

Binding agreements take Asian and European education cooperation to next level

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By adopting the Chair's Conclusions on 28 April 2015 at the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME5), the Asian and European political leaders in education set the working agenda for the next two years until the 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting in the Republic of Korea in 2017. ASEMME5 welcomed 196 participants from 46 member countries and 11 stakeholder organisations in Riga, Latvia. The Ministers agreed on the need to increase tangible, result-oriented cooperation activities within the framework of the existing ASEM priority areas: quality assurance and recognition; engaging business and industry in education; balanced mobility; lifelong learning in technical and vocational education and training.

"When a solid governmental-level dialogue is in place, binding agreements are a natural step forward. A dialogue on a governmental level enhances scholarships, visa issues, diploma recognition, credit transfer and joint projects among universities," said the Latvian Minister for Education and Science, Ms Māriņa Seile. Over 20 bilateral meetings took place and new bilateral agreements between Asian and European countries were signed on both days of the ministerial meeting, including an agreement on mutual recognition of the higher education qualifications between China and Estonia, and China and Lithuania. On 29 April, Latvia is about to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation with Japan.

With ASEM Education Collaboration for Results as the overarching theme, the meeting considered the current global developments and their impact on education policies in ASEM countries. The plenary sessions addressed issues such as the contribution of ASEM education cooperation to the development of skills for better employability, and the current rapid technological developments that promote the emergence of new learning technologies in education. Their impact on the strengthening of the ASEM education cooperation was also discussed.

During their meeting, the Ministers reconfirmed the strategic role of education in promoting sustainable and inclusive development and innovation. They also highlighted the importance of tangible activities and cooperation and encouraged to achieve results in tangible cooperation in the field of education. The participants also stressed the importance of achieving more transparency and raising awareness of the different education systems, by making them more comparable, facilitating mobility and enhancing collaboration. They supported firm ambition to build a cross-border and cross-regional area for cooperation at policy and institutional level. They also emphasised the need for an area where mobility of students, teachers, researchers, ideas and knowledge would be the core common goal.

Next year ASEM will mark the 20th anniversary. The number of its members has grown from 28 to 53 partners (51 states in Asia and Europe and two international organisations) and it has proven to be the key platform for informal dialogue and collaboration between Asia and Europe.

With ASEMME5 concluding today, the ASEM week in Riga continues. On 29 April, the Erasmus+ Information Day will take place at the University of Latvia. Over this same period, the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEMTM3) organised by the Latvian Ministry of Transport will take place on 29-30 April.

Information for the media:

videos of the meeting are available here: <https://eu2015.lv/media-eu/photo/5th-asem-education-ministers-meeting-asem-me5>

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