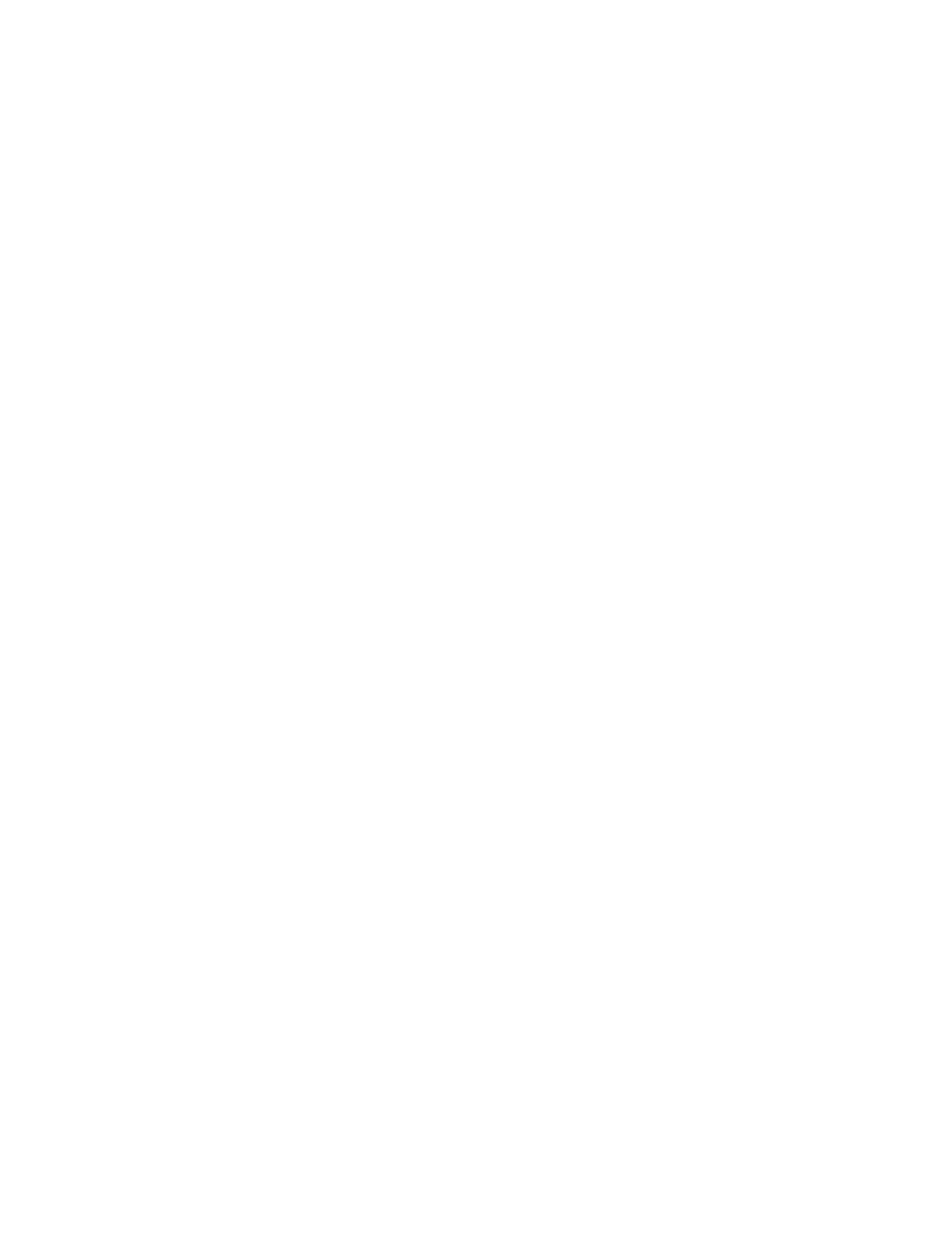


# The EU-Asia Higher Education Platform

A 2 year project of the European Commission,  
implemented by EUA, DAAD and NUFFIC

## Executive summary of project events





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## Project and Objectives

EAHEP (EU-Asia Higher Education Platform) was an initiative of the European Commission to promote cooperation in higher education between Asian and European countries under the Asia-Link Programme, to complement the partnership projects that have been facilitated since 2002. The initiative was jointly implemented by the **European University Association (EUA)**, the **German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)**, and the **Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic)** in 2008 and 2009. The project specifically aimed to:

- provide a sustainable forum (on the internet and through meetings) for disseminating project results, lessons learned, and good practice gained under Asia-Link and similar vehicles for EU Asia-higher education cooperation
- provide information on (a) the practical issues of higher education cooperation, (b) the common challenges faced by higher education administrators/ policy-makers in Europe and Asia, and (c) the role higher education cooperation can play in development, particularly in least-developed countries in Asia
- assist EU and Asian higher education institutions and organisations in preparing for increased student and academic mobility between the two regions, and/or between Asian countries.

Asian countries eligible for EAHEP funding were Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, the Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Brunei, Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Singapore, South Korea could be associated to EAHEP activities but were not directly eligible for funding.

Eligible countries in Europe were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FYROM, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

The project addressed the university community, higher education organisations and government agencies and consisted of a series of events organised mainly in Asia:

- European Higher Education fairs and symposia in New Delhi November 2008 and in Bangkok, November 2009
- A round table on *Autonomy, Governance and Management in Higher Education in Asia and Europe* 25-26 November 2008, Hanoi, Vietnam
- A round table on *Regional higher education cooperation in the next decade: The Bologna process and Europe-Asia dialogue*, 1-4 July 2009, Brussels, Belgium
- A workshop on *Doctoral and Graduate Education in Asia and Europe*, 8-9 December 2008, Beijing, China
- A workshop on *Student Mobility, Joint Degrees and Institutional Development*, 16-17 February 2009, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- A workshop on *International Partnerships in Higher Education: Policies, Practices and Lessons Learned*, 8-9 June 2009, Jakarta, Indonesia
- A workshop on *Quality Assurance in Asian and European Higher Education – Opportunities for Inter- and Intra-Regional Cooperation*, 27-29 October 2009, Bangkok, Thailand.

Attendance at workshops and round tables was by invitation only, however results, summary reports and follow-up topics are publicly available on the EAHEP website.

The website also provides information on higher education systems in Europe and Asia, study and research opportunities, cooperation projects and initiatives, and funding schemes; [www.eahep.org](http://www.eahep.org)

The current publication is a summary of these events and their outcomes.

### Round Table 1: Autonomy, Governance and Management in Higher Education in Asia and Europe 25-26 November 2008, Hanoi, Vietnam

#### Objective:

This round table constituted the first high-level policy dialogue meeting between Asian and EU university leaders and senior experts under the EAHEP. It was designed to exchange information on the status quo of Asian and European higher education systems, particularly focusing on autonomy, governance and management of higher education institutions. The round table presented good practice examples of university governance and management, thereby promoting university autonomy and good governance of higher education institutions in both regions. It furthermore highlighted the importance of capacity building in higher education management and presented opportunities for cooperation in the field.

#### Programme design:

The round table was held as a two-day event, preceded by a half-day pre-round table programme at Hanoi University of Technology, which introduced the international participants to the Vietnamese higher education system. The round table itself was opened by three keynote presentations on recent trends and future perspectives of university autonomy and governance in Asia and Europe. The presentations were followed up in six working groups, focusing on specific subtopics, such as entrepreneurial universities, balancing institutional centralisation and decentralisation and capacity

building in university management. The round table was concluded with a panel discussion on various higher education cooperation initiatives between Asia and Europe.

#### Participation:

The event targeted senior leadership and key faculty from Asian and European universities as well as higher education experts and project representatives from both regions. Roughly 90 representatives of Asian and European institutions participated in the event, particularly senior-level university representatives with experience in higher education management. As to be expected from an event taking place in Hanoi, Vietnam, around two-thirds of the participants came from Asia, particularly from Vietnam, and around one-third from Europe.

The pre-round table session and the round table were officially opened by Ambassador Doyle, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Vietnam. The opening of the round table was furthermore honoured by the presence of Vice-Minister Pham Vu Luan of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).

#### Outcomes:

The European and Asian countries represented at the round table had similar broad approaches to autonomy,



governance and management. National policies were at different stages, but moving in the same direction – towards more, if not complete, autonomy, and towards accountability provided through effective governing bodies with external representatives, and more corporate management. Compared to some 4-5 years ago, the discussion on the topic has matured in that many European and Asian countries have introduced autonomy and universities have gathered hands-on experience in new forms of governance, management and related issues. Therefore, the concern that autonomy would result in the privatisation of higher education came only from university representatives from countries where autonomy has not yet or only recently been introduced. However, there was widespread concern that governance reforms could be used as an opportunity to decrease public funding, and that the new accountability requirements would make autonomy obsolete.

Three other themes were highlighted during the round table: (1) the need for flexibility for universities to raise their own resources, (2) the importance of diversity in what the universities offer, and (3) the value as well as the challenges created by internationally mobile students.

Round table participants clearly emphasised the importance of maintaining dialogue platforms alongside



existing mobility schemes in order to intensify further EU-Asia higher education cooperation, and the need to engage into cross-border exchange and cooperation on the topic. It has to be stressed that capacity building and cross-border exchange on governance are not only relevant to developing countries, but principally to all countries where autonomy has been introduced rather recently and/ or the higher education system has expanded at a rapid pace.



**Round table 2: Regional higher education cooperation in the next decade:  
The Bologna process and Europe-Asia dialogue  
1-4 July 2009, Brussels, Belgium**

**Objective:**

This round table took the Bologna process and the recent Bologna Ministerial Meeting in Leuven/Louvain as point of departure, and compared the European reform process to developments in Asia, and 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 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) education process.

**Participation:**

The 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. Organised within the European Commission, it was a good opportunity for both EC officials and higher education organisations in Brussels to take part.

**Programme design:**

The main two-day event, 2-3 July, was divided into five plenaries 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 process 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 EU external relations toward Asia, and funding opportunities for higher education and research cooperation

**Outcomes:**

The round table demonstrated that there is a general interest in facilitating further information exchange on policy processes at regional level, and on developing specific activities and instruments. The speakers demonstrated the complexity of the regional reform initiatives, and that specific Bologna reforms are not simply transferable to the Asian region. It is therefore important to examine the actual needs and realities of universities and university systems, and the existing and potential structure and bodies that facilitate regional cooperation and cohesion. As a result, the round table was not only perceived as an event under the EU-Asia Higher Education Platform, but a contribution to the ASEM Education Process, initiated in 2008.



## Workshop 1: Doctoral and Graduate Education in Asia and Europe 8-9 December 2008, Beijing, China

### Objective

In many universities and higher education systems, doctoral education is currently being rethought and redesigned in response to changing demands from academics and within research, and society. It is increasingly perceived as a strategic means for institutional internationalisation, as it contributes to pooling academic talent and to building strategic links with partners around the globe. While the overhaul of the doctorate cycle and its role in institutional cooperation and exchange are themes that are being explored at the institutional, national and even regional level (as is the case in Europe at present), this workshop provided the first occasion for university representatives to meet and exchange at an interregional Europe-Asia level on the topic.

### Participation

45 leaders from European and Asian graduate/doctoral schools and programmes participated in the workshop. Many of the European participants were members of the newly established EUA Council for Doctoral Education, which advised and supported the initiative. A post-programme meeting on Europe-China cooperation concluded the event, drawing over 40 representatives of Chinese universities in primarily the Beijing area.

### Programme design

The event was held at the European Commission Delegation to China and Mongolia. Plenary and interactive breakout sessions dealt with issues such as:

- new delivery modes of doctoral programmes, including joint degrees and distance learning
- relationship between Masters and Doctorates
- employability of doctorate holders
- current trends in doctoral education in Europe and Asia
- enhanced cooperation in doctoral education between Asia and Europe
- development of good practices with regards to capacity building in doctoral education.



### Outcomes

Regardless of the diversity of institutional, national and socio-economic backgrounds, there was a high-level of agreement on general principles for doctoral education, for example, the need to emphasise skills training, not only with regards to enhancing employability in the labour market, but also to the overall role of research and research training in knowledge societies and economies.

While there seems to be a general trend towards graduate or doctorate schools, major differences occur in the concept, whether they appear to be mono- or multi-disciplinary focused, or established mainly as an administrative structure. The issue of capacity building for universities in emerging countries should be explored in more detail at upcoming occasions. Quality assurance in doctoral education was highlighted in all sessions as a requirement, but also as an achievement of structural reform. Participants agreed on the need to enhance transparency in doctoral education, and a database of institutions and programmes has been suggested as one way to achieve this. It was acknowledged that the total funding that the EU provides for higher education and research cooperation between Asia and Europe has increased. However, in view of the current trend of large and strictly structured funding programmes, there are insufficient funding opportunities for novel and innovative approaches.



## Workshop 2: Student Mobility, Joint Degrees and Institutional Development 16-17 February 2009, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Objective:

While the problems of realising student mobility and exchanges are now widely addressed, less attention has been paid to the subsequent benefits mobility may bring: improving the quality of education and research and strengthening the capacity of institutions to internationalise their programmes and services. This workshop explored the opportunities for improving academic quality through international collaboration in curriculum development and student mobility. It focused on the advantages and disadvantages of linking mobility to joint and double degrees, as compared to other forms of academic cooperation and mobility. More specifically, it looked at these opportunities in programmes and projects in which both European and Asian institutes participate.

### Participation:

The event targeted university staff members, administrators, government officials and development partners closely involved in the promotion and implementation of international cooperation in higher education through student mobility and joint/double degree programmes. The 47 participants came from seven European and eight Asian countries, and most of them had experience with Asia-Link and Erasmus Mundus projects.



### Programme design:

Invited speakers gave introductions on concepts, perspectives and experiences, followed by discussions in interactive breakout sessions. The sessions brought together the views of European and Asian participants on ambitions, opportunities and challenges on the subject.

With the help of moderators, mixed groups composed of European and Asian participants discussed:

- considerations and conditions which influence decisions for linking student mobility to joint or double degree programmes, or to other forms of academic collaboration and mobility
- organisation and management of sustainable collaborations in setting up joint master degree programmes
- institutional benefits (e.g. in terms of curriculum and overall internationalisation) resulting from the establishment of such programmes and academic cooperation.

### Outcomes:

Academic cooperation through student mobility and joint/double degree programmes were in general considered as positive. Student mobility seems to be most effective when linked to existing academic cooperation programmes between institutions. Seemingly, mobile students benefit the most from these programmes, as studying abroad can improve their employability. The benefits for the institutions are less clear.

Variations in the types of quality systems used within Asia, makes it difficult to agree on one joint system for quality standards and quality approach.

The curriculum of a joint degree programme should be newly developed, combining the strengths of the collaborating partners. However, practice shows that agreeing on the content of the curriculum is a complex and time consuming process.

The workshop clarified that in general, the experience with joint degrees and double degrees has been fraught with legal peril in Asian universities. The participants admitted that the benefits of the programmes are not seen immediately, but they expect that academic standards of the institution will rise.

### Workshop 3: International Partnerships in Higher Education: Policies, Practices and Lessons Learned 8-9 June 2009, Jakarta, Indonesia

#### Objective:

Universities are increasingly looking for international partners for a variety of strategic or opportunistic reasons. This workshop explored the added value of international partnerships in higher education for achieving academic and institutional goals. It focused on conditions which influence decisions on establishing international academic partnerships with institutions abroad and the practical challenges involved in initiating and maintaining sustainable successful partnerships. Furthermore, it analyzed the myriad institutional benefits that may result from such partnerships.

#### Participation:

The event targeted university staff members, administrators, government officials and development partners closely involved in initiating and maintaining academic partnerships. The 37 participants came from seven European and eight Asian countries, and most of them had experience in Asia- Link and Erasmus Mundus projects.

#### Programme design:

Experiences with partnerships in programmes and projects, in which European and Asian institutes participate, formed the basis for the discussions. Introductions on concepts, perspectives and experiences by invited speakers were followed by discussions in interactive breakout sessions.

#### Outcomes:

Activities carried out in the framework of the partnerships are mainly focused on cooperation in education and research, mobility of students and staff, and other activities facilitating international knowledge sharing. In order to establish a shared vision, goals and policy, thorough knowledge of the partner and of their expertise, ambitions and expectations is necessary, as well as transparency around the financial set-up of the partnership. To make partnerships sustainable there should be:

- an active and continuous search for compatibility
- long term commitment which is institutionalised at all levels of both institutions, and compatible with and embedded in both institutions' policy plans
- strong leadership and project management
- an active monitoring of the quality of all aspects of the partnership.

Governments and donors were advised to have reliable and continuous policies and provide sufficient and constant financial means for higher education. They should support international academic partnerships financially, but also practically (e.g. minimising bureaucratic burden, facilitating visa, licences and credit transfer), creating a context that allows partnerships to flourish.



#### Workshop 4: Quality Assurance in Asian and European Higher Education: Opportunities for Inter- and Intra-Regional Cooperation 27-29 October 2009, Bangkok, Thailand

##### Objective:

The fourth workshop focused on internal and external quality assurance procedures in higher education, particularly on regional cooperation initiatives in the field. It was designed as a platform for information exchange on goals, strategies and working methods of regional quality assurance networks in Asia and Europe. The workshop was intended to identify common aims, build trust among regional quality assurance networks, and promote cooperation between Asian and European quality assurance networks.



##### Participation:

The workshop was conducted in close cooperation with the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and hosted by Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, one of the leading Asian universities. Roughly 40 university representatives and quality assurance experts from Asia and Europe participated in the workshop.

##### Programme design:

Prior to the workshop participants were invited to visit Chulalongkorn University and meet with key staff in the field of quality assurance. The two-day workshop was opened by five keynote presentations, focusing on recent trends and future perspectives on quality assurance in higher education in Asia and Europe, both from a governmental and an institutional perspective. The keynote presentations were followed up in six parallel working group sessions, focusing on sub-topics, such as capacity building in quality assurance, regional benchmarking initiatives and quality assurance in joint degree programmes. The workshop was concluded with a panel discussion on cooperation opportunities for quality assurance in higher education.

##### Outcomes:

Growing student numbers, the ensuing transition from elite to mass higher education, increasingly diversified institutional missions and the introduction of new forms of learning are challenges for higher education institutions in both Asia and Europe. Furthermore, many countries, especially in Asia, show a mushrooming of private institutions. Quality assurance systems in higher education have to rise to these challenges. Internal quality assurance and external quality assurance were perceived as two sides of the same coin, and there was a general understanding that the main responsibility for assuring and enhancing institutional quality should be with the universities. Regional harmonisation processes with regard to quality assurance in higher education have started to develop in Europe and Asia. In both regions, there are attempts to enhance the understanding and mutual recognition of quality assurance decisions. Future cooperation initiatives should focus on various aspects of quality assurance, such as information exchange, the training of experts and the exchange of peers, and discussion on common principles in designing different internal and external QA approaches.





## EU-India Higher Education Symposium: Boosting social and economic development for a better tomorrow 12 November, New Delhi, India

### Objective:

The main objective of the symposium was to address EU-Indian higher education policy and cooperation issues, with the aim of:

- Facilitating collaboration between EU and Indian higher education institutions
- Exchanging information on policy issues and practices through sharing key development issues in academic cooperation between senior educationalists and policy leaders
- Creating a forum for strategic and policy dialogue to enhance mutual understanding of priorities and possible future cooperation areas
- Identifying common agendas, possible cooperation areas and to develop mutually beneficial collaborative projects.

The symposium provided discussions on EU-Indian cooperation and on developing awareness of EU mechanisms and programmes. A matchmaking activity enabled representatives from European higher education institutions and other stakeholders to discuss possible cooperation projects with their Indian counterparts.

attended the India-EU Higher Education Symposium. 40 % of the participants came from India, and more than 50 % were representatives of the exhibiting institutions at the EHEF Fair. Around 25 speakers and panellists from different European countries and from India presented and discussed themes of higher education co-operation and mobility between Europe and India.



### Participation:

The event was a platform for high-level dialogue between government officials, key senior managers and policy makers from India and Europe, and representatives from higher education institutions and academic networks. Approximately 220 participants

### Programme design:

The opening ceremony was succeeded by a first plenary discussion on the "Need to develop better understanding by forming strategic alliances to find solutions for global social and economic challenges". The following parallel workshops took place in the afternoon:

- Social responsibility of the higher education sector / The contribution of the higher education sector to "Education for all"
- International Cooperation: Key to overcome challenges in higher education and research
- Demands on the higher education sector from the knowledge-based economy.

The Symposium focused on higher education as a booster of social and economic development. It highlighted the role of the higher education sector in improving capacities, delivering methods and quality with regards to the general education ("Education for All"), as well as to research and industry.

## Symposium on Thailand-EU cooperation in Higher Education: Common interests and shared commitments 30 October, Bangkok, Thailand

### Objective:

The main theme of the symposium, which preceded the EU Higher Education Fair (EHEF) in Bangkok, was cooperation and mobility between Europe and Thailand, with the aim of addressing Thailand–EU higher education policy and cooperation issues, and to provide a platform for high-level dialogue between government officials, key senior managers and policy makers from Thailand, the ASEAN region and Europe, and representatives from higher education institutions and academic networks.

### Participation:

25 speakers, chairs and panellists, and approximately 150 participants attended the symposium. 67% of the participants were Thai (117), 4% (7) came from other Asian countries, such as China and Mongolia, and 29% (51) came from EU member states.

### Programme design:

The symposium was opened by three speakers: the Ambassador of Sweden to Thailand (EU Presidency),

the Secretary-General of the Thai Ministry of Education's Office of Higher Education Commission, and the Head of Delegation of the European Commission to Thailand. During the first plenary discussion on "Facing global challenges: International collaboration as a prerequisite for relevant education and research", four speakers introduced the topic from their perspectives; three from Europe and one from Thailand.

In the afternoon three parallel sessions took place, which picked up important themes of the EAHEP project:

- Collaboration in quality assurance between Thailand and the EU
- Internationalisation for quality improvement in higher education
- Governance and management in higher education in Thailand and the EU

This was followed by a second plenary discussion on "EU – Asian academic responses to climate change".



## EU-Asia Higher Education Fairs (EHEF)

### Objective:

EHEFs are aimed at increasing the attractiveness of Europe as a study and research centre of excellence, to strengthen Europe's economic and cultural presence in Asia and vice-versa, to enhance mutual awareness and to contribute to the further development of EU-Asian cooperation in the field of higher education.

The two fairs organised under this project by DAAD and Nuffic respectively provided a platform for representatives of national structures and higher education institutions (HEI) from all 27 EU Member States to inform students, their parents and study advisors about study opportunities in Europe. Official representatives from higher education institutions and their national representations from the EU Member States provided detailed information about their study programmes, enrolment procedures, language

requirements, living conditions and other related issues. The European Commission was represented in the European Pavilion and provided general information on studying in Europe.

Apart from the information stands where visitors had the opportunity to meet representatives from institutions and get individual counselling, country presentations were held in order to inform students about the different higher education systems, study opportunities and scholarship programmes.

Both fairs received similar appreciation by the students, exhibiting institutions, and host countries as previous EHEFs organised across Asia under the Asia-Link programme in the past five years and the interest for a continuation of common promotion platforms for European higher education institutions was expressed.





## Snapshot EHEF New Delhi, India 12-14 November

### European Countries represented:

Representing 91 exhibitors from 26 European countries, the EHEF New Delhi Fair was able to provide a broad range of study opportunities in Europe. The following countries were represented:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom.

### Student attendance:

About 6,000 visitors attended the fair during both days of the fair opening. The majority of the visitors were students between 21 and 25 years old mainly studying subjects like engineering, commerce and business. They were looking for a Master programme and their preferred study destination were UK, Germany and France.

[www.ehef-newdelhi08.org](http://www.ehef-newdelhi08.org)



## Snapshot EHEF Bangkok, Thailand 31 October -1 November 2009

### European Countries represented:

Presenting the European Union and 61 exhibitors from 19 European countries, EHEF Bangkok 2009 was able to show-case a broad range of study opportunities. 42 higher education institutions were individually represented and 19 national representations: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom.

### Student attendance:

EHEF Bangkok 2009 took place simultaneously and in close cooperation with the 6th Thai International Higher Education Expo organised by the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC). This appeared a strong strategic choice, as the OCSC expo is very well known among Thai students, attracting over 25,000 visitors every year.

EHEF Bangkok 2009 attracted about 35,939 visitors on both days. Visitors attended the exhibition to collect information about studying in Europe as well as to meet representatives from various universities and EU member countries. On the first day, 31 October 2009, 19,047 visitors registered, and on the second day, 1 November, 16,892 visitors registered. The majority of the visitors were students mainly studying subjects like business, engineering, commerce, architecture and law. Many students were looking for a Master programme.

[www.ehef-bangkok09.org](http://www.ehef-bangkok09.org)

