

# Workshop on the Future of European Studies in Asia

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## ABSTRACT OF PRESENTATION

### **A Case for Higher Education Co-operation between Asia and Europe**

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Higher education co-operation has always been one of the priorities of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. Today more than ever, it appears of crucial strategic importance for both Asia and Europe. The ASEM Education Hub (AEH) aims to respond to the challenge.

Internationalisation is especially relevant in the ASEM context. The Bologna process, certainly one of the major higher education initiatives taken worldwide in the past years, is greatly contributing to facilitate vigorous exchanges among European universities. Subsequently, this has helped transform Europe into a main and attractive tertiary education landscape. In Asia, rapidly booming economies, and increasingly important intra-regional processes are contributing to develop a robust and appealing higher education pole. An obvious result of those combined trends is reflected in the last International Association of Universities (IAU) survey on Internationalisation of Higher Education, where Europe and Asia respectively ranked first and second in the top geographical priorities of internationalisation efforts.

However, educational co-operation between Asia and Europe is presently essentially limited to occasional projects and bilateral collaboration between institutions. Given the growth and dynamism of the two regions, they are and will continue to be natural partners in advancing the quality and reach of higher education and mobility of the academic community in the ASEM partner countries.

Enhanced co-operation in higher education opens promising opportunities for mutual benefits, in light of Asia and Europe's emergence as crucial higher education regions. The AEH has been developed as a necessary platform to facilitate and support multilateral exchanges between Asia and Europe higher education sectors.

The AEH involves several initiatives, co-ordinated through a secretariat supported by ASEF. Its Advisory Committee is a forum for discussion between the main networks and organisations acting as both an observatory and a think-tank for ASEM higher education co-operation. Furthermore, thematic networks have been initiated and are supported, grouping universities engaged in staff and student exchanges or joint teaching and research efforts, in fields as diverse as life long learning, peace and conflict, or area studies. Greater co-operation is fostered, at the highest level of university management, through the Asia-Europe Colloquy series.

Finally, mobility is a fundamental aspect of internationalisation. Under the AEH, with the support of three key partners (the International Association of Universities, the Academic Co-operation Association and Sequence Design International), ASEF developed and maintained the Database on Education Exchange Programmes (DEEP), an online portal that provides students with comprehensive information on education opportunities in ASEM countries.

The AEH aims to be a central point for higher education co-operation among ASEM partners. It will continue to welcome and support aligned initiatives and to engage more stakeholders, as fully

developed co-operation between the higher education sectors of both regions will contribute to bringing Asian and European societies closer.