

SUMMARY REPORT: SECOND EAHEP ROUND TABLE Regional Higher Education Cooperation in the Next Decade: The Bologna Process and Europe-Asia dialogue

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
Brussels, 1-3 July 2009**

Background and purpose

The EU-Asia Higher Education Platform (EAHEP) is an initiative of the European Commission, developed and implemented by the European University Association (EUA), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic). The Brussels Round Table brought together 112 Asian and European university leaders and practitioners, and representatives of higher education organisations and government agencies for an interactive discussion on European and Asian higher education reform developments.

The round table took the Bologna Process and the recent Bologna Ministerial Meeting in Leuven/Louvain as a point of departure, and compared the European reform process to developments in Asia, assessing their impact on cooperation. It addressed a variety of issues of immediate relevance to higher education institutions in both regions such as quality assurance, degree structures and recognition, research cooperation, and also the role of universities and university organisations in national and regional reform processes. In this regard, it also sought to contribute to the formulation of policy recommendations related to the new Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) education process.

The main two-day event, 2-3 July, was divided into five plenary and one break-out session, the latter included three specialist break-out discussions on: (1) Recognition and mobility: from intra-regional to inter-regional; (2) New frontiers in quality assurance: bridging national and regional frameworks; and (3) Degree structures and qualifications frameworks. The first day's programme focused on '*Lessons from the Bologna Processes and regional reform processes*' and the second day's overall theme was '*Strategic priorities for higher education development and cooperation*'. A pre-conference programme on 1 July included a European Commission information session on the European Union's external relations toward Asia, and funding opportunities for higher education and research cooperation. In addition, the EAHEP web forum was established to facilitate discussions before and after the event. This can be accessed at: www.eahep.org/blog. All the PowerPoint presentations can be found on <http://www.eahep.org/web/index.php/events/roundtables/bologna-and-asia/121-eahep-rt2-bologna-presentations.html>.

Summary of presentations

The round table event was opened by **Dirk Meganck, European Commission, Director AIDCO Unit D**, who emphasised the destinies of Europe and Asia are bound together by globalisation and the importance of an effective inter-regional dialogue. **Michael Gaebel**, Head of EUA's Higher Education Policy Unit, responded on behalf of the EAHEP Consortium by highlighting the developments and achievements of Asian higher education, as well as its huge diversity.

SESSION 1:

The Bologna Process in the light of global transition: The next decade

Lesley Wilson, EUA Secretary General and Member of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), in her key-note speech, spoke on '*Reflections on the past decade of Bologna, ambitions for the next one*'. She indicated that the event was an important opportunity that challenges us to reflect, rethink and clarify our mutual reform processes. Her talk explored the shifting responsibilities and contexts in European higher education and research and the important differences between the Bologna 46 country educational convergence process and the EU 27 Lisbon Strategy that focused more on creating jobs, skills and enhancing Europe's capacity for research and innovation. The European University Association (EUA), which represents 800 universities and 34 National Rectors' Conferences, plays a significant role both in the Bologna Process and in discussions on the European Research Area (ERA).

She pointed to the diversity of European higher education systems, which are structured in different ways with a mix of binary and unitary systems and about 4500 higher education institutions (HEI), with approximately 2000 PhD-awarding institutions. Bologna's success partly rests on it being a voluntary process with a small bureaucracy. Since the reform process started in 1999, over 95% of European HEI have the 3 degree cycles in place. A series of reference points have been implemented at national and European level including: ECTS credits, the Diploma Supplement, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), and a strategy for European higher education in a global setting. The Leuven Ministerial Communiqué of 2009 introduced the second decade of European reforms, seeking to maintain the reform momentum and setting an ambitious new 20% mobility benchmark for all those graduating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2020. The first Bologna Global Forum in 2009 also marks an important development in the relationship between Bologna and the rest of the world. Bologna is a way of internationalising European universities and enhancing international global cooperation and competition.

Hélène Clark, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Director Unit B, spoke on *‘Bologna and the Lisbon Strategy: Europe’s modernisation agenda and the global implications’*. Her talk focused on the EU strategy to create jobs, growth and the need to improve social inclusion by improving the number of trained and well-qualified citizens in tertiary education. She showed a number of comparative charts that illustrated the need for European action to meet the five European benchmarks in reading, upper secondary completion rates, lifelong learning participation, early school leavers and graduates. Europe needs a sufficient critical mass of well-trained and educated citizens. For the higher education sector, this requires more university autonomy and accountability within national frameworks and more financial support from private sources. Increased student mobility is important for inter-cultural dialogue; EU programmes have increased growth from 3000 students in 1987 to 180,000 in 2007. There is an aim to make student mobility not the exception but the principle. Strengthening the knowledge triangle between education- research-innovation is important. The EU also seeks to strengthen business-university links as well as to support initiatives to produce global multi-dimensional rankings for higher education institutions.

Following these two keynote speeches there were a number of questions from the audience that explored how to remove obstacles to mobility, the need for more researchers in maths and science, the linkages between teaching-learning-research, university ranking problems, improving social inclusion and the requirement for study programmes to improve employability. It was emphasised that any system for university ranking must recognise institutional diversity and employ some sort of global multi-dimensional approach. Various obstacles to mobility must be removed and there is a strong need for better information in this area.

SESSION 2:

Regional perspectives on Asian higher education development

The second session presented Asian higher education reform developments at national and regional level, in order to find out whether they address similar issues, and to what extent supranational approaches have been established or are under preparation.

The session started with input presentations followed by a moderated question and answers panel chaired by Lesley Wilson. The first presentation gave an overview of pressures and drivers in Asian HE reform and development, considering, in particular, schemes for enhanced cross-border cooperation and systems convergence. This was followed by two presentations that approached the issues from a sub-regional (ASEAN) and national approach (Pakistan).

Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee, National University of Singapore (NUS), Director of EU Centre, provided an overview of *‘The Asian higher education development’*. Her talk was from the researcher’s point of view of regional cooperation and integration in Asia. She described the complicated regional architecture that exists in Asia, a patchwork of regional cooperation with no overarching blueprint or direction. There is a multitude of actors and agents and a

high degree of informality and flexibility. Current regional higher educational bodies and initiatives in Asia and Asia-pacific include: The Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP), University Mobility in Asian and the Pacific (UMAP) and Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN). It is important to note that ASEAN is not like the EU as it is essentially an intergovernmental organisation. In 2003, ASEAN leaders agreed on an ambitious goal to create an 'ASEAN Community' – comprised of economic, political and socio-cultural elements by 2020 (deadline now revised to 2015). The benefits of creating a common higher education space for Southeast Asia are clear. But the realities of diversity (instructional practices, linguistic differences, curriculum approaches, structures, bureaucracy, etc.) within these countries makes this task very difficult. It is particularly problematic to rethink educational norms, invest in institutions and overcome nationalistic and protectionist approaches. However, there are some grounds for some optimism. There are signs that bottom-up initiatives may well overshadow top-down approaches to help create a more dynamic and deeper reform process.

Dr. Supachai Yavaprabhas, Director SEAMEO-RIHED, Thailand, spoke on '*Current realities in regional dialogue*'. He explored the Southeast Asian higher education landscape, SEAMEO RIHED's initiatives on the harmonisation process (convergence in higher education), and convergence of infrastructure (key elements of the harmonisation process). In Southeast Asia there are more than 5000 HEIs of which approximately 180 are universities. The region has highly centralised, ministry-regulated, as well as autonomous, higher education systems. The number of international students varies between countries in the region as does the distribution of outgoing mobile students to different parts of the world. Staff and student mobility between different countries in the region is limited and only UMAP and AUN are really active in promoting this sort of multilateral exchange. There is also a great variety of experience and sophistication in the provision and effectiveness of national quality assurance agencies; the first was established in the Philippines in 1955 and the most recent in Cambodia in 2006. Many of the regional developments and dialogue to enhance the educational reforms are relatively recent and the various forums that exist meet at different levels; progress in regional cooperation is relatively slow. The lack of regional harmonisation has led SEAMEO-RIHED to try to raise awareness among key stakeholders, promote change, and emphasise higher education as an important engine for social and economic growth. There is a need for an Asian higher education qualifications framework, a register for quality assurance agencies, Diploma Supplement, standards and guidelines for quality assurance, and a credit transfer system. There is progress in some of these areas and it was agreed by ASEAN Ministers in January 2009 to develop a template for an ASEAN credit transfer system. It is important to keep up and intensify the pressure for suitable reforms.

Prof Atta-ur-Rhaman, Chairman, Higher Education Commission, Coordinator General, COMSTECH, Pakistan spoke about '*National perspectives in a regional context: Pakistan*'. He presented a broad overview of the recent developments and transformations in Pakistan higher education. He touched upon the strategies he employed as Federal Minister of

Education and Chairman of the Higher Education Commission. He emphasised that a requirement for rapid progress was a mix of human capital with knowledge and skills, good science and technology and suitable innovative structures to promote innovation and entrepreneurship. This needs to be augmented with an appropriate higher education budget, better funding of key people and organising clusters of researchers. He has put in place a reform strategy that embraces basic science, applied science, social sciences, economics and financial management and linkages with industry. This was augmented with appropriate salaries, tax breaks and conditions designed to attract and develop the brightest minds and reverse the brain drain. Links were built with well-regarded Western universities (including 50 UK universities) as well as employing new technology to speed developments. The quality assurance agency oversees this process, regulates university quality enhancement cells, arranges capacity building training, serves as a master trainer and monitors quality. The result is a change in the Pakistan university landscape with more publications, citations and PhD completions. He also underlined that Pakistan would comply with the Bologna Process.

The three presentations referred to national and regional reform trends, which develop elements and approaches similar to those of the Bologna Process; but they also pointed to the challenges in developing valid and robust approaches to regional cooperation in higher education

Following these three presentations there was a panel discussion on the question of the possibility of ‘*a regional convergence process for Asia.*’ Lesley Wilson, as session chair, posed the following four questions: (1) In what respect can the European HE integration process serve as a model for Asia?; (2) Which other factors must be considered when developing regional integration in Asia?; (3) What are the advantages to regional integration? How have existing regional political bodies furthered or hindered this agenda? How do larger more developed countries fit in?; and, (4) What is the added value of region-to-region cooperation in HE and research?

The resulting discussions and exchanges highlighted the need for bottom-up reform to complement top-down initiatives. University autonomy was seen as very important for higher education reform, as was outside help, support and expertise. EU projects were identified as useful in this context as well as drawing on various Bologna action lines.

SESSION 3:

Reform under the Bologna Process: success and lessons learned

The session began with an introductory presentation by **Gerard Madill, Senior Programme Manager EUA Higher Education Policy Unit** on, ‘*Creating a higher education area: from policies and tools to practice.*’ This presentation set the scene and related European developments to the three workshop themes: recognition and mobility, quality assurance, and qualifications frameworks. The very complex Bologna reforms have been adopted and the challenge is their full implementation across 46 countries. Bologna is not about harmonisation and the creation of identical study programmes but about the creation of

converged structures - comparable and compatible systems that are transparent and easy to make informed judgements about. Bologna employs a range of tools and devices designed to improve transparency (and therefore mobility and recognition) that include: the Lisbon Recognition Convention; Diploma Supplements; ENICs/NARICs; qualifications frameworks (3 cycle systems); quality assurance 'Standards and Guidelines'; ECTS. The building blocks of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are learning outcomes (with different types and applications), credits and clear cycle descriptors. In some areas implementation has been relatively rapid and successful while in others progress is slower and more difficult – progress is detailed in the various 'Stocktaking', 'Trends' and 'Bologna with Student Eyes (ESU)' reports. The main lessons learned from the Bologna experience include: the need to adopt a realistic timescale; to involve all stakeholders (the EHEA is greater than the sum of its parts); to be aware of unintended consequences; to realise that the implementation of reforms is very difficult and time-consuming.

The three break-out sessions were organised with a chair, rapporteur and two or three short presentations to introduce and stimulate discussion. In the second part of the break-out sessions, the chairs led the discussions and sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the lessons learned from the Bologna process on this topic?
- What are the current initiatives in Asia on this issue and do they or do they not mirror Bologna?
- What can Asia learn from Bologna, what can Bologna learn from Asia?

The rapporteurs collected key points from the break-out sessions, which were presented by the general-rapporteur, Stephen Adam at the end of the second day of the event that focused on 'Strategic priorities for higher education development and cooperation'. The three break-out sessions were:

1. Recognition and Mobility: from intra-regional to inter-regional

The break-out group was chaired by **Andrejs Rauhvargers, Latvian Rectors Council**, and the rapporteur was **Michael Hörig, EUA**. The session assessed the experiences of European and Asian initiatives in enhancing international mobility of students and graduates. It focused on actual and projected mobility and goals, but also on the underlying implications for institutional policies and curricula planning.

Siegbert Wuttig, DAAD, Germany, spoke about '20 years of Erasmus mobility'. He indicated that the Erasmus programme is a European Union mobility programme, launched in the 1980s, which has come to be known as a 'brand' for European mobility. But despite its acclaim, and the past 10 years of the Bologna process that aims to render mobility between countries more feasible and desirable, many objectives have yet to be met in terms of actually increasing and facilitating mobility.

Takao Kamibeppu, Tokyo Jogakkan College spoke about '*Prospects for Asian Erasmus*'. He indicated that Japan has declared its intention to launch and support an 'Asian Erasmus', and has invited other nations in Asia to join this initiative. The presentation suggested different scenarios for an Asian mobility scheme, cited existing initiatives and pilots, and pointed to the challenges that lay ahead.

2. *New frontiers in Quality Assurance: bridging national and regional approaches*

The break-out group was chaired by **Luc Weber, University of Geneva**, and the rapporteur was **Tia Loukkola, EUA**. The presentations illustrated the relationship between institutional, national and supra-national levels in quality assurance, and assessed the added value for the university and its members, including students. Luc Weber gave a short introduction on '*the developments in European quality assurance under Bologna and challenges for the next decade*'.

Norma Ryan, University College Cork, Irish Bologna Promoter, spoke about '*the European dimension of quality assurance*', the establishment of which is one of the core action-lines of the Bologna Process. Bologna has created mechanisms and tools that complement quality mechanisms at institutional and national level and opened up the discussion on a quality culture across national borders. Using the case of Irish Universities as an example, she concluded that, in Ireland, the Bologna Process has driven reforms and modernisation. In particular, the European dimension of quality assurance has encouraged universities to be outward looking, provided models of good practice, enabled change rather than restricted it and fostered internationalisation of agendas of Irish universities. It was concluded that a shared QA system contributes to enhancing transparency and fostering international cooperation and exchange, e.g. through the recognition of curricula and degrees. It is also a good basis for facilitating mobility of staff and students, and joint degrees, and allows for greater cultural diversity.

Tan Kay Chuan, Office of Quality Management, National University of Singapore explored the '*The next decade for Asian higher education and research and its impact on the Bologna Process and European universities*'. In his presentation he outlined the changes in the educational and research landscape in Asia comparing how these relate to the developments in Europe in the framework of Bologna Process. The second part of the presentation was dedicated to ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) which is an initiative to establish quality assurance at regional level. The presentation explained motivations for, and the development stages of, the AUN-QA.

3. *Degree structures and qualifications frameworks*

The break-out group was chaired by **Stephen Adam, educational consultant**, and the rapporteur was **Gerard Madill, EUA**. The vision of degrees in Europe has fuelled the discussion on employability of graduates and the need for common transparency tools such as qualifications frameworks. Stephen Adam gave a short introduction to the topic and the distinctions between types of qualifications framework, and what they can achieve and what they can help achieve. He also explored how frameworks relate to qualifications, quality assurance, mobility, recognition, educational standards and pose severe challenges in terms of national implementation.

Volker Gehmlich, Fachhochschule Osnabrück, presented the '*German and European Qualifications Frameworks*'. He explained the approach taken in Germany and how Europe has made considerable progress since 1999 in re-defining degree structures and mapping them to National Qualifications Frameworks that adhere to a commonly agreed European qualifications framework. This is a work in progress that has been realised at variable speeds, with variable understanding, and there still remains much to be done.

Sharifah Hapsah Shahabudin, Vice-Chancellor University Kebangsaan, Malaysia, explained '*the Malaysian qualifications framework (MQF)*'. Malaysia is one Asian country that has developed a national qualifications framework. This has been a highly successful model that provides valuable lessons for other countries. She explored the reasons for establishing the MQF (problems with the old systems), its added value (including more transparency, standards, flexibility and progression) and the challenges in realising them. The scope for Europe-Asia cooperation in further development of national and regional qualifications frameworks is important as is the role of the MQF in ASEAN developments.

SESSION 4:

Asia-Europe research cooperation: linking research and higher education agendas

A key characteristic of university education is that it is research-based. While the Bologna Process focuses on reforming teaching and learning, the 2003 Prague Declaration included doctorates as the third study cycle and highlighted the necessity of relating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to the European Research Area (ERA).

This session was organised as a panel discussion with five short initial inputs from the panel members. It was chaired by **Tadeusz Luty, Wroclaw University of Technology, EUA Board member**, who introduced the session and explained how '*the European Research Area (ERA) and the EHEA overlap and complement each other and the relationship between European research and international cooperation*'. He indicated that what is done for European higher education needs to be done for research. Most research budgets are nationally funded. The European Research Area (ERA) needs similar priority to that enjoyed by the Bologna process, and the ERA and EHEA need to be linked. He highlighted the 2007

green paper re-launching the ERA and its six main dimensions as well as the EUA 2009 Prague Declaration's message to political leaders.

Morshidi Sirat, Universiti Sains, Malaysia spoke on '*Research mobility and collaboration in Asia*'. He emphasised that universities contribute to society by improving the level of human capital and this sort of development is crucial in Asia. Globalisation and competition has led governments to think more strategically and about knowledge production and the goal of capacity building, not status building, should dominate this. Universities are reorganising themselves to meet the new challenges and numerous opportunities for collaborative research exist. However, research and innovation must be sustainable. In Malaysia there is research collaboration in all universities and it takes many forms. It is important properly to underpin collaborative research and mobility as they involve complex negotiation of plural cultures, languages and knowledge.

Philippe Vialatte, DG Research, European Commission, explored the '*International dimension of FP7*' with regards to cooperation with Asian countries and regions. The FP7, an instrument with €50 billion, is designed firstly to respond to Europe's needs in terms of employment, competitiveness and the quality of life. The presenter explored the basic principles for the FP7 structure and ongoing international cooperation with Asian countries and regions that seek to solve common problems, build lasting links, address global challenges and develop common standards. He explained the various FP7 tools used to facilitate cooperation, including: INCO-NETs, ERANET, BILAT, ACCESS4EU, FP7 contact points. A Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology cooperation (SFIC) was established in 2009 to help set priorities. It is important to develop ties between Asian and European researchers and generate durable networks.

Intan Ahmad, Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia, spoke about '*Capacity building in research collaboration*'. Indonesia has 2800 universities with large variations in quality. The general research level is mixed and many constraints exist. Very few faculties have master programmes and relatively low numbers of PhDs are completed. As a consequence there is limited research capacity. It is a daunting task to overcome such a situation, and strategic collaborations with other universities are important for the development and improvement of the research base and overall research capacity.

James Browne, National University of Ireland, Galway, spoke on the topic '*Institutional collaboration: models and practice – the Galway experience*'. The National University of Ireland, Galway, actively seeks collaboration in specialist areas where it has its research strengths. It has identified research themes and builds on strengths of the region and partnerships with local industry. It has developed research links with India and China, and cooperation extends to joint papers, and staff and student exchange. Good student-staff exchanges are based on complementary interests and strengths. Higher education institutions must be aware that there are huge transaction costs associated with research collaboration and careful incremental funding is important. The general advice was to build collaboration on firm foundations. The importance of seed money was highlighted, as several of Galway's

international research cooperations have been started with relatively small grants from the European Commission, and could be sustained and further developed, after the funding expired.

Following these presentations the session chair explored several questions on research based education including: How has the research agenda evolved under Bologna? What are the current practices in international research collaboration with Asia? How does the ERA relate to other world regions? The discussions confirmed also that the transaction costs (staff time, travel, administrative support etc.) for developing and maintaining international cooperation are relatively high.

SESSION 5:

Closing discussion: Projections and possibilities for EU-Asia regional cooperation and dialogue

A report was presented by the general rapporteur Stephen Adam summarising the discussions and main points that arose from the three break-out groups (for details, see session 3 above). This was followed by a panel discussion session chaired by Stephen Adam, and four brief presentations from the panellists. The following comments and observations are based on the reports of the break-out session rapporteurs.

1. Break-out group: *Recognition and mobility: from intra-regional to inter-regional*

Observations:

- Dialogue has to intensify to clarify key aspects of existing tools such as our understanding of credits based on total workload and learning outcomes and not simply contact time. There is also a need for practical efforts to achieve more balanced mobility flows between institutions.
- Effective networking between universities for exchange and collaboration is vitally important as this facilitates exciting and useful initiatives in terms of joint and double degrees, aided by new technologies, as frameworks for mobility. Mobility is built on recognition and trust, which develops over time.
- New initiatives are needed to aid mobility, including shorter mobility possibilities that lead to longer periods. Work placements and summer schools can help. There needs to be a debate about academic mobility and what exactly is useful mobility? Undertaking a language course holds massive benefits.

Comments:

- Huge benefits result from mobility (e.g. individual growth, language skills, employability). We must foster all types of mobility and the Europe-Asia dialogue should continue to explore this dimension
- We must have trust between academics and give full credits and grades for successful transfer students.

- There is a need to create trust and not to seek precise equivalence for transfer students – rather ‘fair recognition’.
- New technology should be employed to implement internet-based modules that facilitate different types of mobility. A global lecture hall should be created.

2. **Break-out group: *New frontiers in quality assurance: bridging national and regional approaches***

Observations:

- The group explored the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) initiative and the European approach to quality assurance in the framework of the Bologna Process.
- Quality depends highly on funding, academic autonomy and human resources. It is clear that external (and internal) quality assurance processes alone, although they are important, do not guarantee quality.
- The need for good quality assurance systems is crucial both in Asia and Europe, especially in the context of the ‘massification’ of education, its increasing diversity and internationalisation, and the growing need for accountability, related to increased levels of autonomy.
- A quality enhancement approach is more efficient for quality improvement than approaches that emphasise sanctions and punishments.
- Defining common standards and processes is difficult, even among universities with similar profiles.
 - Defining and measuring transparent learning outcomes is what quality assurance is moving towards globally.

Recommendations:

- There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution or approach to quality assurance - national and institutional contexts need to be taken into account. Therefore we should not aim for similar quality assurance models or standards to be adopted in Europe and Asia. The ‘*European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*’ may serve as a source of inspiration in Asia, but should not simply be copied.
- A number of potential future activities include development of benchmarking and the sharing experts and experiences

3. **Break-out group: *Degree structures and qualifications frameworks***

Observations:

- The group explored the nature, purposes and benefits of qualifications frameworks and how qualifications frameworks (QF) varied in nature, detail, level, purpose, etc.
- There are clear links between qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition, mobility, transparency and employability.

- Multiple European frameworks exist: The (Bologna) Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education (FQ-EHEA), the (European Union) European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQFLLL) and ‘new style’ national qualifications frameworks (NQF). Each of these have different characteristics and functions.
- The session explored and discussed differences and similarities between the German and Malaysian NQF and what was the value added (recognition, transparency, common standards, etc.) of introducing these ‘new style’ (based on learning outcomes) frameworks.
- It acknowledged the existence of the challenges presented by their implementation - especially the huge academic change in culture they represent and
- Discussed the place of student-centred learning, learning outcomes (of various types), credits, binary divides, level descriptors and the importance of bottom-up change in the context of qualifications frameworks.

Recommendations:

- We cannot, and must not, make a photocopy of Bologna for Asia – it is not appropriate and will not work.
- There is a need for reform champions at regional, national and institutional levels to promote and explain suitable educational reforms.
- There is a need for joint expert discussions and workshops on sectoral framework/subject benchmarks statements (e.g. the Tuning project) in order to exchange good practice and practical level experiences.
- Workshops are required on the implementation of qualifications frameworks at institutional level for senior management, administrators and academics.
- Reciprocal Europe-ASEAN/Asian subject study centres should be established to facilitate mutual understanding and the academic study of each region.

The break-out groups enjoyed lively and fruitful discussions and the overall message was agreement about a strong need to continue and enhance the Europe-Asia dialogue in order to promote further cooperation, share experience, including lessons to be learned from Bologna mistakes and problems. It is clear that in terms of globalisation our destinies are interlinked. We all have to undertake educational reform to make our education systems fit for the 21st century. However, we must recognise that major differences exist between Asian and European higher education, with varying regional, national and local priorities. We also face many common educational problems which have common solutions, and tools to employ, so we must share our experiences. The major issue is how to move things on to our mutual benefit in the context of so many current initiatives. There could be more of a focus on concrete technical help at the institutional level (where reform is started and halted) to aid the bottom-up reform process – practical targeted workshops to share both good and bad experience. In the past, the Asia-Link programme has facilitated not only disciplinary cooperation, but also work on these more horizontal issues, such as curricula development and teaching methods, capacity building and institutional development.

A re-launch of this programme, combined with networking and coordination meetings which would consider the horizontal issues, and link it to the policy processes, could be a very powerful driver for reform and development in higher education, which could be expected to stimulate sustainable exchange and cooperation relations of universities between but also within both regions.

We should consider inter-regional framework linkages - in order to develop a 'community of practice' as envisaged by the *'Bologna Global Policy Forum'*, held in April 2009 just prior to the Leuven Bologna event (<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/forum/>).

Furthermore, consideration should be given to establishing Asian information/recognition centres to link to the existing European ENIC/NARIC information centres as these would prove invaluable networks for resolving problems and enhancing mobility between the regions. European and Asian recognition conventions could usefully be linked. It is the clear message of the Round Table that we must continue our Asia-Europe dialogue for continued mutual benefit.

Final panel, summary and recommendations

The final panel event was designed to link round table discussions back to the overall theme of cooperation. It consisted of four brief presentations followed by questions and answers directed by the panel chair. **Nantana Gajaseni, Executive Director of the ASEAN University Network (AUN)**, spoke about *'Prospects for an enhanced EU-Asia dialogue from ASEAN's perspective'*. The 21 AUN members were involved with a variety of inter-regional partnership projects, network initiatives and exchange programmes with Europe, China, Korea and Japan. They have adopted a roadmap for the ASEAN community 2009-2015. Dr Gajaseni outlined the common interests for international cooperation and their long-term strategic plan. Policy makers should mandate a proportion of all EU and Asia collaborations to involve researchers and higher education institutions, support regional databases and quality assurance initiatives with the aim of creating sustainable partnerships.

Eva Åkesson, Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Lund, spoke about *'Regional higher education cooperation in the next decade - the Bologna process and Europe-Asia dialogue'*. She described the positive attitude towards the Bologna process in Sweden and how it helps to promote educational reforms, involving a shift from teaching to learning, inputs to outcomes, and enhanced pedagogy, assessment and quality assurance. The process has opened up many opportunities for the university, including improved employability for graduates, cross-disciplinary collaboration and joint degrees. Lund has adopted a clear policy towards internationalisation and mobility based on student consultation: 'ask them what they want – do not guess'. The dialogue with Asia is regarded as beneficial and important but must be part of a long-term strategy combining top-down and bottom-up elements.

Hanneke Teekens, Director and Board member of the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic), emphasised that Europe is an

idea, not a confined geographical space and this is particularly true in education. Bologna is a process that started in Europe and is now a model for cooperation beyond the borders of Europe. The same holds true for Asia: it is a continent with borders that blur into other regions. Both Europe and Asia know a tremendous diversity of languages and cultures. We have to learn more about each other and people-to-people contacts are very important in education and research. Asia and Europe have long-standing relationships that in the 21st century need new forms of cooperation. The notion of what a university is and what the learning outcomes of graduates should be is an important debate and there should be no attempt to develop one notion of a university. There are a number of key issues that need to be considered, including: the need for more cooperation on staff and student mobility; reciprocal centres in Asia and Europe to provide better knowledge of each other's systems; discuss 'brain drain' issues; unbalanced mobility flows and more web-based activities; and an examination of different ways internationalisation can be organised. There are important lessons to be learned from the EAHEP project: to link learning and research closely; be conscious of each other's problems; publicise good and bad experiences in cooperation. A key conclusion is that all graduates in Asia and Europe need the competencies to live and work in globalised working and living conditions, not only those who have become involved in people to people international mobility. That means not only the rethinking of actual mobility but also more time and attention (funds!) are needed to include schemes for virtual exchanges and the international dimension of the curriculum for the home students in both Asia and Europe.

Michael Gaebel, Head of the Policy Unit, European Universities Association (EUA), indicated that the Round Table had contributed to enhancing mutual understanding of the higher education reform efforts that are currently taking place in Asia and in Europe at institutional, national and regional level. The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area, the European Union with its Lisbon Agenda and its European Research Area, and ASEAN and its charter with actual and potential impacts on higher education and research are concrete examples that demonstrate the influence of a regional political framework that impact higher education and research beyond national borders. It was demonstrated during the conference that quality assurance in Europe and in parts of Asia is developing a regional dimension, which complements quality assurance arrangements at institutional and national level. Qualifications frameworks are developed in Europe at European level, and at national level. Some Asian countries already have such frameworks, while for others they are a topic of great interest. If ASEAN succeeds in developing a joint reference qualifications framework, this may be of relevance for other countries in the region, and beyond. Plans exist to boost mobility in both regions. The European Commission launched its Erasmus scheme 20 years ago, to develop the mobility of students, also with regards to the labour needs of the joint European market. More recently, Erasmus Mundus has contributed to European exchange with other parts of the world.

The EU-Asia Higher Education Platform (EAHEP) project, that facilitated the current round table, ends in December 2009. The ASEM Education Ministerial Process was launched last year and there are good prospects for continued Asia-Europe higher education dialogue and cooperation. There is a clear architecture, in ministerial meetings, senior officials meetings,

agreed priorities, and the concrete activities set out to implement them. A secretariat has been established, to ensure coordination and follow-up. However, ministers alone will not be able to change institutions. This requires the active contribution of stakeholders.

Therefore, also in 2008, the ASEM University Platform was launched, known as the ASEM Rectors' Process, by the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the European University Association (EUA). This is recognised by the ASEM Ministers, as an effort to match the governmental process, and to establish a robust, efficient and visible stakeholder process. It will hold an ASEM Rectors' Conference every two years.

The current Round Table has been understood not only as an event under the EU-Asia Higher Education Platform, but also as a contribution to the ASEM Education Process. There is a general interest in facilitating further information exchange, on policy processes at regional level, and on developing specific activities and instruments. Speakers have demonstrated how complex the regional reform initiatives are. Bologna reforms are not all transferable to the Asian region. It is important that there is an examination of the actual needs and realities of universities and university systems. The challenge is to keep to feasible useful developments, information exchange and capacity building.

Two issues should be taken into take into consideration for the future: firstly, there was a good participation in the ASEM ministerial meeting in Hanoi, but we have also to ensure at stakeholders' level that institutions from big countries in Asia are fully involved, and participate actively in events such as the current round table; secondly, how to involve the many existing initiatives and integrate them so that they can feed into the upcoming workshops and the ASEM Rectors' conference in 2010. If too many events take place, with no systematic follow-up, this might put any process at risk. Therefore, it might need the Rectors' process and a platform to ensure that process is not only made, but also stated.

Final panel question: the four panel members were asked to make one key recommendation from their different perspectives on the way forward for the Asia-Europe dialogue. They all confirmed the importance of continuing the dialogue. It was suggested that we must intensify and rethink the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to facilitate mobility. The policy process exists for cooperation but this needs to be augmented with more scholarships and practical teaching and research cooperation. The myriad number of Asia-Europe initiatives, organisations and bodies that exist would benefit from more coordination, provided that diversity is not compromised. It must be recognised that universities have a major role to play, and need to be supported, in the Asia-Europe dialogue and various dimensions of quality, transparency, mobility, autonomy and ICT are interlinked. Asian and European education institutions face many common problems and can certainly learn from each other but this does not mean that Asia should copy Bologna – it must create its own solutions and ways forward, informed by appropriate best practice. The Brussels Round Table provided a large number of fruitful points for future constructive dialogues.

Stephen Adam 29.09.2009