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This Gazette is a communication channel in printed and online version which consists of series of articles to highlight the successful initiatives and contributions of ASEM member countries and stakeholders. The selection of facts and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and concerned participants only.

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**CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Aris Junaidi (P.h.D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Does ASEM Education Cooperation Matter?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que Anh Dang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education – ASEM ME1 to ASEM ME5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEM Education Secretariat: The First and Only Secretariat of ASEM Ministerial Cooperation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ASEM Bridging Declaration on Recognition of Qualifications Between Asia and Europe</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Decade Working Together for ASEM Lifelong Learning: Looking Back and Looking Ahead</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEM Education Four-Point Agenda in One Pilot Project: Joint Degrees in Tourism and Hospitality</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ASEM Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forum: A Voice from Non-state Actors</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated Edition of the Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear ASEM Members

The ASEM Education Secretariat is indeed honoured to introduce the first edition of the “ASEM Education Gazette” as an official publication for the ASEM Education Process. The ASEM Education Process was initiated at the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki (2006), when the Heads of State and Government expressed their commitment to establish a “continued dialogue and exchange of best practices on questions related to education and training” at the ministerial level. Hence, the first Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME1) in Berlin, Germany in 2008 marked the official launch of the ASEM Education Process.

Currently, the ASEM Education Process focuses on four main priorities, namely Quality Assurance and Recognition, Engaging Business and Industry in Education, Balanced Mobility and Lifelong Learning (LLL) including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The four priorities play a vital role for the enhancement of the collaboration and cooperation in the field of education between Asia and Europe. However, I believe that the current four priority areas could be further cultivated for deeper cooperation between the two regions.

The aim of the Gazette is to highlight the major initiatives and successful pilot projects, with the contribution of member countries through a series of 8-10 articles per edition. The Gazette is published for the benefit of the ASEM member countries, stakeholders, international organisations and the wider public. The main ideas of the Gazette are to increase the visibility and uniqueness of the ASEM Education Process; to improve communications with the member countries; to create a space for reflecting on achievements and challenges, to disseminate information to the public; and to enhance the coordinating role of the ASEM Education Secretariat. With the financial support of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia, it is planned that the Gazette will be published once a year on the occasion of the ASEM Senior Officials Meeting and Ministers Meeting in hard copy and online version via the ASEM Education Secretariat’s official website.

I hope that the first edition of this Gazette retains the institutional memories on the achievements and challenges of the first seven years and celebrates the progress of the concrete activities and results-oriented projects which are the backbone of the ASEM Education Process. For the future editions, I would like to invite all ASEM member countries, especially the working groups, to contribute articles on their ASEM joint projects. I believe that your contributions to the Gazette will enhance the quality and visibility of the ASEM Education Process as well as create more opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between Asia and Europe in the field of education.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and congratulations to all the authors, interviewees and especially to Ms. Que Anh Dang from the University of Bristol, UK for her initiative to create the ‘ASEM Education Gazette’ and her excellent work in making the publication of this first edition a success.

Happy reading!

Prof. Aris Junaedi (P.h.D)
Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat
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Why Does ASEM Education Cooperation Matter?

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), established in 1996, is an inter-regional platform for dialogue based on economic, political and socio-cultural pillars, involving 51 European and Asian countries, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. Given that the economic pillar has been the most developed and substantive cooperation, education (embedded in the socio-cultural pillar) has always received attention from the ASEM leaders because intellectual exchanges and student mobility were regarded as crucial for achieving a deeper understanding between Asia and Europe. Therefore in 1999, the ASEM Vision Group, in their report ‘For a Better Tomorrow: Asia-Europe Partnership in the 21st Century’, envisioned a five-fold increase in the total number of students exchanged between Europe and Asia by the year 2025; an improved balance between the number of Asian foreign students studying in North America and those studying in Europe; and the creation of a prestigious, high-profile ASEM scholarship scheme.

Although there was an incoming tide of Asian students studying in Europe with numerous bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements at different levels between the ASEM countries, this ambitious vision until 2006 was far from realised. Therefore Germany’s proposal at ASEM 6 Summit to embark on high-level inter-regional education cooperation became a revival for the second decade of ASEM, which matters to both Asia and Europe. As the Bologna Process gathered pace around 2005-2006, the European ministers developed an ‘external dimension’ strategy for intensifying dialogues and exchanges of ideas and experiences with other regions, to ‘mobilise brainpower’, ‘attract talent and ‘deliver the on the modernisation agenda for universities’ with an ultimate aim of enhancing European economic competitiveness. Many Asian countries also showed their interest in the Bologna Process, a unique pan-European higher education structural reform project with multiple political purposes, such as increasing regional integration through the ‘European dimension’, standardising degree structures, raising the attractiveness of European higher education, increasing mobility and enhancing quality assurance. Noticeably, the ASEAN countries were inspired by the EU’s model of a common market and Bologna convergent higher education systems to build the ASEAN economic and cultural communities.

By and large, education is mobilised for advancing both regions’ economic and political projects, hence ASEM education ministers were keen to forge a high-level strategic partnership whose time has come.

Shaping an ASEM Education Process

As featured in the first two articles of this Gazette, since 2008 the education ministers from both regions have convened for their biennial meetings and started the so-called ‘ASEM Education Process’. Given the high momentum that this new process generated, the first two annual meetings in Berlin and Hanoi were more or less a ‘courtship’ between enthusiastic Asian and European policy makers who had a relatively broad agenda and vague ideas of what form and structure the ASEM Education Process might take. However, from the third meeting in Copenhagen a clearer four-point agenda and a governance structure began to take shape. The Ministerial Senior Officials Meetings (SOM) and the Secretariat, whose conception of an ‘ASEM Education Area’ is at the heart of the process, do indeed play a crucial role in making these changes. After seven years, the ASEM Education Process has initiated more than 50 events ranging from ministerial meetings, expert seminars, rectors’ conferences, students’ forums, and working group meetings. The Chair’s conclusions became longer and the stocktaking report now requires days to read and perhaps months to compile. Informed readers may see the ASEM’s four agenda points as resembling some of the Bologna Process action lines, and may notice Bologna vocabularies at the ASEM meetings and in the Chair’s conclusions, but their actual meanings and connotations are constantly negotiated through the interactions between European and Asian participants. That is the beauty of the [re]discovery of each other at this Asia-Europe interface.

Together with the shift of focus from ‘talking’ to ‘action’ in the ASEMME Chair’s conclusions, the last four years have witnessed concrete collaborative projects.
mushrooming across the two regions, gathering expertise from state and non-state partners, and mobilising resources from various Asian and European countries. This first edition can only cover a few of those projects, such as the Lifelong Learning Initiative, Work Placement, Joint Curricula Degrees, Bridging Declaration on Recognition of Qualifications, Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forums, and Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks in order to exemplify how the ASEM education process is actually constructed in practice. Through these sample projects, ASEM creates space for large and small countries, state representatives and non-state stakeholders to actively contribute to and shape the developments of the process. This process, though still in the making, is not the simple extension of the European or Asian model; it is the construction of a new educational region. The stories about the ASEM projects in this edition give evidence that different cooperation cultures, often known as the ‘institutionalised European model’ and ‘informal ASEAN way’, are not simply passed along, copied and imitated via policy networks; they are actually put together and reproduced as a new hybrid form. The ASEM education process gradually moves ASEM away from the previously perceived inter-regional relationship to a new type of region-building. This hybrid form is reflected in the language of ASEM participants when they say ‘we’ at the ASEM meetings. Sometimes it means ‘we-Asians’, other times ‘we-Europeans’, and increasingly ‘we-ASEM’. Additionally, the enlargement of ASEM with new members, such as Australia, New Zealand, Russia, and Kazakhstan being admitted to the Asian side, actually blurs the boundaries of Asia and Europe. Furthermore, the increasing number of joint projects over the past years has created more commingling between the Asian and European countries and less of an ‘us-and-them’ feel at meetings.

Managing ‘Noodle Bowl Syndrome’

ASEM education cooperation is built on multi-level partnerships, ranging from regional, to national, to institutional cooperation in bilateral and multilateral agreements involving state and non-state actors across Asia and Europe. Some commentators call these multi-layer interactions as ‘noodle bowl syndrome’. Managing such a ‘noodle bowl’ is an art. Despite the deliberate informal character of the ASEM education process, a degree of formalisation and bureaucracy has crept into its operation over the past years. The numerous Chair’s conclusions, policy recommendations, declarations, and meeting statements bear testimony to this. At the recent SOM in Riga, there were two contrasting views on the working methods of the ASEM education process. One group is keen to accelerate a formal institution with a monitoring mechanism because they fear that without a more binding nature, the ASEM education process would invite free-riding and thus become irrelevant. However, the other group argues that deeper institutionalisation would have the effect of stifling cooperation and that a low level of formalisation would be the most suitable institutional framework for a highly heterogeneous group like ASEM to build trust. The ASEM education process is also about trust building because region-building without trust among its members remains a hollow technocratic form at best.

QUE ANH DANG

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WHY ASEM AND ASEMME

Why and when did the ASEM leaders emphasise that ASEM should focus on education? ASEM stands for the Asia-Europe Meeting, and it was created when the first ASEM Summit was held in March 1996 in Bangkok, Thailand. Today, there are 53 partners comprised of 51 countries from Europe and Asia, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEM is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation among partners on all issues of common interest to Asia and Europe. The ASEM Summit of Heads of State and Government takes place every two years and is the highest level of decision making in the ASEM process.

At the Sixth ASEM Summit (ASEM6) in 2006 in Helsinki, Finland, ASEM Leaders underlined the importance of education as an investment in human resources:

24. Leaders emphasized that qualified human resources constitute a key factor for economic and social development. They recognized that globalization poses challenges to human resources development affecting the entire field of education and training, and that both Asia and Europe are facing common issues such as managing financing and ensuring quality education and training for all. Leaders also underlined the importance of basic education, vocational training, and life-long learning as investment in human resources. With this in mind, Leaders stressed the value of continued dialogue and exchange of best practices on questions related to education and training, and welcomed the offer by Germany to host the first ASEM Ministerial Meeting on Education in 2008. They also recognized the role of the ASEM DUO Fellowship Programme in promoting exchanges in the field of education

(The Chairman’s Statement of the Sixth Asia-Europe Meeting, Helsinki, 10-11 September 2006)
The First Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME1)

For the second decade of ASEM, the ASEM Leaders defined some key policy areas including education, science and technology. In progression of ASEM6, the German Government proposed to organize ASEM ME1 in Berlin.

Two years later, in May 2008, ASEM ME1 was organized by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and supported by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder. The meeting was co-sponsored by China, Denmark and Japan. The theme of the meeting was “Education and Training for Tomorrow: Common Perspectives in Asia and Europe.” The two-day meeting focused on strengthening cooperation in higher education by forging strategic partnerships and exchanging views on enhancing employability and lifelong learning by bringing together education and the labour market.

The Meeting also featured the pivotal role of education and training with regard to economic and social development within both regions. The ASEM ME1 in Berlin was an important first step towards strengthening the dialogue and fostering cooperation between ASEM member countries in the field of education and training. It helped the two regions to look back on a history of long and successful bilateral partnerships in science and education. The significance of the meeting was that the Ministers agreed to set up a strategic Asia-Europe education partnership for the 21st century to strengthen the ASEM dialogue and cooperation in education to include stakeholders at all levels and agreed to convene a second Ministerial Meeting on Education in Vietnam in 2009.

Why did Germany host the First ASEM Education Ministerial Meeting? In 2008, Germany had identified education as a future topic not only for Germany and Europe, but also for the European-Asian cooperation. Better qualifications and employability of citizens, progress and innovation in science, economic growth, and mutual respect and understanding are central for both regions and their relationship. For this reason, The Federal Ministry for Education and Research of Germany had not only been acting as a host for the First Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education who convened in Berlin in 2008, but had also funded the ASEM Education Secretariat located at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for four years (2009-2013) in order to foster the sustainability of the ASEM Education Process.

The Second Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME2)

ASEM ME2 under the theme “Sharing Experiences and Best Practices on Higher Education” was held in Hanoi, Vietnam from 14 to 15 May 2009. The Meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam and co-sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Education, the Danish Ministry of Education, the German Ministry of Education and Research, the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and The Thai Ministry of Education.

ASEM ME2 identified the objectives for a joint collaboration to strengthen cooperation in higher education with regard to quality assurance, credit recognition and transfer in ASEM member countries. The Ministers also concentrated on issues of sustainability of human resource development for ASEM’s future needs through the promotion of lifelong learning and vocational education and training.

One of the achievements of ASEM ME2 was the decision to establish the first ASEM Education Secretariat sponsored by the German Ministry of Education and Research for four years. The main role of the AES was to ensure the effective coordination and sustainable progress of the ASEM Education Process.
ASEM ME2 was to enhance the country’s bilateral cooperation with other ASEM partners in order to enrich the country’s education system and human resource. “Vietnam is set to make comprehensive changes in the education sector so that the country will have an advanced education system by 2020 to keep pace with national industrialization and modernization in the context of international integration”, said the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Nguyen Tan Dung at the opening ceremony. Additionally, the Deputy Prime Minister cum Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam, Professor Nguyen Thien Nhan had bilateral meetings with China, Finland, Thailand, Denmark, Singapore, Germany, Korea and Latvia, to set up and renew the cooperation in education and training. For example, Vietnam signed Memorandum of Understanding with Germany and Korea respectively on quality assurance, credit recognition and transfer and Pharmacy Education. ASEMME2 also provide the opportunity for other Asian and European countries to update each other on the development and enhance their cooperation in education.

The Third Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME3)

“Shaping an ASEM Education Area” was the theme of ASEM ME3 hosted by the Danish Ministry of Education in Copenhagen from 9 to 10 May 2011. ASEMME3 welcomed the new ASEM partners namely Australia, New Zealand and the Russian Federation, who joined the ASEM Process during the 8th ASEM Summit in Brussels in October 2010. At this meeting, the Ministers underlined their wish for an intensive and sustainable Asia-Europe education partnership on the basis of mutual respect and benefit, thus contributing to the overall strategic dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. The Ministers focused on four priority areas of ASEM Education Process namely Quality Assurance and Recognition, Engaging Business and Industry in Education, Balanced Mobility and Lifelong Learning Including Vocational Education and Training.

Each topic was introduced by keynote speakers. Jan Truszczyński, Director-General for Education and Culture in the European Commission, presented Europe’s efforts and achievements in quality assurance and recognition in cross-border education with special regard to examples of good practice resulting from EU initiatives and the Bologna Process. The Asian perspective on this topic was highlighted by Ju-Ho Lee, Minister of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Korea. Malaysia’s Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin, who was at the same time Minister for Education, focused his introductory words on cooperation between education and the world of work. On the second day of the conference, the Chinese Vice-Minister for Education, Dr Hao Ping, introduced the topic of balanced mobility by giving an overview on China’s internationalization initiatives. The Vietnamese Deputy Minister, Bui Van Ga, presented his country’s manifold efforts concerning lifelong learning. In their final declaration, the Heads of Delegation agreed on 29 conclusions.

ASEM ME3 also endorsed Malaysia’s offer to host the Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME4) in 2013, Indonesia’s offer to host the ASEM Education Secretariat as of October 2013, Latvia’s offer to host the Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME5) in 2015 and the Republic of Korea’s offer to host the Sixth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEMME6) in 2017.

The meeting in Denmark also played a vital role in giving continuity and new momentum to the ASEM Education Process and education policy dialogue which started in Berlin 2008 and Hanoi 2009.
The Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME4)

In May 2013, Malaysia hosted ASEM ME4 under the theme “Strategizing ASEM Education Collaboration”. The new members of ASEM, Bangladesh, Norway and Switzerland who joined the ASEM process during the 9th ASEM Summit in Vientiane, Laos in November 2012, also attended the meeting.

ASEM ME4 took note of the results achieved from ASEM ME1 to ASEM ME4. The four main topics of ASEM Education Process highlighted during the ASEMME3 were discussed again to set out the future direction and define concrete activities to put policy into practice. In order to further develop and strengthen the ASEM educational cooperation in the four key policy areas of ASEM Education Process and to achieve better understanding and greater comparability between the different education systems in the ASEM Education Area, the Ministers agreed on a number of concrete activities and measures to be carried out and to be implemented in the coming years. The ASEM ME4 also witnessed the handover of ASEM Education Secretariat from the German Ministry of Education and Research to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture for the period of October 2013 to October 2017.

The theme “Strategizing ASEM Education Collaboration” was well chosen for ASEM ME4 because after five years, it was the right time for ASEM partners to consolidate their collaboration and cooperation from ASEM ME1 to ASEM ME4. The theme was also relevant to Malaysia, as it gave opportunity to the Malaysian Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) to initiate a new project aiming at overcoming the imbalance in mobility between Asia and Europe.

The ministers invited the Senior Officials of ASEM members to meet yearly in order to discuss the implementation of the ASEM activities, to keep the collaborative momentum, and to agree on priority areas for the next Ministerial meeting. Therefore, the first Intermediate Senior Officials’ Meeting (ISOM) took place in Hangzhou, China from 7 to 9 May 2014.

Malaysia had shown its vested interest in ASEM to overcome the imbalance of mobility between Asia and Europe. Malaysia also had successfully implemented many strategic initiatives in translating policies into practice. For instance, one of the significant initiatives was the establishment of the Asia-Europe Institute some 10 years ago and now operating under the purview of the University of Malaya, a Malaysia’s premier university.

“I believe that improving mutual recognition of higher education qualifications is a key factor for more balanced mobility, in particular to attract more European students to study in Asia, as there is better information on the quality of higher education in receiving countries. Without compatible academic cycles, shared quality assurance procedures, systems of provision for qualification recognition and also domestic regulations, the sustainable movement of students is not likely to occur” said the former Secretary General of Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia during the press conference of ASEM ME4. [ASEM ME4, 2013]
The Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME5)

The Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME5) will take place in Riga on 27–28 April 2015. Hosted by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, the meeting will be held under the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In order retain the stability of the ASEM Education Process, the ASEM ME5 will continue to focus on the four existing ASEM key priorities, namely quality assurance and recognition; engaging business and industry in education, balanced mobility, lifelong learning including technical and vocational education and training. However, with the prevailing socio-economic challenges in both regions, the ministerial meeting is also going to touch upon the development of skills for better employability, as well as new learning technologies. In response to the rapid changes of our technology-driven world, the meeting will introduce issues that have not been discussed within ASEM, like the information and communication technologies.

Over the past seven years since the ASEM Education Process was launched, the dialogue between the two regions has evolved, prospered and resulted in tangible forms of cooperation. The ASEM family is expanding and the ASEM ME5 will welcome two new member states – Croatia and Kazakhstan. At the same time, the number of ASEM-related events is also growing and one can see more result-oriented and tangible outcomes of the entire cooperation process.

As the host of the meeting, Latvia looks forward to seeing a new dimension within the ASEM Education Process. Latvia’s intention is to invite new initiatives, which provide more opportunities to evaluate the history of the ASEM ME and to reflect on the potential future success.

In order to obtain a solid view of the ASEM members and stakeholders’ opinion, Latvia carried out an early consultation last year which highlighted the main questions to be brought forward for further discussion, most importantly regarding the ASEM priorities. Most members believe that the four main priority areas should be maintained during the ASEM ME5 to ensure continuity and further development. The members also pointed out that it is important to explore the progress of the activities identified under each priority area and an evaluation process should be initiated on the different outcomes of current priorities. Similarly, the member states questioned what should be changed in the process of implementing the present priorities and which ones should receive particular attention. The question remains whether there is a need for new initiatives or rather the modification of the current four priority areas. In addition to the early consultation, these issues were later further discussed also at the Senior Officials’ Meeting, held on 10–11 November, 2014.

Acknowledgement: the authors sincerely thank the host countries of ASEM ME1 to ASEM ME5 for their support in compiling the information for this article.
ASEM Education Secretariat: The First and Only Secretariat of ASEM Ministerial Cooperation

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Introduction

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an inter-regional organisation which does not have a physical office and a permanent secretariat. The highest level political entity of ASEM is the Summit of Heads of State and Government, and this has been taking place every two years in Asia and Europe alternately since 1996. The Summits and activities in the interval between Summits are coordinated mainly by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in a rotating group of four members: the European Union through its External Action Service (the only permanent coordinator), an EU Presidency country, an ASEAN country and a non-ASEAN country. This unconventional structure does not seem to prevent its enlargement, rather the number of ASEM members has increased from 26 to 53 in only 18 years. Alongside the Summits of the top leaders, there are meetings of ministers, senior officials, academics, students, parliament members, business people, journalists, artists, etc. While the ASEM ministers of foreign affairs, finance, defence, transport, labour and employment began meeting in the late 1990s, the ministers of education convened for the first time only in 2008 in Berlin following a proposal made by the German Chancellor at the ASEM Summit 6 in Helsinki in 2006.

Although ASEM Education Ministers convened later than other ministers, they have established their own secretariat, which is the first and the only secretariat so far for ASEM ministerial cooperation.

The organisational structure of the ASEM education process in the ASEM overarching architecture is depicted in the chart below. (Figure 1)

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1 The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), established in 1997, has been involved in education activities since the late 1990s, but mainly facilitates people-to-people exchanges, such as young leaders, academic and cultural dialogues and cooperation with civil society partners across Asia and Europe. Since 2008 ASEF has worked in partnership with university associations to organise the ASEM Rectors' Conferences and Students' Forums. However, ASEF is not a secretariat for ministerial cooperation.
Germany and Vietnam hosted the first two Asia–Europe Meetings of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME) in May 2008 and May 2009. There were over 40 ASEM member countries and there was not a secretariat at that time. How were these first meetings organised? How were the Chair’s conclusions implemented? How were follow-up activities coordinated? These questions are worth investigating in order to understand the emergence of the ASEM education secretariat, its mandate and the tremendous contribution of the member countries.

The Emergence of the Secretariat

In preparation for ASEM ME1 in May 2008, some 50 senior officials from 31 countries in Asia and Europe, and the European Commission gathered in Bonn in March 2008 to identify the main topics of the agenda for the Ministers, as well as establish a protocol for future ASEM education meetings. In the capacity of Chair for the first Senior Official Meeting (SOM), the senior official from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Susanne Burger, presented two main topics: “Aspects of EU-Asia higher education cooperation” and “Education and the labour market”, resulting from a questionnaire survey launched by Germany. The important background documents on these topics were prepared by the German Academic Exchange Service (known as DAAD). These papers shaped not only the discussions at the first SOM by testing different ideas, but also arguably framed the first concepts for Asia–Europe education cooperation. At the meeting, Dr. Siegbert Wuttig, Head of the National Agency of EU Higher Education Cooperation at DAAD - who later became the director of the ASEM Education Secretariat (2009-2013) - presented the summaries of the papers and gathered feedback on various sub-topics. It was evident that DAAD played a crucial role in this meeting and together with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, they made a significant contribution to the ASEM education process. This contribution also paved the way for greater involvement of the DAAD later on. The Chair’s Conclusions of ASEM ME1 in Berlin in May 2008 still did not explicitly mention a Secretariat, but stated “the activities of the German Academic Exchange Service in this field [structural education cooperation] could be a source of inspiration”.

At the ASEM expert meeting on removing obstacles to student mobility in Frankfurt, Germany in December 2008 to implement the Chair’s Conclusions, the idea of setting up a coordination unit for ASEM education activities was mentioned informally. The idea was supported by a group of senior officials, especially the Vietnamese representatives, who were overwhelmed with new administrative tasks in preparation for the next ASEM ministerial meeting the following year.

In January 2009, over 60 senior officials from 32 ASEM countries and the European Commission gathered in Hanoi to prepare the agenda for the second Ministers’ meeting in May that year. In the minutes of this SOM, the Vietnamese Chair formally suggested the establishment of an ASEM Secretariat in order to ensure effective coordination and sustainable progress of the ASEM process. The Secretariat would coordinate ASEM education activities, help with preparation for ASEM ministerial meetings, and facilitate the implementation of output-oriented initiatives that contribute to education policy development and practices. The Meeting welcomed Germany’s offer to host the ASEM Education Secretariat for the first four-year cycle and invited ASEM member countries to join and send in staff (ASEM ME2, page 4).

The Secretariat in Rotation

After a few months of preparation, in September 2009 the Secretariat was set up as a new unit at DAAD in Bonn and was led by the director of the National Agency for EU Higher Education Cooperation and responsible for Bologna Process-related matters. The DAAD staff of the new Secretariat included a deputy director, who was the national contact point for EU-third country programmes in higher education, a project officer and an administrator. China seconded an expert for 15 months.
Indonesia seconded five academics for four to five months, and the Benelux countries seconded two experts for a total of four years. Financially the secretariat was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research including the staff and the overhead costs. The salaries of seconded staff members were paid by their respective countries. However, their work space and work related travels were funded by Germany. Although in the Chair’s conclusions, ASEM ministers invited member states to send their experts to the Secretariat, the assignments turned out to be an uneasy business, not least the requirements for residence and work permits, social welfare, and the discontinuation of work due to short-term secondments in some cases. Despite the challenges of the start-up period, the first secretariat did an excellent job in shaping the ASEM education process and professionalising (and formalising) the organisation of two ministerial meetings in 2011 and 2013, as well as numerous seminars over the four years of its service. The composition of the secretariat’s staff and their expertise played a crucial role in handling the complex tasks of the newly created ASEM education process.

At ASEM ME3 in 2011 in Copenhagen, Indonesia announced its offer to host the Secretariat for the following four years as of October 2013. At the secretariat handover ceremony during ASEM ME3 in Kuala Lumpur in May 2013, Mr. Djoko Santoso, Director General of Higher Education of Indonesia’s Ministry of Education and Culture thanked the ASEM member countries for entrusting Indonesia to take on the coordinating role for this inter-regional cooperation. Although a restructuring took place under the new Indonesian government in 2014 and led to the establishment of the new Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Mr. Ainun Na’im, the Secretary General from the Ministry of Education and Culture, affirmed Indonesia’s continued commitment to host the secretariat. Since October 2013, the Secretariat has been affiliated to the Bureau for Planning and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Education and Culture in Jakarta. The first director of the Secretariat was Dr. Ananto Kusuma Seta, who is also the head of the bureau. The new director of the Secretariat, Professor Dr. Aris Junaidi from the University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, was appointed in early 2014. The Secretariat has two Indonesian full-time staff and a seconded staff member from Malaysia’s Ministry of Education, and receives administrative support and guidance from the above bureau. Australia is planning to second two experts to the Secretariat in 2015 as part of their new Colombo mobility programme. As the ASEM education process gathers pace, the focus has moved towards result-oriented activities and pilot projects, the tasks of the secretariat require more coordination, but the informal nature of ASEM cooperation makes the tasks more challenging.

“The only facilitate the organisation of events and help the host countries, and we have to remain neutral. This is the rule of the secretariat. In order to coordinate activities we need information from member countries, but the response rate is low. Paradoxically, if communication and activities are only available in a few active countries, the neutrality and impartiality of the Secretariat may look different”, said Director Aris Junaidi.

At ASEM ME4 in 2013 in Kuala Lumpur, Mr Pascal Smet, Belgium’s Flemish Minister of Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels Affairs, announced its commitment to host the Secretariat in the third term from 2017 to 2021. Despite the diversity, scope and complexity of this inter-regional cooperation, the voluntary contribution of member countries signals the continuation and sustainability of the ASEM education process, particularly at ministerial level.

The Functions of the Secretariat

First, the Secretariat was created to minimise the administrative burden for the host countries which volunteer to bring the ASEM education process closer to their national interest or expertise by hosting events or leading collaboration initiatives. Second, since the organisation has expanded rapidly and the size of each ministerial meeting with over 50 delegations has made it difficult for a single host country to coordinate and follow up all the activities. Having a secretariat seems to be a sensible way of reducing transaction costs of cooperation and thus yield positive efficiency pay-offs for the member countries.
Due to the informal nature of the ASEM process, there is no official statute or terms of reference that explicitly set out the functions and tasks of the Secretariat. Nonetheless, from the ASEM ME Chair’s conclusions, there appeared more frequently clauses such as:

“The Ministers urged the ASEM Education Secretariat to organise workshops in order to develop, together with experts from ASEM members, a strategy for balanced mobility and prepare a first draft with recommendations for the next ministerial meeting” [ASEM ME3, 2011]

…“[T]he Ministers proposed to enhance mobility between Asia and Europe by intensifying promotional activities in both regions, appointing competent students and staff with a mobility experience as “ambassadors for mobility” in each ASEM country and organizing ASEM education fairs in Asia and Europe (e.g. with EU support). The ASEM Education secretariat is asked to set up an expert group to explore the usefulness of a promotion strategy for the ASEM Education Area” [ASEM ME3, 2011]

or a statement:

“The Ministers mandated the ASEM Education Secretariat to observe and assist the member countries in implementing the proposed initiatives and to inform the Ministers on the progress achieved with the stocktaking report for ASEMME5 in 2015” [ASEM ME4, 2013]

Over the years, the Secretariat summarises its functions in the diagram below3 (Figure 2)

Instead of making a formal statute, the draft Chair’s conclusions of the coming Ministers’ meeting in April 2015 continue the pattern of giving a task list to the Secretariat.

“The Ministers invited the ASEM Education Secretariat:

1. To assist the ASEM members in implementing the agreed ASEM initiatives and in cooperation with the ASEM members and stakeholders to intensify the follow-up and enhance the coherence of all the activities, projects and initiatives taken.

2. To collect information and provide analysis on the results achieved by the ASEM members implementing the agreed ASEM initiatives and to inform Ministers on the progress achieved by preparing a descriptive and analytical Stocktaking Report for the next Ministerial Meeting.

3. In close cooperation with the ASEM members and stakeholders to develop the communication plan to facilitate exchange of information among the ASEM members and stakeholders and to provide public access to the results of the ASEM education cooperation.

4. To make better use of the website of the ASEM Education Secretariat as a main channel of communication.

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3 Source: ASEM education secretariat’s presentation, 6 March 2012, Thailand.
The wording of the Chair’s conclusions is sometimes relatively vague; therefore there is room for interpretation on the scope and types of the Secretariat’s activities. Also the fact that the ASEM Education Secretariat is managed and funded by a national ministry makes it more difficult for other countries to exert control over its structure and operation.

**Institutional Capacity of the Secretariat**

A closer look at the activities and performance of the Secretariat over the last five years could help to group the functions of the Secretariat in four main categories:

1. **Secretary**: the Secretariat provides administrative support, such as coordinating and organising meetings, drafting minutes, conclusions, reports, recommendations, newsletters, etc.
2. **Facilitator**: the Secretariat provides expert information and analysis to facilitate cooperation and consensus-building, and create norms (e.g. drafting Chair’s conclusions, surveys, consultations, provide expertise from other forums, such as Bologna Process, identify speakers at meetings, lobby the potential sponsors, be it the European Commission or individual ASEM countries).
3. **Policy Entrepreneur**: the Secretariat identifies new policy issues and interprets new trends (e.g. recognition of qualifications, balanced mobility), and places them within related topics or policy solutions (e.g. global inventory of national qualifications frameworks) on the ministers’ meeting agenda.
4. **Implementation Agent**: the Secretariat designs with member countries the implementation plan of ASEM initiatives and writes reports on the implementation process and outcomes (e.g. facilitate and support expert groups for specific topics and use them as leverage for new declarations or initiatives, such as the Beijing Bridging Declaration on recognition of qualifications to facilitate mobility across education systems).

All of these functions are reflected in the relationships between the Secretariat and member countries, especially those hosting events or leading specific initiatives. However, this host-secretariat relationship seems to be rather fluid. Some countries may rely more extensively on the Secretariat than others. It is also dependent on the types of event: whether they are ministerial meetings or expert seminars on particular topics, the different functions may be jiggled around to fit the needs and competences from both sides. For instance, the relationship between the Secretariat and the Danish Ministry of Education for the Ministers’ Meeting in 2011 was different from that with Malaysia in 2013 and Latvia in 2015. Furthermore, some new norms emerged, such as the procedure of finalising the Chair’s conclusions. At the ASEM ME2 in Hanoi May 2009, before the establishment of the secretariat, the host ministry finalised the Chair’s conclusions and the chair announced at the closing ceremony that delegates had two weeks to make further comments. However, from ASEM ME3 in 2011, the first meeting officially administered by the Secretariat, the Chair’s conclusions were finalised, signed, and sealed on spot at the closing ceremony of the meeting. Although the drafting of the Chair’s conclusions in advance becomes a norm in political meetings, it has somewhat turned the ministerial meetings into reading aloud formal statements while providing limited space for real dialogues.

Looking closely at each function, it is possible to note a conflict between the ‘Facilitator’ and ‘Policy Entrepreneur’ roles; while the former requires neutrality, the latter makes choices regarding which initiatives to promote. The ‘Implementation Agent’ role gives the Secretariat not only a mandate to monitor progress and report to the Ministers, but also implicitly creates a space for the Secretariat to take on a representational role, such as opening ASEM seminars and meetings as a spokesperson of the ASEM Education Ministers. The ‘Implementation Agent’ role also gives the Secretariat content expertise in terms of technical knowledge, which in turn makes the Secretariat an advisor offering suggestions on what issues to include on the agenda for the next meetings. Due to its in-depth involvement in the implementation of activities, continuity and institutional memory, the Secretariat tends to have a good overview of the preferences of member countries. The Secretariat is also at the core of the machinery or occupying the driver’s seat, through regular interactions with member countries, especially bilateral contacts with the active members, they know precisely at what stage to intervene. They also have the expertise and information accumulated over time to advise the member countries on how to make the best use of the events.

In summary, the Secretariat with its institutional functions and capacity has not only been given some autonomy to facilitate the cooperation between ASEM member countries, but it has also created its own space for actions and shares its expertise both inside and outside the ASEM Education Process. The level of proactive intervention, albeit neutral, depends on the expertise and competences it holds.

**Note**: the article is based on the author’s previous professional experience and involvement in the ASEM education activities from the beginning of the process.
The ASEM Bridging Declaration on Recognition of Qualifications Between Asia and Europe

“...The diversity of region’s higher education systems in both Europe and Asia poses challenges in quality assurance and mutual recognition of qualifications” 1. What do these indicate? The mutual recognition of qualifications is still a problem although the regional qualifications frameworks may have been in place.

Why does ASEM need a new policy instrument for recognition? ASEM would like to foster closer cooperation and exchange of information in recognition of qualification. Therefore, at the third Asia Europe Meeting of Ministers of Education (ASEM ME3) in Copenhagen in 2011, ASEM member countries initiated the establishment of an ASEM convention on mutual recognition of degrees and study achievement including the establishment of a National Information and Recognition Centre.

First and Second Working Group Meeting – Demand and the move of ASEM Recognition

Austria established an ASEM pilot working group of experts to discuss the idea about creating a platform for ASEM in recognition of qualifications across education systems. The volunteerism of Austria in leading the working group indicates that Europe is more concerned with the mutual recognition of qualifications.

The first Working Group Meeting was held from 5 to 6 December 2011 in Vienna and attended by representatives from Austria, China, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the ASEAN University Network, and the ASEM Education Secretariat. The expert group discussed the existing regional conventions on mutual recognition, namely the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region ("Lisbon Recognition Convention") which was adopted on 11th April 1997 in Lisbon, Portugal and the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education ("Tokyo Recognition Convention") which was adopted on 26th November 2011 in Tokyo, Japan.

The working group conveyed that an “ASEM Convention” on mutual recognition would contribute to a better understanding of higher education systems in the two regions and to the promotion of student mobility between Asia and Europe. One of the important recommendations of the working group was the proposal for establishment of the Network of National Information Centres. Finally, after the productive discussion, the working group came up with a bridging ‘ASEM Recognition Agreement” with reference to the two Conventions mentioned above instead of making an entirely new convention.

The working group met again in China from 6 to 7 September 2012 and finalised the draft of the ASEM Bridging Declaration based on the two international recognition conventions. In this regard, China played an important role in drafting the declaration and Asian countries also have high interest in mutual recognition of qualifications.

Vision of ASEM Bridging Declaration at ASEMME4

During the SOM1 in 2013, the draft of the declaration was presented and the Austrian delegation informed the steps towards implementation of the ASEM Bridging Declaration. Therefore, ASEM ME4 noted with appreciation Austria’s successful initiative and China’s organisational support

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1 Que Anh Dang and Roger Y Chao JR wrote in their article Regional Qualifications Frameworks are still only a promise in ASEMagazine For Lifelong Learning, Edition 3, May 2013
in drafting an ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration.

In addition to that, the Ministers emphasized that the networks of national information centres in the European and Asian regions were encouraged to work closely with regard to inter-regional cooperation and information exchange on recognition matters. The endorsement showed that the Ministers believed that this declaration assertively would contribute to the improvement of the recognition of higher education qualifications between Asian and European regions.

Austria’s, China’s and other committed ASEM member countries’ efforts in preparing the declaration were paid by the gratitude of the ASEM Education Ministers during the ASEMME4. Not just that, the Ministers also fully endorsed the Declaration and advised all the ASEM countries to explore concrete steps to implement the Declaration in close cooperation with existing structures which are active in the recognition field.

Implementation of ASEM Bridging Declaration - Contribution of China

Will the creation of the ASEM Bridging Declaration contribute to the mutual recognition of qualifications in Asia and Europe? The understanding and implementation of ASEM Bridging Declaration will be key factors for the success of the mutual recognition of qualifications in the ASEM countries.

China with high interest in the quality assurance issue, offered to coordinate a working group on implementation of the ASEM Bridging Declaration during the ASEM ME4. Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community and French Community), Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and the United Kingdom had agreed and came forward to participate in the working group for the benefit of the ASEM member countries.

The China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Centre entrusted by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, organized the First Meeting of the Working Group on Implementing the ASEM Recognition Declaration in Kunming, China from 10 to 11 December 2013. The working group was supported by the ASEM Education Secretariat and Ministry of Education of China.

The members of the Working Group encompass representatives from the 12 ASEM member countries, namely China, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea from Asian region, and Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and United Kingdom from European Region.

As agreed in ASEMME4, China hosted the Working Group. The representatives of 12 Member countries as stated above except (Austria, Belgium and Germany) and representatives from the Regional Centre for Higher Education Organization and Development under the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO RIHED) and ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) also attended and supported the working group meeting.

Recommendations of the First Working Group Meeting on Implementation

The first meeting concentrated on the coordination and collaboration in mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education in the ASEM region predominantly on the Terms of Reference of the working group and the action plans for the implementation of the declaration.

The meeting agreed on three [3] actions plans as follows:

- The establishment of the Asian NIC-NARICs website in which the information resources for recognition professionals, researchers, international students, and their parents were provided and also to facilitate the effective communication platform for Asian competences recognition authorities. It is believed that the website will be officially launched after being endorsed and approved by the Ministers in ASEMME5 which is on 27 to 29 April 2015 in Riga, Latvia;
- To draft the handbook of guidelines, principles, and good practices on Recognition in ASEM regions. This handbook aims to give reference on recognition principles, criteria and procedure, construct a common language and concept, recommend good practices on qualification assessment, and facilitate bilateral, regional, and inter-regional cooperation. The handbook will be submitted for approval in the ASEMME5; and
- The inexistence of the platform targeting the Quality Assurance in cross-border education is a prime reason for the establishment of Cross Border Quality Assurance Network (CBQAN).
The consensus agreed in China anticipates a commitment of the working group of this particular declaration to work more effectively to gain and share knowledge of mutual recognition of qualifications in both regions. The terms of reference and action plans for the above activities clearly shows the interest of all parties involved in the ASEM Bridging Declaration to move forward to the mutual recognition of qualifications in Asia and Europe to the world standard.

The Way Forward from Second Working Group Meeting on Implementation

As the continuation of the first meeting, the 2nd Working Group on ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration was held in Riga, Latvia from 11-12 November 2014. The Academic Information Centre (AIC) with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia organized the second working group meeting. The meeting was co-chaired by China and Latvia.

The second meeting focused on the implementation of the three action plans agreed during the first meeting. Again, China presented the progress of the action plans. The working group agreed that the action plans need to be continued although these tolls is a long and complicated process. Besides that, for the continuity, the working group agreed to develop and improve the structure of handbook and present the revised structure of Handbook in ASEMME5.

The third working group meeting was organized to prepare a more detailed report on the action plans for ASEMME5, and China once more offered to organize the third meeting. The second meeting also agreed that the working group should be opened for other countries and international organizations in order to ensure wider discussions and better visibility of the three action plans. It is believed that the expansion of the working group would increase the likelihood for the continuation and sustainability of the working group activities after ASEMME5 and to implement the ASEM Bridging Declaration.

ASEM dream on Mutual Recognition on Qualifications will come through?

The final version of the Handbook, NIC-NARICs website and the Cross Border Quality Assurance Network will enhance the links between different education systems in the two regions. The open dialogue on the current issues of mutual recognition of qualifications undeniably would fulfill the expectations of ASEM Education Ministers during the ASEMME3.

ASEM member countries should step out of their silo to gain more added values in the recognition of qualifications of their systems. ASEM member countries are interested in working closely and share their best practices in mutual recognition of qualifications. It is hoped that in the future, many more ASEM member countries will ratify the two recognition Conventions and actively take part in the ASEM Bridging Declaration.
A Decade Working Together for ASEM Lifelong Learning: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

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This year the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) celebrates its tenth anniversary marking a decade of policy dialogue between ministries and research cooperation between academics in Asia and Europe. ASEM LLL Hub’s primary aims are to conduct studies on lifelong learning, enhance scholarship in the field, offer research-based policy recommendations, and develop mutual understanding between the two world regions. Today the Hub has become an official network of some 100 researchers across a range of disciplines working together in five thematic groups to generate new knowledge on different aspects of lifelong learning, such as e-learning, workplace learning, core competences, professionalisation of adult teachers, and policy development. However, not many people know how this unique ASEM initiative has come about and who the key architects were. Therefore the ASEM Education Gazette shares this brief story about the historical background and development of the ASEM LLL Hub, and its future prospects for growth.

The Genesis of the ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative

The word ‘lifelong learning’ first appeared in the third ASEM Summit Statement in Seoul in September 2000, but the ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative was actually born at the ASEM conference on ‘States and Markets’ in March 1999 jointly hosted by Denmark and the Republic of Korea in Copenhagen with a view to promoting economic and social progress. The conference was organised in the context of the European Union’s policy agenda focusing on lifelong learning together with the knowledge economy discourse. The ‘European Year of Lifelong Learning’ was proclaimed in 1996 to raise the public awareness of the importance and benefits of lifelong learning. In the same year the OECD published the report ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ as a strategic framework guiding education and training in the 21st century, and UNESCO launched the historic publication ‘Learning: the Treasure Within’ conducted under the leadership of Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission. While lifelong learning
“The ASEM LLL Initiative embraced deeper cultural, economic and technological diversities than any other international cooperation on education policy at the time. It focused on an area of education - Lifelong Learning - that despite its potentials to the global and national economy and the well-being of a vast majority of people in our nations, enjoyed little and in some countries no political attention at all. But we managed to bridge the gaps, create new awareness. I am truly grateful to the courageous, dedicated and like-minded members of our working groups - or a ‘working family’ seems to be a more proper term to describe our relations.

We produced new concepts and developed new modes for cross border, cross regional and cross cultural cooperation.”

Jern Skovsgaard, Danish Ministry of Education, Chair of the working group on ‘Ensuring Basic Skills for All’. He later became the first Chair of ASEM LLL Hub Advisory Board and was succeeded by Zoltan Loboda (Hungary), Piniti Ratananukul (Thailand), and Dmitrijs Kulss (Latvia).

became a mainstream discourse in Europe, Southeast Asian countries were looking for ways to overcome the financial crisis which demonstrated the vulnerability of their economies, particularly the fragility of social progress to sudden external market forces.

The Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, in his opening address at the ASEM 1999 conference, emphasized the role of the state and public institutions in partnering and balancing market forces. Such strategy was to ensure healthy growth of a market economy and at the same time to maintain social stability, to enhance the well-being of all, and to create sustainable growth on a global scale. Drawing on the experience of Denmark, he emphasised social security and lifelong learning as some of the most important preconditions to entrust and make people capable of coping with changes in a globalised world. His firm statement “what we need is lifelong learning for all people of our societies” has indeed helped to place lifelong learning squarely on the ASEM agenda and opened up new cooperation opportunity under the ASEM’s ‘cultural and social pillar’ alongside the economic and political pillars.

Subsequently, Malaysia, Singapore, Ireland and Denmark devised a proposal detailing the objectives, key themes and feasibility studies for the ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative, which was welcomed and endorsed at the ASEM Foreign Affairs Ministers’ meeting in Beijing in May 2001. In October 2011 a steering committee with representatives from the four founding countries was established and chaired by a senior official at the Danish Ministry of Education, Mr. Villy Hovard Petersen. In 2002, three thematic working groups of some 50 experts from 14 ASEM countries and the ILO (International Labour Organization) began to conduct feasibility studies and analyse over 100 cases on different aspects of lifelong learning in the participating ASEM countries.

The final report and recommendations resulting from the findings of the three working groups and the deliberation of three conferences in Denmark, Malaysia and Singapore, were presented at the fourth ASEM Summit in Copenhagen on 22-24 September 2002. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001, this proposal on lifelong learning cooperation was well received by the ASEM top leaders and was regarded as a meaningful and innovative way to build lasting peace and security. The core humanist value and mission of ‘learning to live together’ was flagged up as a necessity for the survival of humanity. That is also a space where the Asian idea of ‘harmonious society’ and the European concept of ‘social cohesion’ share much in common.

From Political Will to Academic Research Cooperation

After achieving the political mandate of the 2-year ‘ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative’, it became imperative to look at a more strategic goal of including this on the long-term ASEM education agenda and creating an inclusive space where sustainable cooperation is possible. This was another ambitious task to set, given all the (then 25) ASEM countries have sovereign control on education. Having analysed the rising trends of regional educational projects in Europe such as the Bologna Process for higher education since 1999, the Copenhagen Process for vocational education since 2002, and the European Commission’s policy of ‘Making a European Area for Lifelong Learning a Reality’ launched in 2001, Arne Carlsen in his capacity of the Vice Rector for Education at the Danish University of Education, proposed to establish a network of Asian and European universities working and learning together to stimulate the production of new knowledge on lifelong learning. This proposal was presented by the then Danish minister of foreign affairs, Per Stig Møller, and was endorsed at the fifth ASEM Summit in Hanoi in 2004. With

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1 These 14 countries include: Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Malaysia, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, UK, Vietnam
the support provided by Danish government and
the financial assistance from the Asia-Europe
Foundation, in May 2005 the inaugural conference
took place at the Danish Association of Folk High
Schools in Copenhagen to officially launch the ‘ASEM
Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning’.

One of the significant results of this conference
was the agreement on five thematic areas:
e-learning and ICT skills, workplace learning,
professionalisation of adult teachers, national
strategies for lifelong learning, and core
competences. These themes served as the basis for
establishing five research networks across Asia and
Europe.

Figure 1: ASEM LLL Hub Organogram

Since then the Danish University of Education (now
the Department of Education, Aarhus University)
has been hosting the Secretariat to coordinate
the activities of the research networks and build a
bridge between research and policy making. The
governance model of the ASEM LLL Hub creates
a well-functioning platform to facilitate dialogues
between researchers, university leaders and policy
makers to receive support as well as provide
research-based policy recommendations. This
project has been financially supported over the
last ten years by the Danish Ministry of Foreign
Affairs and the Danish Ministry of Education and
the Asia-Europe Foundation. The success of
the project, however, has been achieved by the
intellectual contribution of individual researchers

Que Anh Dang, Former Head of ASEM LLL Hub Secretariat (2007-2013).
Currently Researcher at the University of Bristol, UK.

Arne Carlsen, the Founding Chair of the ASEM LLL Hub

“Perhaps the most important achievement is that the Hub
has managed to turn the diversity of its members into assets
and raise the collective voice of ASEM researchers for
lifelong learning. The range of seminars and conferences,
the intellectual interactions in each thematic network, the
volume of joint publications, the exchanges of doctoral
students and academics between universities, and not least,
the friendship among the members speak for themselves.”

“The venue of the inaugural conference was carefully chosen
to introduce the ASEM participants to Denmark’s ‘Grundtvig
gfolk high school’ concept and tradition spanning centuries
and to inspire university academics to carry out research on
new basic skills for all, such as ICT skills, foreign languages,
entrepreneurship, and social skills. The basic skills for all
are deeply rooted in the Danish folk high school tradition, but
were not the mainstream research activities at universities.
Therefore, in his opening speech, the Danish Minister of
Education, Bertel Haarder, expressed great expectations
to see the Hub’s new knowledge and ideas on lifelong
learning for making social progress and creating confidence
and understanding across the boundaries of regions,
nations and generations. As the chair of this new university
network, my first ideas were to develop a vision, set up the
Hub’s institutional governance, appoint thematic research
coordinators and recruit members.”
with the support from their universities. The comparative study of workplace learning ‘Decoding the Meanings of Learning at Work in Asia and Europe’ and the collection of research papers ‘e-Learning for Lifelong Learning in Ubiquitous Society’ are some examples of the collaborative work. After ten years in operation, the Hub is today bringing together 100 specialist researchers from some 45 universities and has proven to be one of the most sustainable and successful interregional projects in the ASEM education process.

**A 10-year Journey of Rediscovery and Exchanges at the Asia-Europe Interface**

ASEM LLL Hub has also been seen by the members as a space for Asia’s and Europe’s (re)discovery of each other and exchanges of perspective and understanding after a long period of hiatus during the cold war. Drawing on his teaching experiences at universities in both regions, a European academic discovered that critical thinking capacity is not a distinctive feature of only Western universities and that a combination of both Socratic and Confucian educational practices could ensure the creation of global citizens capable of bridging cultural gaps and of coping with uncertainty. Another Nordic scholar realised that the concepts and practices of community learning centres in Asia have much in common with the Nordic tradition of folk high schools, especially in their main focus on popular education and enlightenment for the common people and marginalised groups at grassroots level.

The professional networks amongst researchers from both regions have, over the years, produced some good work arising from a deeper understanding of the cultures, histories and diverse knowledge systems that inform the output of this uniquely collaborative research engagement. This is also a journey of learning and working together. The notion of journey sums up the sense of movement, growth and change. The journey also becomes a meaningful way of narrativising the ups and downs of the whole experience of working across cultures. Interestingly, ASEM scholars are fascinated by the puzzling complexity in theorising and researching concepts and practices of learning in different contexts, although cogent analysis

“Participating in the ASEM research network activities really opens my eyes to the need for exchange, and reciprocal exchange - not just one way exchange. Some countries, like Australia, may have the attitude that the ways we do things are more advanced. Australia has particular strengths, but quite narrow in some ways. What ASEM has exposed me to is different ways of doing and thinking about policy-making and research in other countries. I went to Malaysia with ASEM and discovered ways of thinking and policy action there that I found to be much more advanced than Australia. It gives us the opportunity to learn about what is happening elsewhere so that we start thinking differently about what we do in Australia. I can’t claim any particular impact as yet, but it can sow seeds of thinking about different approaches and changing perspectives.”

*Associate Professor Allie Clemans, Member of ASEM LLL Hub Research Network 4, Director of Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia.*
of the shared patterns of concepts and meanings of learning remains in its infancy. Progress will certainly take considerable time to achieve, not least because the global dominance of Western scholarship, both in publications and in researchers’ minds. There is an increasing interest in questioning the uncritical adoption of perspectives and knowledge developed in western societies and cultures, including for the purpose of understanding ideas and practices extant in other civilisations, not least, those that have developed in Asia.

ASEM LLL Hub and the Role of Bilateral Partnerships

ASEM is not meant to replace but instead complement bilateral partnerships that bring Asia and Europe closer together. Given the great diversity and different interests, ASEM countries often adopt flexible and pragmatic multi-layer strategies in partnership. Generally, there are three distinct but connected layers: first, the ASEM overarching multilateral partnership; second, sub-group partnerships (e.g. ASEAN-EU; EU-China, ASEAN and ASEAN+3, ASEAN and Australia and New Zealand); and third, bilateral partnerships between individual member countries. The ASEM LLL Hub has also created an avenue for countries to strengthen their bilateral relationships and profile themselves as reliable and strategic partners in the other region. The recent ASEM Forum ‘Renewing the Agenda for Lifelong Learning’ co-financed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture is a case in point. Other events

“Denmark is very proud to support ASEM LLL Hub and co-finance this Forum together with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. I am particularly happy that this event takes place in Bali as my government has an ambition to expand the bilateral relationship between Denmark and Indonesia - the world’s fourth largest country. Our relationship is about government-to-government cooperation, trade and commercial activities, but it is also about people-to-people connectivity. Lifelong learning has been a key priority of the Danish government for many years. One of our lessons is that lifelong learning in Denmark is a shared responsibility between public and private sector, government and social partners, employers and employees. I recently visited the Danish shoe manufactory, ECCO, in the city of Surabaya, which employs more than 7.000 people. There I saw lifelong learning in practice. Most managers I talked to, started at the floor and moved up to their senior positions through upgrading their competences and skills at work. The employees were very happy with the opportunities created for them by the company’s deliberate strategy and so was the employer. That is what lifelong learning is all about – it simply produces win-win results.”

Mr Casper Klynge, Ambassador of Denmark to Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and the ASEAN. Speech delivered at the ASEM Conference ‘Renewing the Agenda for Lifelong Learning’, 10-11 March 2015, Bali, Indonesia.
Thus, bilateral government-to-government agreement remains an important and ongoing (hopefully growing healthily) aspect of the multilateral relations. The ASEM framework is therefore a multi-layer cooperation in which different layers and various diplomatic, economic and socio-cultural streams are intertwined.

Charting the way forward: Renewing the Agenda for Lifelong Learning

The most recent ASEM Forum in Bali addressed the question of change and renewal of the agenda for lifelong learning in Asia and Europe. The present chair of ASEM LLL Hub, Dr. Claus Holm, highlighted three reasons. First, to deal with the global challenges, that reshape educational landscape of in Asia and Europe in the 21st century. Second, to identify drivers for change. Third, to devise lifelong learning strategies and methodological pedagogy relevant for learning cultures in Asia and Europe. Given the openness of the call for ‘renewing the agenda’, ASEM members need to articulate it in the ways that they make meaning of it, and deal with it directly and proactively.

The past decade has witnessed the good work achieved by the ASEM LLL Hub which built a strong foundation for further growth. The renewed agenda for the next decade would be empowered with more dialogues and meaningful partnerships.

Acknowledgement: the author sincerely thanks the interviewees for sharing their insightful information. Due to limited space, this article only presents a short story, for more information please visit www.asemLLLhub.org

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**Key milestones**

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Opening Conference to launch ASEM LLL Hub, Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Conference to launch ASEM LLL Hub’s four research networks, Bangkok, Thailand</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Conference “Ensuring Basic Skills for ALL under the spirit of Partners, Pathways and Pedagogies”, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Conference “Exploring Frameworks for Supporting Lifelong Learning”, Beijing, China</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Conference “Increasing Opportunities and Removing Obstacles for Lifelong Learning”, Nha Trang, Vietnam</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Conference “Learning Unlimited”, Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Conference “Strategising Collaboration, Leveraging Resources: Charting the Way forward for Lifelong Learning”, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Forum “Renewing Agenda for Lifelong Learning”, Bali, Indonesia</td>
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“Thailand became involved in the ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative in the early 2000s because we saw human resource development as an important way to recover from the Asian financial crisis at that time. Networking with European Union countries has created opportunities for us to learn from their lifelong learning systems. ASEM LLL Hub was built by dedicated individuals and it has grown significantly and beyond my expectation. More than a decade later, we can today share our experiences with European partners, especially the countries that have been hit hard by the current financial crisis and have high youth unemployment rate. We need to renew our cooperation, not only bilateral inter-regional, but also intra-regional projects to support member countries. For me, that is a way of renewing agenda”.

*Areeya Rojvithee*, Founding member of ASEM LLL Hub, Former Deputy Director General, Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Labour, Thailand.
Why Work Placement is needed?

Will work placement improve the skills of graduates and enhance graduate employability? Most people would agree that graduates with work experience and book knowledge will perform better. Nowadays, employers look for students with work experience. Therefore, the employability of graduates, the economic growth and the social development of a country largely depends on the effective cooperation, exchange of knowledge and innovation between education institutions and the world of work.

In the 21st century more companies/organizations operate globally and it will benefit students to gain international work experience. Hence, there is a need to educate and train more students with work experience to deepen interregional collaboration between higher education institutions and the world of work across the ASEM region. Therefore, it is believed that the ASEM Work Placement Programme will enable highly motivated and qualified students to gain valuable work experience and build cross-cultural skills and competencies through interregional work placement in the ASEM region.

ASEMME3 and the Genesis of ASEM Work Placement Programme

The Third Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education (ASEM ME3) held in Copenhagen, Denmark on 9 and 10 May 2011 became a milestone for the ASEM Work Placement Programme. During the ASEM ME3, the Ministers considered that a work placement programme would provide opportunities for students to gain international work experience and discover the world of work in a different region and culture. In this context, the Ministers “Considered the establishment of an ASEM placement programme in terms of setting up a pilot scheme for higher education-business mobility of qualified students between Asia and Europe (partly funded by public resources and industry)”. [No.8 ASEM ME3 Conclusions by the Chair]

The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) in Bonn presented the outline of the programme in the Third University – Business Forum which was held in Kuala Lumpur from 10-11 November 2012 and organized by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia. This programme expects to be funded by public resources and industry to offer the possibility to qualified students to do a 2 to 6 month placement in the ASEM region.

The paper prepared by the AES clearly specified the information needed by the interested ASEM member countries to join the ASEM Work Placement Programme. The AES distributed the proposal to all ASEM member countries for their consideration before the Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers of Education (ASEM ME4). The proposal was drafted with the intent that all the parties involved in the ASEM Work Placement Programme would gain some benefit and valuable experience from the programme. However, the success of the ASEM Work Placement Programme depends on the commitment of the ASEM Member countries, higher education institutions, companies/organization and students as well as financial support.

ASEMME4 and the Progress of ASEM Work Placement

The proposal for the pilot scheme of the ASEM Work Placement Programme was presented during the First Senior Official Meeting of ASEM ME4. Then the proposal was discussed during the Second Senior Official Meeting of ASEM ME4 and ASEMME4. In this context, during ASEM ME4 held in Kuala Lumpur in May 2013, the Ministers underlined that the work placements in higher education play a key role in enhancing graduate employability and endorsed the launch of an interregional ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme. They also welcomed the expressions of intent of Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, Germany and Thailand to take part in the pilot phase of the programme. The Ministers also considered that this pilot programme could promote practical experience and cross-cultural skills and competences of Asian students in Europe and European students in Asia.

The ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme, introduced at the ASEM University-Business Forum in November last year, was endorsed by ministers as part of their focus to improve student employability by enhancing cross-cultural skills and real world work experience. Delegates also encouraged education and
business stakeholders to collaborate more on preparing competent graduates. 1

The endorsement of the ASEM Work Placement at ASEM ME4 was the first time since 2008 that the Ministers welcomed concrete programmes to be set up under the ASEM umbrella. It is believed that this endorsement will lead to more tangible activities/projects for the enhancement of the ASEM Education Process between Asia and Europe. As the current status, there are only four countries committed to this program. Inviting more countries to join this program might take time since they have to consult with their government and educational system and the domestic regulations may become a constraint for them to participate in such a programme. However, the best practices of four countries (Belgium (Flemish Community), Brunei Darussalam, Germany and Thailand) in a pilot scheme would provide more information to other countries to participate in the programme in the future.

ISOM leads to the First Expert Meeting on the ASEM Work Placement Programme

As agreed in ASEM ME4, China is organizing the Intermediate Senior Official Meeting (ISOM) of the Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education in Hangzhou, China on 7-9 May 2015. In the ISOM, the Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat presented the current status of the ASEM Work Placement Programme. The Director pointed out that the initial countries, Germany and Belgium (Flemish Community), responded to the questionnaire and proposed a meeting with all the interested parties in order to work on the pilot scheme.

Hence, the First Expert Meeting on the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme was hosted by OHEC in collaboration with the ASEM Education Secretariat from 29 to 30 January 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting was attended by the experts and representatives from Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Thailand and the Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat. The main objective of the meeting was to draft a guideline for launching the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme which could significantly contribute to the ASEM Education Process.

The discussion at the meeting focused on the characteristics and model of the pilot programme including the funding scheme. The target group of the programme will be undergraduate and masters students and priority will be given to the masters students. A communication platform will be developed to promote the programme through the ASEM Education Secretariat website. Besides that, the meeting also expressed the need for development of one common training agreement for both Asian and Europe as well as a service and information package for the workplace of higher education institutions and students. The meeting also welcomes participation of Indonesia as a new member for the ASEM Work Placement Programme.

On top of that, each participating country is requested to nominate a national coordinator and an institutional coordinator to coordinate implementation of the programme and to engage the participation of the workplaces in this pilot programme. The meeting also recommended an annual meeting with alumni and stakeholder will contribute to maintaining the smoothness and the efficiency of the pilot programme. In conclusion, the meeting believed that the success of the pilot programme will be determined by the balanced mobility between Asia and Europe.

The work placements in higher education will enrich students with experiential learning and cross-cultural exchange and enhance their graduate employability. Through the programme, Asian students will have the opportunities to take part in European work placement through their existing industrial linkages, and similarly, European students will have the same opportunities of work placement in the Asian countries. Therefore, students in higher education of both regions will have extensive experiential learning opportunities in the corresponding regions. 2

What can we say about the outcome of the first expert meeting on the ASEM Work Placement Programme? The meeting undoubtedly gave a clear guideline to participating countries to contribute to make the ASEM Work Placement a successful pilot programme in the ASEM region. Besides that, the participation of Indonesia shows that this program has attracted more Asian countries to join the project. Although the total number of Asian countries in ASEM is less than European countries, it is a hope that in the near future, more Asian and European countries will participate in the ASEM Work Placement Programme Pilot Scheme.

Acknowledgment and what is next?

The willingness of Thailand to host the first expert meeting and the good work of Germany and Belgium and the commitment of all parties involved in this programme, will contribute to achievement of a positive outcome for this programme in the coming years. In this context, the other ASEM member countries need to encourage the five committed country for the success of the ASEM Work Placement Programme. The progress report of the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme will be conveyed in the Second Senior Official Meeting (SOM2) of ASEM ME5 in Riga, Latvia by the Director of the ASEM Education Secretariat.

The success of ASEM Work Placement Pilot scheme could become a role model for other activities/project in the ASEM Education Process.

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ASEM Education
Four-Point Agenda in One Pilot Project:
Joint Degrees in Tourism and Hospitality

The First Fruits

The Joint Curriculum Pilot Project in Tourism and Hospitality between six Asian and European higher education institutions is among the first ASEM collaborative projects to bear fruit after almost four years of dialogues. At the meeting in Bonn in March 2015, the consortium of three Indonesian universities, two German universities and one Lithuanian university reached a 3-year agreement on setting up a structure for joint master’s degree programmes, which are scheduled to enrol the first cohort in the coming autumn. Upon completion of the first semester at home universities, in the spring of 2016, it is expected that 15 Indonesian students (five students from each university) with Indonesian government scholarships will study their second semester at the three European partner universities. In a reciprocal exchange agreement 10 German and 5 Lithuanian students will carry out one semester at Indonesian universities. In addition, Belgium (Flemish Community) and Indonesia also agreed on a three-year collaborative bachelor programme in tourism and hospitality including internship arrangements. Although there are still certain elements which need to be clarified in the bilateral institutional partnerships, these agreements exemplify the excellent progress under the ASEM education cooperation framework. This is also an outstanding project in the sense that it touches upon all four points of the ASEM ministerial agenda: balanced academic mobility, quality assurance and recognition of joint programmes, engaging business and industry in education for apprenticeships, and lifelong learning, specifically vocational education/workplace learning. This success has been made possible by the contributions of a number of ministerial senior officials and academics in the respective countries, but not without challenges.

Sowing the Seeds

The initial idea was planted at the ASEM Seminar on Regional Quality Assurance in July 2011 in Bonn, where one of the recommendations put forward by 60 Asian and European experts was “to explore the possibility to fund more inter-regional curriculum development programmes in line with a cross border quality assurance procedure”. The recommendation was phrased in a modest tone and was hidden among other more burning issues in quality assurance of higher education. However, a year later, the ASEM Conference on Quality Assurance in Sevres, Paris dedicated a workshop to the topic of developing ASEM joint degree programmes with curricula jointly developed by Asian and European institutions. Chairing the workshop, Ms. Patricia Pol, Head of European and International Affairs at the French Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education, stimulated the discussion on the feasibility and scope of a pilot project and drew on the experience of the European Erasmus Mundus programme. Participants left the workshop energised, but there was no mention of any subject areas and it was unclear whether the idea had gained ground. Two months later, another ASEM Workshop on ‘Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector’ was organised in Vienna by the two leading Austrian institutions in tourism, MODUL University Vienna and MODUL Tourism College under the auspice of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture. The discussions at the workshop concentrated on two topics “New Trends in TVET and their significance for the international hotel and tourism sector” and “Successful co-operation projects between Asia and Europe in tourism and hospitality education”. The two-day workshop led to consensual conclusions by the participants which stressed that

“...more than any other sector, the tourism and hospitality industry is a global one with transnational firms and a transnational labour market. Therefore the international
tourism and hospitality industry – more than most other sectors – needs TVET curricula and TVET certifications that are both competency-based and internationally comparable, to ease transfer of credit and credentials between countries and regions that would prepare human development with comparable competencies in the ASEM” (Vienna, 2012)

Suddenly tourism and hospitality was thrust into the limelight and even became a solution to the financial crisis spreading in Europe. This position was also reflected in the workshop conclusions:

“TVET for the hospitality and tourism sector has a great potential for future cooperation within the ASEM process. Tourism is a growing industry worldwide, even in times of economic crises. Many countries in Asia and Europe are popular tourist destinations and tourist flows between Asia and Europe are increasing”.

Tourism and hospitality were given a new meaning and relevance to the ASEM education process although it sounds optimistic. Six months later, via two meetings in January and May 2013 of the Ministerial Senior Officials, the vague idea of an ASEM joint curriculum pilot project has gained ground and became a decision made by the ASEM Education Ministers in Kuala Lumpur:

“31. [The Ministers] shared the view that attractive education offerings would positively influence interregional mobility and therefore supported the proposal to set up an ASEM Joint Curriculum Development Pilot Scheme. They welcomed the intention of Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Germany, Indonesia, Lithuania and Malaysia to facilitate the implementation of the pilot scheme with financial support.” [ASEM ME4, 2013]

It is interesting to note that the idea of a joint curriculum project was born in quality assurance seminars, travelled through vocational education and training, and business engagement agendas, and finally ended in the Chair’s conclusion to improve inter-regional, balanced mobility. The meanings attached to this project have evolved over time and made the four points of the ASEM education agenda interwoven. Moreover, the motivations for the countries to participate in this joint project are different in regional and national contexts.

Why is Indonesia active in this project?

There are many reasons for why Indonesia proactively takes the lead in this project. This article mentions a few of them. Tourism and travel generated a total contribution of USD 85 billion or equivalent to 9.1% of Indonesia’s GDP in 2013, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council and Oxford Economics. This industry also produced a total of 9.4 million direct, indirect, and induced jobs (or 8% of employment) for the country in 2013. The industry has been growing faster than the supply of qualified people, both at managerial level and skilled workers. For every job directly in the tourism sector, another two jobs are created on an indirect or induced basis, making this industry one of the most important priorities in the world’s fourth largest country with a population of...
"We have a variety of schools in tourism offering a wide range of education programmes at all levels in Indonesia. There are currently 48 programmes in tourism and 148 programmes in hospitality. Therefore we are ‘brave’ enough to offer other ASEM countries the opportunity to develop joint curricula to broaden knowledge for our students. With this ASEM joint project, we hope to introduce our students to international education and training in tourism, which inherently is a very international subject. Therefore, we thought we could talk in a common language of international standards in this sector. We hope to bring international standards to Indonesia, so more of our workers can be qualified and even can work abroad. That is why we reaffirm our commitment to implement the Chair’s conclusions of ASEMME4 and volunteer to lead this initiative, and host the kick-off meeting between Asian and European higher education institutions and ministerial officials in October 2014 in Bali", said Dr. Illah Sailah, a long standing member of the ASEM senior officials meeting, Director of Learning and Student Affairs, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Indonesia.

The major obstacles identified by the Indonesian partners are student visa and English language proficiency of students and teachers. The sustainability of the project depends heavily on the continued commitment of the university leaders as well as the financial support from the government.

so that they can work with their partner universities in Europe. Indonesian Universities will offer this international master’s programmes in English to both local students and international (European) students.

"This ASEM pilot project is expected to help us to achieve many objectives. First, to upgrade the existing lecturers at colleges, who have rich teaching and professional experiences but no master’s degree qualifications. This project is an instrument to enhance quality of future tourism education programmes in Indonesia. Second, the Ministry of Education and Culture has issued a new regulation requiring all lecturers teaching at bachelor degree level to have at least a master’s degree qualification in both theoretical and practical subjects, such as cuisine, patisserie, food and beverage service, hotel management, marketing, tour design, tourism guide (museum, eco-tourism, sport, health-tourism, spa, etc.). Therefore, training new lecturers and upgrading the current lecturers are very important for the universities because without qualified lecturers their institutions and education programmes cannot meet the accreditation requirements. This, in fact, is an unexpected outcome beyond our initial plan under this ASEM framework", shared Dr. Illah Sailah, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Indonesia.

of over 250 million. Recognising the significance of tourism and hospitality in the nation’s economic growth, the Indonesian government has made effort to improve the quality of human resources in the sector.

In March 2008, tourism and hospitality education was recognised, for the first time, as an independent and fully fledged academic discipline by the Indonesian higher education authorities. This implied that education establishments may offer bachelor, master’s and doctorate degree programmes in this discipline. Furthermore, in January 2009, the new tourism law (article 53, section 1) provides explicitly that ‘all tourism workers should have competency standard’. Consequently, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism actively facilitates the undertaking of a competency certification programme for all workers in the tourism sector. These legislative changes resulted in a rapid growth in the number of education providers as well as the range of courses. There have been many initiatives introduced by the Association of Indonesian Tourism Education Institutes and the concerned Ministries, such as setting up classification of study programmes, determining competencies and learning outcomes, and establishing a research roadmap. The new policies provide education establishments with better opportunities to act more resourcefully and autonomously in catering for the rising need of a qualified workforce at all levels. The support to the tourism industry by the government has also marked a new phase in tourism higher education in Indonesia. In this context, the participation in the ASEM joint curriculum project was seen as a way to internationalise the domestic study programmes and raise the quality standards and profiles of industry-oriented education.

Four Indonesian higher education institutions were selected for this project, including three public universities, University Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, Udayana University Bali, Bandung Institute of Tourism and one private institution, Trisakti Institute of Tourism in Jakarta. The government of Indonesia has provided a sum of 150 million Rupiah (11,000 Euro) as seed money to the four higher education institutions to work together on reviewing and comparing the curricula of their existing master’s degree programmes, updating and converting them into English...
Why are European institutions interested in this joint project?

In the European Union, intra-regional student mobility and joint degree programmes have been institutionalised for several decades. However, the meanings of these policies and practices have also changed over time. In the 1980s and 1990s, the mobility programmes, such as Erasmus and Socrates, were the first major initiatives with a primary aim to create a European citizenship feeling and European identity among young people. Student mobility was seen as an instrument for increasing mutual understanding, knowledge of different cultures and languages and to develop a sense of belonging to Europe. The discourses of ‘European identity’ and ‘European citizenship’ introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, had an important impact on the Union’s policies in higher education, noticeably the Bologna Process and its ‘European dimension’. Later its ‘external dimension’ manifested in the Erasmus Mundus scheme made the objectives of student mobility and joint degree programmes become manifold and shifted the focus to ‘graduate employability’ and ‘attractiveness of the European higher education’. These changes can be observed in the Bologna Process Ministers’ Communiqué in 2001 and in 2005:

“In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability, Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with ‘European’ content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree. “ (Prague, 2001)

“The European Higher Education Area must be open and should be attractive to other parts of the world...We see the European Higher Education Area as a partner of higher education systems in other regions of the world, stimulating balanced student and staff exchanges and cooperation between higher education institutions.” [Bergen, 2005]

The Erasmus Mundus programme launched in 2004 has led to over 150 joint degree programmes at master’s and doctorate levels across Europe and also with non-European partners, mainly in academic degrees at prestigious universities for the ‘excellence’ agenda, rather than in professional master’s degrees at vocational colleges or universities of applied sciences. Ten years later, the new Erasmus+ programme launched in 2014, has opened up more opportunities for vocational and professional students to study and take apprenticeships abroad. Hence, this ASEM pilot joint project in tourism and hospitality offers a fertile ground for three universities of applied sciences, Klaipeda in Lithuania, Stralsund and Jade in Germany to work with partner universities in Europe and Asia. The German Academic Service Exchange (DAAD) with its inherent competence in cross-border educational cooperation played an important role in building up this joint project.

From Words to Deeds

This pilot project together with other initiatives presented in this first edition of the ASEM Education Gazette has gradually changed the perception of ‘ASEM as a talk-shop’ to ‘ASEM as concrete result-oriented projects’. While some sceptics may see these joint degree programmes as too complex and too expensive to implement, other internationalisation enthusiasts see the benefits outweighing the costs, especially the deep and meaningful international experiences for students. The consortium of these ASEM universities has devised a roadmap of the next steps and will convene again in early 2016 in Lithuania. Other member countries, especially those registering their interest in the early stage of this project, may resume their participation to enhance ASEM expertise in this subject area.
The ASEM Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forum: A Voice from Non-state Actors

The ASEM Rectors’ Conference (ARC) series was launched by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in October 2008 as a stakeholder response to the 1st ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM ME) “Education and Training for Tomorrow: Common Perspectives in Asia and Europe” (5-6 May 2008, Berlin, Germany). Since then, the Conference has been serving as a platform for university leaders and representatives of relevant associations, networks and international organisations to discuss the up-to-date developments in the higher education systems in Asia and Europe as well as strategic cooperation among the universities in both regions.

At ASEM ME3 “Shaping an ASEM Education Area” on 9-10 May 2011 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the Education Ministers recognised the need to strengthen the involvement of students in the ASEM Education Process. Hence, ASEF launched the Students’ Forum back-to-back with the 3rd ASEM Rectors’ Conference in 2012 in Groningen, the Netherlands. The Forum brings forth student-proposed solutions to emerging challenges facing higher education in Asia and Europe and thus provides an inter-regional venue for students to be closely engaged in the ASEM education policy discussions.

The ASEM Rectors’ Conference is a flagship project under ASEF’s Education Policy Programme which ensures that perspectives and proposals from the higher education community and civil society stakeholders are channelled to the policy makers of the ASEM Education Process. Key objectives of the ASEM Rectors’ Conference Series are:

- Develop policy recommendations for the ASEM Ministers for Education
- Share best practices in university governance and cooperation
- Reinforce the role of rectors and students in the ASEM Education Process
- Enhance partnerships among universities in ASEM countries
- Contribute to student exchanges and strengthen connections between students in ASEM countries

The meaningful contribution and added value of the ASEM Rectors’ Conference to the ASEM Education Process was acknowledged at the 2nd ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting “Sharing Experience and Best Practices on Higher Education” on 14-15 May 2009 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. On this occasion, the Ministers for the first time recognised ARC as an “Official Dialogue Partner” of the ASEM ME with ASEF being its “permanent secretariat”.

Thereafter, ARC Policy Recommendations have been contributing to the preparations of the ASEM ME and the Ministers’ deliberations. This demonstrates ARC’s important role in furthering dialogue and cooperation amongst education stakeholders in Asia and Europe as an integral part of the ASEM Education Process. All past editions of the Rectors’ Conference were commended and supported by not only the ASEM governments in the ASEM ME Chair’s Statements, but also by the wider ASEM higher education community.

In 2014, the ASEM Rectors’ Conference and Students’ Forum have become one of the initial commitments to the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which is the successor to the United Nations Decade of ESD (2005-2014). It is one of the few existing large-scale inter-regional projects aimed at advancing ESD-related policies.

The ASEM Rectors’ Conference Series

1st ASEM Rectors’ Conference (ARC1): “Between Tradition and Reform: Universities in Asia and Europe at the Crossroads” (27-29 October 2008, Free University of Berlin, Germany)

2nd ASEM Rectors’ Conference (ARC2): “Contributing to the Global Knowledge Society”, (26-27 October 2010, Korea University, Seoul, Korea)

3rd ASEM Rectors’ Conference (ARC3): “Universities, Businesses and You: For a Sustainable Future” and Students’ Forum: “Are you fit for the future?” (24-26 September 2012, Groningen University, Groningen, Netherlands)

4th ASEM Rectors’ Conference (ARC4) and Students’ Forum: “University-Business Partnerships: Asia and Europe Seeking 21st Century Solutions” (26-27 March 2015, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China)
The 4th ASEM Rectors’ Conference (ARC4)

The latest edition of ARC took place on 26-27 March 2015 in Hangzhou, China. It focused on the topic “University-Business Partnerships: Asia and Europe Seeking 21st Century Solutions”. More than 100 university leaders from across 43 ASEM member countries as well as business representatives, leaders of relevant international organisations and networks joined the Conference. The participants also included Rectors from Croatia and Kazakhstan, the two newest ASEM members. A few ASEM member countries which had never participated in previous editions of ARC attended for the first time, for example, Bangladesh, Cyprus, Malta, the Russian Federation and Switzerland. The Students’ Forum which preceded the Rectors’ Conference on 24-25 March 2015 attracted over 2400 applicants from all 51 ASEM member countries, out of whom one student from each country was selected.

Both ARC4 and the Students’ Forum were co-organised by ASEF, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, and were hosted by Zhejiang University (China). The International Association of Universities (IAU) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN) contributed as partners, and Chulalongkorn University and the Office of Higher Education Commission of Thailand as supporters.

Keynote speakers at the Conference included Mr Du Zhanyuan, Chinese Vice Minister of Education, Ms Mārīte Seile, Latvian Minister for Education and Science, Dr Kim Gwang Jo, Director of the UNESCO Office in Bangkok, and Mr Jan Truszczynski, former Director-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC).

Dr Zeng Ming, Chief Strategic Officer of Alibaba Group, the world’s largest e-commerce firm, Dr Lou Xiangming, Executive Director of the research institute of Wahaha Group, the biggest beverage company in China, as well as Ms Olga Balakina, Head of International Operations of the Finland-based start-up, technology talent and investor fair known as SLUSH joined panel discussions together with Asian and European Rectors, sharing perspectives from the business sector on the topics. As part of the programme, the organisers arranged two separate visits for the Students and Rectors to the Alibaba Group headquarters.

Quick facts about the ASEM Rectors Conference and Students Forum

- As “Official Dialogue Partner”, direct link between the higher education community, civil society stakeholders and the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting
- Track-Two diplomacy contribution to the ASEM Education Process
- One of the largest conferences for Asians and Europeans university leaders’ within the ASEM framework
- Diversity of Students’ Forum reflects the full diversity of ASEM: 51 students from 51 ASEM countries selected through an Open Call
- Policy Recommendations of both the Rectors and the Students as valuable input to the ASEM Education Ministerial Meetings
- Biennial event alternating between Asia and Europe

“ARC4 is a grand informal dialogue platform, which ensures that the information circulates all along the chain of students, rectors and policymakers.”

Minister of Education & Science, Latvia
“One of the challenges to foster university-business partnerships is to understand that knowledge systems do not only exist at university systems – they exist everywhere.”
Prof. Dinesh Singh, Vice-Chancellor of University of Delhi

The Conference concluded with the official handover of two sets of Policy Recommendations by the Rectors and Student Representatives respectively to the Latvian Minister, Ms Mārīte Seile. Together with the Latvian host of the fifth ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM ME5), ASEF will circulate these Recommendations to relevant stakeholders across Asia and Europe. Some representatives of ARC4 and the Students’ Forum will also participate in ASEM ME5 in Riga, Latvia on 27-28 April 2015.

“In the new global economy, it is crucial for universities to equip students with the right set of skills that they will need to deal with growing challenges in the job market”.
Ambassador Zhang Yan, ASEF Executive Director

The development of ARC in general and the success of ARC4 and ARC4 Students’ Forum in particular illustrate the increasingly strengthened engagement of the key stakeholders, including the civil society, in the official ASEM Education Process.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, economy, education, governance, public health and sustainable development. ASEF is a not-for-profit intergovernmental organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Together with about 700 partner organisations ASEF has run more than 650 projects, mainly conferences, seminars and workshops. Over 17,000 Asians and Europeans have actively participated in its activities and it has reached much wider audiences through its networks, web-portals, publications, exhibitions and lectures.

For more information, please visit www.asef.org
UNESCO, CEDEFOP, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) will be presenting a second edition of the Global inventory of qualifications framework developments at the fifth ASEM Ministers of Education meeting in Riga in April 2015. This is an updated work of the first report jointly presented by these international organisations at the previous ASEM event in 2013 in Kuala Lumpur.

With the report, these organisations are monitoring and characterising the development of national qualifications frameworks across the globe, analysing both the progress and the challenges in the implementation of qualifications frameworks. The inventory covers close to 90 individual country chapters and includes seven regional qualifications frameworks as well as six cross-country thematic chapters. Currently approximately 80% of the UN member states, including many ASEM countries have developed or are in the process of developing a NQF, although many are still at an early phase.

UNESCO, CEDEFOP, ETF and UIL have been writing about the NQF developments from the point of view of their own constituencies, of high, middle and low income countries, which have led to a report that uses different lenses to look at a global phenomenon the emergence of Qualifications Frameworks at national and regional levels.

Recognition of Learning Outcomes Within and Between Systems

In Europe, the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework has stimulated more and more countries to develop and formally adopt a NQF. Initially the aim of most of these NQFs was just to improve the transparency of existing qualifications within and between countries. However, seven years after the EQF was launched it seems that the reforming features of NQFs are getting stronger, with NQF becoming more embedded as tools for alignment in the national political and institutional settings.

World-wide there is an increasing link between systems for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and NQFs. NQFs can facilitate recognition in different ways, by making learning outcomes visible and measurable and because they often promote the quality assurance of validation processes in order to formally recognise the outcomes.

“The learning outcomes approach promoted through the NQFs influencing standards, curricula and assessment criteria as well..."
learning and teaching forms, signals an openness to different forms of learning and teaching, and thus fits well into the ambition of recognition and validation” (UIL)

Although NQFs are no guarantee for direct recognition, they often contribute to making learning more transparent and they have challenged existing informal skill initiatives and education systems to create better links.

“In low- and middle-income countries with large informal sectors, NQFs can provide a framework for formalising and recognising learning that would otherwise remain informal and often under-valued. NQFs can bring existing informal sector skill initiatives, and formal education and training systems closer together and improve permeability” [EFT]

A critical challenge for implementing NQFs is the lack of understanding and a systematic approach to learning outcomes-based qualifications, particularly in countries, which desire to have better qualifications. In order to establish Frameworks of Qualifications, populating the NQFs with qualifications that are based on identified needs (e.g. through occupational standards) and expressed in learning outcomes is a priority that requires systemic efforts. This includes the engagement of sectoral and professional organisations that can bring together representatives from the world of work. Once they are available, the new qualifications can become the starting point for developing programmes, allowing different learning pathways, changing the paradigm that qualifications are the end-result of a curriculum.

Systemic and Legislative Changes

NQFs that aim at systemic changes in education and/or labour market policies require legislation. The degree of regulation is determined by historical, cultural and socio-political factors. Legislation is a process that is performed in different steps, following the original act that introduces the framework. What matters more than legislating the NQF is how it affects existing laws and regulations. Many countries establish specialised institutions to support the implementation of the NQF. They can perform coordinating, or quality assurance/regulatory functions, or support the development of qualifications and sometimes provision. In reality, the functions and tasks of these institutions vary and change over time. Key to the implementation of qualifications frameworks is an active dialogue between stakeholders.

Most of the cross-country chapters compare national developments, but there are also chapters on the regional qualifications frameworks that describe the transnational cooperation between countries to develop common qualifications frameworks to link the national systems. Seven such frameworks now exist, including the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) which was adopted last year. All the regional frameworks are described in the inventory.

A New Initiative: World Reference Levels

UNESCO has started to work on developing World Reference Levels that should facilitate the international recognition of qualifications. These World Reference Levels are at an early stage and still have to prove their political legitimacy and credibility but it shows that global trends such as the development of qualifications frameworks also require global responses. A necessary condition is a common conceptual basis, which can only be learning outcomes.

“World Reference Levels of learning outcomes would provide a neutral and independent reference point against which a level of learning can be assessed. They would support mobility, and participation in the labour market and lifelong learning” [UNESCO]

They would need to be supported by agreed quality assurance principles, whose level of specificity will need to be deep enough to be meaningful at the level of an individual qualification, but broad enough to be globally shared.

The key issue is often not the technical side of these instruments, but much more the consultation, institutional and political processes that are underpinning these arrangements. Our understanding of these developments is growing. We appreciate the opportunity to report on these developments at the ASEM ministerial forum. The full publication will be available on the websites of UNESCO, CEDEFOP, ETF and UIL.