



5th ASEM Rectors' Conference Policy Recommendations for the 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6) 2017, Korea

Society and the economy are facing rapid changes driven by on-going digitalisation and globalisation, which create an increasing need for adaptability within the private, public, and third sectors. In order to prepare students for the future, these developments call for stronger relations and interactions between all sectors and higher education institutions. Possible solutions entail the deliberation of curricula towards a better quality of employability for students, opportunities for students to have work-study as well as work-life balance, and open platforms for dialogue between universities, businesses, third sector, government, and students. The different perspectives, concerns, needs, ideas, and innovations from all sectors are crucial towards preparing students to succeed in the new economy and contribute as responsible citizens to sustainable development.

To this aim, the participants of the 5th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC5) that took place on 6-8 April 2016 at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, propose recommendations for consideration by the ASEM partners. These recommendations were formed in several working groups on the topic of "Employability: Asia and Europe Prepare the New Generation," while taking note of the priorities voiced by students of the ARC5 Students' Forum and Policy Recommendations put forth at the 4th ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC4) in 2015 in Hangzhou, China.

An overarching need expressed by the ARC5 participants is the strengthening of existing, or development of new, platforms for interaction between Asia and Europe on the concerns, barriers, opportunities, and best practices related to employability and sustainable development. ASEM partners should encourage interactions involving actors from higher education institutes, industry, public sector, third sector, and students, and invite all stakeholders to engage in the ASEM policy recommendation implementation process.* The recommendations below are founded on the ability of all stakeholders to engage in mutual exchange across the two regions and across sectors.*

To encourage an "employment-friendly" curriculum, ASEM partners should:

1. Support and facilitate frameworks/models for universities to:
 - a. engage in mutual exchange with industry, NGO, public sector, students, alumni, and other relevant stakeholders on curriculum matters for employability;
 - b. raise awareness of employability and related transferrable and soft skills and competencies amongst faculty to encourage reflection and co-development of programs and curricula to address student employability (including attention to student-centred pedagogy)*;
 - c. develop or maintain and ensure equal opportunity is offered to all students to undertake internship and other work-integrated learning opportunities in ways that are relevant within various disciplines (e.g., engagement in joint research collaborations).
2. Decrease bureaucratic and financial barriers to student engagement in work-integrated learning opportunities;
3. Support and encourage universities to offer recognition to collaborating partners that provide work-integrated learning experiences for students.

*Also prioritised at the 4th ASEM Rectors' Conference in 2015 in Hangzhou, China

To acknowledge the importance of work-study balance, extracurricular activities, and exchanges, ASEM partners should:

1. Facilitate the development of new models/frameworks that:
 - a. strengthen intercontinental mobility (e.g., by addressing barriers to obtaining visas, issues around labor laws, providing financial support when appropriate)*;
 - b. advocate and support flexibility of learning paths (e.g., internships, work-study, volunteer/community service, intercontinental exchange, cross-/interdisciplinary exchange, and other extracurricular activities);
 - c. build in equity considerations.
2. Support existing, and facilitate development of new, programs for intercontinental mobility, for example, the ASEM DUO Fellowship Program, activities by the Asia-Europe Foundation such as the ASEF Summer University, and others;
3. Create pathways to increase opportunities for collaboration between universities and other sectors (corporate, SME, public, NGO) (e.g., facilitate mutual awareness, incentivize partnerships)*;
4. Support and facilitate the development and/or maintenance of monitoring systems that involve feedback from students, university faculty, and respective (private, public, third) sector partners to assure quality and assess outcomes of work-integrated learning experiences;
5. Stimulate research on employability, for example, as initiated by the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub).

To better address the challenges of the New Economy, ASEM partners should:

1. Support education systems that offer pathways that create more connectivity, mobility, and a greater public recognition of the value of the full diversity of higher education institutes and across various disciplines, for example, by creating a good balance between social sciences and technology research.
2. To provide adequate funding and incentives for higher education policy initiatives and the creation of awareness for sustainable development goals including poverty alleviation.
3. Leverage on instruments offered by the New Economy to facilitate and support the mobility of students, academic staff and recent graduates between Asia and Europe, e.g., the usage of data-driven approaches to better match students to the labour market.
4. Support stakeholders in seizing the opportunities by the New Economy to better access knowledge and information platforms.

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