanked Latvia for hosting a TVET Seminar on 25th and 26th April 2018 in Riga, Latvia to promote dialogue on sharing best practices and future perspectives in TVET. The Ministers appreciated the views of the initiative's members Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, Indonesia, Latvia, the Netherlands, the Philippines and the Russian Federation that the ASEM Education Process could be leveraged to strengthen the mutual learning and exchange regarding TVET in order to strengthen TVET systems both in Asia as in Europe at policy level and by sharing experiences from practice. The Ministers encouraged the ASEM partners to continue such an initiative to enhance the TVET delivery system and to identify effective teaching and learning tools for the benefits of teachers, learners and TVET institutions in both regions. The Ministers appreciated the willingness of the Russian Federation to continue the initiative and organise a follow-up seminar.

43. Appreciated the efforts and contribution of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University by managing the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) since 2005. The ASEM LLL Hub is an open research network dealing with the complexity of Lifelong Learning between 40 Asian and European universities, offering education policy recommendations based on research as well as on mutual understanding between Asia and Europe. The Ministers welcomed the commitment of the University College Cork, Ireland, to host the Hub and appreciated the support of the Founding Chair of the ASEM LLL Hub, Arne Carlsen and AES Belgium to facilitate the transfer discussion and the hand-over process.
44. Acknowledged that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has stimulated global interest in lifelong learning; there is growing recognition that it would generally drive changes in people's lives that are required for a sustainable future. However, the concept may be diversely understood, depending on national contexts as well as on education and training sectors, or still not be much addressed. This is a challenge for the development of comprehensive policy frameworks and for the consistent implementation of lifelong learning strategies. Against this background, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has inaugurated a strategic project to guide the planning and implementation of lifelong learning policies and to strengthen the capacities of Member States in this regard. To facilitate this, UIL is developing a set of learning materials, including a Handbook and Toolkit for Lifelong Learning policy-making. The Ministers appreciated the development and publication in June 2019 of the Handbook, which will guide the planning and implementation of lifelong learning in UNESCO Member States, including in ASEM partner countries. The additional Toolkit for Lifelong Learning will provide guiding materials, case studies and instructions for developing capacity-building workshops. The Ministers also appreciated the development of cross-sectoral collaboration and governance models in the field of lifelong learning policy-making through meetings and workshops such as "The International Consultative Meetings on Lifelong Learning" in Shanghai, China, on 18th and 19th October 2018 and the "Capacity-Building Workshop on Developing Lifelong Learning-Oriented Education Systems", also in Shanghai, from 22nd October to 2nd November 2018. The former was organised by UIL, in partnership with the Chinese National Commission to UNESCO, Shanghai Open University and East China Normal University, to develop lifelong learning-oriented education systems, using the Handbook as a basis. Country teams of Indonesia and Viet Nam participated in the workshop. The Ministers noted that the Handbook will be published in June 2019 and welcomed its development. The Ministers also welcomed the organisation of a second capacity-building workshop, from 28th October to 8th November 2019, in which two Asian countries will participate. They also welcomed the UIL support in the development or renewal of lifelong learning policies in these countries. The Ministers invited ASEM partners to promote and use this Handbook and Toolkit in the future to support policy development processes in lifelong learning.

45. Welcomed the initiative of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) to contribute video tutorials and knowledge materials on lifelong learning to ASEM partners. The Ministers appreciated the development of a set of animated video tutorials to support cities in the process of implementing lifelong learning. The tutorials consist of seven infographic animation videos for cities to enable them to become centres for lifelong learning. In addition, UIL has developed a thematic video tutorial focusing on education for sustainable development (ESD) – how ESD can be integrated in learning cities. The tutorials were showcased during the two weeks of the International Capacity Building Workshop on Lifelong Learning held in Shanghai in October 2018 which was targeted at policy-makers from Vietnam and Indonesia. The Ministers acknowledged that the tutorials support the reinforcement of the cooperation between the national and local levels of European and Asian countries as well as among cities by focusing on how lifelong learning can be implemented at the local level. The Ministers appreciated that the UIL is developing a set of seven training modules to support cities in the process of becoming learning cities. The objectives of the training modules are to help project leaders and stakeholders in cities understand the concept of a learning city, and to facilitate learning city project leaders' efforts to build capacities and provide opportunities for practitioners to learn strategic approaches in building dynamic and sustainable learning cities. The modules will be launched in October 2019 for the Fourth International Conference on Learning Cities. The Ministers encouraged the ASEM partners to promote and make use these video tutorials and the training modules.
46. Welcomed the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)'s initiative to further use these tutorials to develop Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and to provide training and capacity building workshops in all UNESCO regions. The Ministers pledged high importance to the development of these tutorials and MOOCs for the development of Lifelong Learning Policies in Cities to contribute to the SDG4 and encouraged the ASEM partners to use these MOOCs for their own LLL policy development or enhancement.
47. Noted with interest and encouraged the development of the UNESCO-led World Reference Levels (WRL) of learning outcomes, which can be used to compare qualifications, credentials and other sets of outcome statements to support the recognition of skills and competencies across borders. The Ministers acknowledged the outcome of the WRL Expert Group meeting held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 26th – 27th November 2018. The meeting recommended pilot-testing the WRL tool, using a technology-based solution and further improve the WRL tool and its function to support Regional Qualification Frameworks (RQFs) and harmonise the way in which learning outcomes, qualifications and credentials are described.

48. Noted that European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)'s and UNESCO's joint development of an international handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes. Given the growing importance of learning outcomes in international education and training policies, the process involved in preparing the Handbook (2019-2020) allows for a closer dialogue and cooperation between international experts (including from Asia and Europe) in this field. The final product (due end 2020) will support a more consistent use of learning outcomes, a necessary condition for increased international transparency of qualifications. The Ministers stimulate the ASEM partners to make use the handbook.
49. Acknowledged the 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 publishing an updated global inventory on regional and national qualifications frameworks. The Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks 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 are an established instrument in many countries around the world and are significant in comparing and classifying 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 fully implement their existing RQFs and NQFs. The Ministers also encouraged the development of the World Reference Levels (WRL), led by UNESCO, which will, on completion, support RQFs and NQFs, by providing a global reference instrument. Ministers further requested the agencies which developed the Global ROF and NQF Inventory to proceed with producing an updated edition in time for dissemination at the 8th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting in 2021. The Ministers called upon the ASEM partners to work with UNESCO, Cedefop and ETF to provide data for the 2021 edition.
50. Welcomed the proposal from 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) to share with ASEM countries and partners their respective studies, toolkits and event reports in the field of lifelong learning, including vocational education and training, skills and qualifications, which support the development of qualification frameworks, engage actors and ensure benefits for people; and, further, the proposal from the ETF to promote and disseminate to ASEM partners the findings from its conference on skills and qualifications, which will be held in Turin 6th and 7th November 2019.

51. Noted with satisfaction the progress of the ASEM Network of Massive Online Courses (MOOCs) led by the Republic of Korea and supported by ASEM partners namely by Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), China, Denmark, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Thailand, The United Kingdom. The Ministers welcomed the interest of India to join the network. The network has organised the ASEM Network of MOOCs Initiative Project Leaders Meeting and the ASEM MOOCs Stakeholders' Forum in Seoul, Republic of Korea, on 7th November 2018. The network is also currently developing the MOOCs subjects and courses content, national guidelines for a quality assurance guideline and a survey for MOOCs platform-operating institutions with all network members. The Ministers welcomed the intention of the network to create a website for common communication and collaboration with network members. The Ministers acknowledged that the outcomes of the survey for MOOCs platform-operating institutions would be analysed and shared with network members and support the organisation of an ASEM MOOCs Stakeholders' Forum. The Ministers encouraged the ASEM partners to follow the development of this network to embrace MOOCs and transform the higher education system in each ASEM partner country for the mutual benefits of higher education institutions and students.
52. Welcomed with high prospect the aspiration of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) to enrich the lifelong learning agenda of the ASEM Education Process in order to provide more opportunities for the ASEM partners' citizens to acquire adequate knowledge and skills for personal and professional development. In this context, the Ministers welcomed ASEF's close alignment of activities with ASEM priorities and the UN's Agenda 2030 on the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in the fields of sustainability & climate change, gender equality & inclusion and digitalisation, and its proposal to focus on capacity building for individuals and institutions. The Ministers encouraged the ASEM partners to make use of this platform to exchange best practices and to promote innovative approaches for lifelong learning.

Ministers invited Senior Officials:

53. To develop a strategy paper on the *ASEM Education Process Vision 2030* during SOM1 and SOM2 of the 8th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME8) to be presented in the ASEM ME8 in 2021 for discussion and adoption. The proposed strategy paper shall include an action plan with clear objectives and measurable targets (including Terms of Reference (ToR), actors, milestones and timeline.). The basis of the preparation of the strategy paper will be laid at the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) in 2020.
54. 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. 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.
56. To determine an official list of ASEM Education Stakeholders in cooperation with the ASEM Education Secretariat. This list will be composed by current ASEM Education Stakeholders as well as by proposed new stakeholders. Stakeholders who are currently not part of the ASEM Education Process, and would be interested to join, are invited to notify their interest to the ASEM Education Secretariat. The list of official stakeholders can be updated during (Intermediate) Senior Officials' Meetings ((I)SOM) and endorsed by the Ministers in ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEM ME). The stakeholders on the approved list will be entitled to attend ISOM, SOM and ASEM ME with the right to speak. The Ministers trust that this will increase the regular participation of stakeholders in (I)SOMs and ASEM MEs and enrich the discussions with fresh ideas and (field) experts' knowledge.
57. To explore the possibility of hosting an ASEM Education Week with an ASEM Education Fair focusing on networking between the ASEM partners and stakeholders in connection with the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting and/or the ASEM Day on the 1st of March and on showcasing top-class ASEM Education Process initiatives. The Ministers believed that this will increase the public interest on the ASEM Education Process and will motivate ASEM partners and stakeholders to participate and nurture ASEM Education Process initiatives.
58. To explore how to integrate and create synergies between the Policy Recommendations of the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) developed by Rectors and Students, and discussions and initiatives under the ASEM Education Process.

Ministers mandated the ASEM Education Secretariat:

59. To facilitate and coordinate the preparation and drafting of an *ASEM Education Process Vision 2030* strategy paper in cooperation with Senior Officials and the hosts of SOM1 and SOM2 of ASEM ME8 as well as the Standing Working Group.
60. To enhance the workshop format introduced during ISOM 2018 and SOM1 2018 in close cooperation with the host of SOMs and ASEM MEs including an informal retreat session in order to allow strategic policy discussions and increase policy development of the ASEM Education Process.

61. To present the achievements of the ASEM Education Process and results of ASEM MEs during ASEM Summits, to include key results of the ASEM Education Process in the Chair's Statement of ASEM Summits in cooperation with the ASEM partners and stakeholders, host of the ASEM Summit and with support of ASEF. The Ministers believed that this approach would improve the visibility and increase the contribution of the ASEM Education Process within the overall ASEM Process.
62. To monitor the ASEM Education Process and its initiatives and analyse their progress and results from a policy perspective by establishing regular contacts and collaboration with the coordinators of initiatives and the Standing Working Group. This approach would allow to stimulate coherence between the 4 priority areas and policy developments of the ASEM Education Process.
63. To prepare a comprehensive Stocktaking Report including an analytic view on the progress of initiatives based on the above-mentioned analysis.
64. To enhance the presence and visibility of the ASEM Education Process through the website, social media and digital newsletter by presenting the best practices of the ASEM Education Process in close collaboration with the initiatives' coordinators. Initiative coordinators are encouraged to provide input for these communication purposes to the ASEM Education Secretariat such as updated information on events, good practices, publications and progress on initiatives.

The Ministers thanked:

65. India for its commitment to host the Intermediate Senior Officials' Meeting (ISOM) which will take place in spring of 2020.
66. Germany for its commitment to host the 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1) of ASEM ME8 in the autumn of 2020 under the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
67. Thailand for its commitment to host the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM2) and the 8th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME8) in 2021.

Initiatives within the ASEM Education Process 2019-2021

A. Quality Assurance and Recognition

Pillar 1

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	Cooperation in the context of the IAU World Higher Education Database (WHED)	2019 - 2021	IAU

Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	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.
2	Meetings of the Expert Group on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanism and Learning Outcome Systems	4 th - 5 th November 2019, next TBC	Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, China, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Thailand, United Kingdom, SEAMEO RIHED
3	Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications	November 2019	UNESCO & ETF
4	EU-SHARE Project	2019-2021	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	8 th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC8) & ARC spin-off events Official side-event of the 8 th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME8)	2021 Asia & European countries	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders

Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	ASEM Work Placement Programme	Second Phase 2019-2021	Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands and Thailand
2.	ASEF Innovation Laboratories (ASEF InnoLabs)	2019 and 2020 China, Germany & Portugal (TBC)	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders

C. Balanced Mobility

Pillar 1

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	4 th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) & ASEFYLS Navigator Trainings Official side-event of the 13 th ASEM Summit (ASEM13)	2020 Cambodia India & Poland (TBC)	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)
2	9 th Model ASEM	December 2019 Madrid, Spain	ASEF In partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain,

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
	Official side-event of the 13 th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM13)		Casa Asia and ASEM stakeholders, supported by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of Switzerland
3	Model ASEM Spin-offs	August 2019, Malta 2020-2021 Asian & European countries	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)
4	Developing an e-learning module on ASEM and the ASEM Education Process.	2020	ASEF and AES Belgium
5	Peer Learning Activity: "Inclusion through Virtual and Blended mobility"	Spring 2020	Belgium (Flemish Community)
6	Establishing the ASEM educating process information framework for students and young scientists and digitalization of academic mobility.	Russia TBC	The Russian Federation (STIpot)

Pillar 2

No	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	23 rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU 23) on "Developing Liveable & Sustainable Metropolitan Areas"	First quarter 2020 Bangladesh, India, Pakistan & Singapore	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)
2	24 th ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU24) on "The Arctic Region: A 'Hot Spot' for Asia-Europe Cooperation"	Third Quarter 2020 Finland, Norway and Sweden	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)

3	5 th Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)-ASEM Summer Schools (AEI-ASS)	11 th - 29 th June 2019 Malaysia and Ireland	AEI, University of Malaya, Malaysia and University of Limerick, Ireland
4	Pilot project: Creation of local student organisations supporting international students in Asia	2019-2021 Kick-off May 2019 Singapore	Erasmus Student Network (ESN); ASEF, ESN Local partners in Asia (higher education institutions and students in ASEAN Region; civil society and umbrella organisations in Asia)
5	ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme	2016-2020	The Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Sweden, Belgium (Flemish Community and French Community) New member: India
6	8 th European Higher Education Fair 2019 (EHEF 2019)	Tokyo and Osaka, Japan on 17-21 May 2019	The European Union and Japan

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	Initiative to promote a dialogue on sharing best practices and future perspectives in TVET	Russia TBC	Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Latvia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the Russian Federation
2	15 th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet15) on “Education for Sustainable Development and Artificial Intelligence: Re-imagining the Future of Learning” (TBC)	2019 Japan	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)

3	16 th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet16)	2020 United Kingdom (TBC)	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)
4	17 th ASEF Classroom Network Conference (ASEFClassNet17)	2021 Asia	ASEF In partnership with ASEM partners and stakeholders (TBC)
5	Capacity Building Workshops and MOOCs in the field of Lifelong Learning Policy development and implementation and Learning Cities	2019-2021	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)
6	Distribution of Toolkits, studies, reports in the field of lifelong learning including TVET to support the development of Qualification Frameworks	2019	Cedefop, ETF , UNESCO, UIL

Pillar 2

	Initiatives	Date and Venue	Name of ASEM Partners and Stakeholders
1	ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning	2019-2021	University College Cork, Ireland (Secretariat)
2	ASEM Network of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)	Republic of Korea 2019- 2021	The Republic of Korea, Brunei Darussalam, Belgium (Flemish Community), China, Denmark, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Thailand, The United Kingdom
3	Update version of Global Inventory National Qualification Frameworks	ASEM ME8 2021	UNESCO, ETF, Cedefop, UIL

4	Developing World Reference levels of learning outcomes to compare qualifications and credentials to support the recognition of skills and competencies across border	2019-2020	UNESCO
5	An International Handbook on Defining, Writing and Applying Learning Outcomes	2019-2020	UNESCO and Cedefop
6	Developing seven set of the digital training modules to support cities in the process of becoming Learning Cities	October 2019	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)
7	Handbook and Toolkit For Lifelong Learning: From Policy to Practice (+ workshops)	June 2019 (publication) October- November 2019 (workshop)	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Chinese National Commission to UNESCO, Shanghai Open University and East Asia Normal University



7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7)

Students' Forum: 11–15 May 2019 | Rectors' Conference: 12–14 May 2019

Bucharest, Romania

**Higher Education Taking Action towards Sustainable Development Goals:
Perspectives from Asia and Europe**

ARC7 Students' Forum Policy Recommendations for the

7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7)

15-16 May 2019, Bucharest, Romania

The ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC) is the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEM MEs). Since 2010, ARC has been contributing through Policy Recommendations to the deliberations of the Ministers and the ASEM Education Process.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call for action to shape a better future for all. The SDGs are transformative and rights-based, and explicitly refer to higher education and research.

At the 7th ASEF Students' Forum, 51 student leaders from Asia and Europe discussed the role of higher education in driving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with attention to three core areas of institutional activity: 1) institutional governance; 2) societal impact; and 3) international partnerships.

1. Taking Action at Home: SDGs as Core Pillars of University Governance

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should ensure a sustainable future by creating an inclusive and diverse society, for which HEI governance is key to providing transparent communication, access for everyone, and empowering students to enhance knowledge and obtain their full potential.

As students, we call upon the ASEM Governments to:

1. Ensure that HEIs are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating a specific office permeating every decision-making level that works towards implementing and achieving SDGs;

2. Establish an institution-wide digital centralised system ensuring transparent and inclusive communication by gathering and disseminating information from and to students, academic, and non-academic staff and other stakeholders;
3. Invest in teachers' trainings which support student centred learning and equip educators with tangible skills in addressing different learning needs;
4. Ensure student representation at all levels of higher education governance, including representation on internal and external auditing committees;
5. Take responsibility to educate and promote positive health behaviours by students and employees by:
 - Promoting health as equal pillars between mental, sexual, physical health, and social well-being;
 - Forming a confidential, accessible, and innovative mental health support system;
 - Easing access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

2 Taking Action at Community Level – SDGs as Drivers of University Social Impact

Higher Education serves as a driving catalyst for civil engagement, social diversity and sustainable advancement on a local, regional, national, and international level. HEIs shall respond to community needs and promote diversity, practical education, and locally relevant research. It is crucial for HEIs to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness. Governments should support HEIs by allocating appropriate funding.

As students, we call upon the ASEM Governments to:

1. Ensure that HEIs and student organizations represent the diversity of their communities, at both access and completion levels, among students, staff, and faculty. Aspects including race, religion, ethnicity, sexual-orientation, gender, socio-economic background, and access needs shall be considered;
2. Encourage HEIs to promote experiential and practical education in order to prepare students for their careers and social life, i.e. field studies, applied problems during courses, professional skills, paid internships, volunteering, community engagement, summer schools, short courses, and entrepreneurship. These should include a strong focus on SDGs;
3. Ensure that all HEIs have sufficient research capacity by allocating funds and encouraging institutional partnerships;
4. Incentivise and facilitate meetings between community members, and HEI researchers to gather research ideas and to disseminate research findings to non-academic stakeholders;
5. Funding bodies shall involve community group representatives in research funding allocation processes;
6. Ensure that degree requirements in HEIs should include completing a minimum of 3 ECTS credits or equivalent of tailor-made, societal impacting SDG activities. Appropriate training in SDG awareness and implementation should be provided.

3. Taking Action at an International Level - SDGs as a catalyst to reorient internationalisation

For internationalisation in higher education to be sustainable and to furthermore play its key role in reaching the SDGs, we believe it must be based on the principles of quality education, cohesion, equal opportunities, solidarity, and mobilising a global knowledge community.

As students, we call upon the ASEM Governments to:

1. Call upon higher education institutions to be involved in international exchange programs interconnected amongst students, researchers, and staff and implement best environmental practices and more inclusive and streamlined processes;

2. Introduce a standardised and internationally recognised *Academic Credit System* and the issuing and recognition of transcripts in agreed upon languages;
3. Encourage leaders in higher education to promote virtual collaboration through an international online platform in order to facilitate cooperation between higher education institutions and the online application process for international mobility;
4. Provide multilateral support for mobilising students, including financial, administrative or technological and e-learning resources in order to guarantee equal access to international higher education, especially for students in need;
5. Ensure quality and diversity in higher education by providing language courses for students, researchers and staff to enhance knowledge and mobility;
6. Encourage and support a launch of an International Students at Risk Network of higher education institutions that gives students, who face difficulties at their higher education institution due to their advocacy for human rights, as well as stateless persons, a chance for an education abroad;
7. Encourage respective governmental actors to support national strategies for internationalisation of higher education institutions.

Conclusion

Our discussions have been comprehensive and inclusive, and the recommendations that we propose in this document represent all perspectives of SDGs, from nationalities across Asia and Europe. The recommendations of our working groups emerged from deliberate and thoughtful student conversations. This exercise has exemplified that universities are change-engines and students are at its forefront. It is critical that university governance adopts a lens of efficiency and action. It is of the utmost importance that SDGs are embedded into each tier of university structure, that they are present in governance conversations, lecture halls, and student gatherings.

15 May 2019, Bucharest

Background:

The 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) took place at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), in Bucharest, Romania, on 11-15 May 2019. The ARC7 Students' Forum brought together 51 student leaders from 51 Asian and European ASEM partner countries to discuss how can higher education take action towards the sustainable development goals.

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The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call for action to shape a better future for all. The SDGs are universal, transformative and rights-based, and explicitly refer to higher education and research.

At the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference, higher education institution leaders from Asia and Europe discussed the role of higher education in driving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with attention to three core areas of institutional activity: 1) institutional governance; 2) societal impact; and 3) international partnerships.

The Conference resulted in **Commitments** by higher education institutions (HEIs) from both regions, and also proposed **Policy Recommendations** to feed into the deliberations and outcomes of the 7th ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM ME7).

Commitments by Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions contribute to building the environmental, economic, social, cultural and intellectual conditions required for a sustainable future for all through their three institutional missions (education, research and community engagement). Higher education institutions have the capacity to engage with the different SDGs through a whole institution approach, i.e. through actions in the areas of teaching, research, governance, campus resource management and through the values and ethics lived in the academic community and shared with society at large. They are committed to stepping up their actions and allocate the necessary resources.

Building and sharing capacity to contribute to global transformation

Higher education inter- and multidisciplinary curriculum, research, knowledge development and dissemination are key to addressing the Goals. Higher education institutions engage in local and international partnerships, involving other education and research organisations, governments, NGOs,

businesses and other society actors. These partnerships should be (re)considered in the context of the SDGs, in their ability to transcend disciplinary, political, social and cultural boundaries, and as a contribution to peace, inclusion and solidarity.

Providing lifelong learning for a global community

Higher education contributes through research and education to sustainable societies in the global context of demographic changes, technological developments and evolving societal demands. Higher education institutions from both regions therefore pledge to provide lifelong learning opportunities for the benefit of the global community. Higher education institutions are committed to equip learners from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds with the necessary knowledge and skills to learn and adapt to new tasks and situations.

Embracing internationalisation as part of a global commitment towards sustainable development

Universities from Asia and Europe pledge to envision internationalisation as part of a more global commitment towards sustainable collaborations, translated into connected institutional strategies with globally sustainable and equitable objectives. The Agenda 2030 provides a key opportunity to reassess the goals, purposes and means of higher education internationalisation, and to address standing issues, such as imbalances in research capacity and mobility exchanges. Achieving the SDGs requires better and more ethical cooperation in research and education, in terms of access, equal opportunities, and geographic balance. A better engagement with the SDGs is necessary in all university endeavours. This should be reflected in research projects and partnerships, curricula reform, informal learning opportunities, as well as international, purpose driven student and staff exchange and inter-university collaboration.

Policy Recommendations

Universities from Asia and Europe recommend the ASEM Education Ministers to

1. Orient the ASEM Education Process towards the Agenda 2030

Ministers are invited to include the SDGs into the goals, priorities and activities of the ASEM Education Process (AEP). This would enable the Process to play an active role towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030, and also stimulate each individual ASEM Partner country to make the Agenda 2030 part of national education and research strategy.

2. Support higher education institutions to engage with the Agenda 2030

ASEM governments should encourage and support higher education institutions to address SDGs in strategy and actions for education, research and community engagement. Governments should recognise these initiatives, as part of the national contribution to the Agenda 2030. They should ensure that rules and regulations, including funding rules, and national quality assurance and research assessment frameworks support the development of inter- and multidisciplinary research, use of innovative teaching approaches and development of transformative curricula, and the engagement in local and international cooperation. Governments have to ensure that higher education institutions enjoy the necessary autonomy, academic freedom and appropriate accountability as key conditions for the exchange of knowledge and development of competences that our societies require to reach the SDGs.

3. Incentivize and support education and research collaboration among universities and with other societal actors, at national and international levels

ASEM governments should create a positive environment for collaboration, among higher education institutions and with other parts of society, to advance education, knowledge, and innovation, and in line

with the higher education third mission. Governments should not only valorise collaboration with enterprises, NGOs, local communities or national authorities, but also community engagement, community-based learning and citizen science.

4. Develop research and knowledge-based policy agendas and informed decision-making in democratic societies

ASEM governments should develop policy agendas informed by internationally reviewed and recognised inter- and multidisciplinary research, and close collaboration with universities and other civil society actors, considering multi-stakeholder perspectives, economic, environmental and social aspects, and the prospective impacts for national, local and global society. This would also be a means to enhance and strengthen democracy, distinguish national interests from nationalistic ones, and counter populism, fake news, alternative truth and conspiracy theories, that seek to undermine and discredit both, international initiatives, such as the Agenda 2030, and research and education.

5. Acknowledge and support the role of higher education in contributing to equity, inclusion and lifelong learning

ASEM governments should develop policies and strategies for social inclusion and lifelong learning, encompassing all education sectors and forms of learning, and all stakeholders, including higher education and research. They should encourage and recognise the contribution of higher education institutions to lifelong learning, through research, education and outreach to society. There is ample evidence that diversity enhances the quality and relevance of research and education. The experience of inclusion and equity as a shared value in education and research, and the ability and opportunities for lifelong learning will also prepare future graduates to contribute to peace and sustainable development, as part of the work force and through active citizenship.

6. Support higher education internationalisation in line with the goals of the Agenda 2030

The 2030 Agenda provides an appropriate framework to rethink internationalisation as a part of a fair and equitable approach to education. ASEM Governments should review their national strategies for internationalisation, including legislative frameworks, enabling institutions to pursue fair and/or equitable and ethical internationalisation that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. This would require the set-up of appropriate funding schemes, including truly transnational funding schemes. It also requires incentives for more ethical internationalisation, in terms of equal opportunities, learning gains and geographic balance, and incentives for professional development. Likewise, fair and adequate recognition mechanisms of diplomas, period of studies abroad and prior learning need to be established or strengthened.

Conclusive words

The leaders of higher education institutions in Asia and Europe and ARC7 participants express their hope and expectation that the above commitments and policy recommendations will enable ASEM governments, institutions and all education stakeholders under the ASEM Education Process to contribute jointly and proactively to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Using the framework of the SDGs provides an opportunity to relate national priorities and interests to the wider context of a global environment and a global realm of knowledge and research. It enables Asian and European governments and higher education institutions to develop stronger education and research partnerships to generate a better future for all.

Background:

The 7th ASEM Rectors' Conference was hosted by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), in Bucharest, Romania, on 12-14 May 2019. It brought together over 150 leaders of higher education institutions, experts, government officials and 51 student leaders from 51 Asian and European ASEM partner countries to discuss how can higher education take action towards the sustainable development goals.

The policy recommendations were proposed and reviewed by the ARC7 organising partners – European University Association (EUA), International Association of Universities (IAU), ASEAN University Network (AUN) – discussed and finalised by the ARC7 Rectors' Conference participants.

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