



7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7)

Students' Forum: 11–15 May 2019 | Rectors' Conference: 12–14 May 2019

**Higher Education Taking Action towards Sustainable Development Goals:
Perspectives from Asia and Europe**

Overview



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BACKGROUND ON THE #ARC SERIES

The ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC) is the only bi-regional multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for university and student leaders, policy makers, and business representatives to discuss higher education challenges of mutual concern in Asia and Europe.

ARC is recognised as the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM ME). Its results, including policy recommendations and research, feed into the preparation of ASEM MEs, which ARC rectors and student representatives are invited to attend. Moreover, ARC is contributing to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and it is one of the initial commitments to the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

ARC takes place on a biennial basis alternating between Asia and Europe. It addresses 3 areas in higher education:

- 1) quality and inclusive education
- 2) university governance
- 3) university-business partnerships

Over 296 universities from 51 Asian and European countries have been represented at the ARC conferences since 2008.

MISSION OF #ARC7

- Build **awareness** on the importance of higher education acting on sustainability
- Explain the context in **Asia and Europe** and identify **issues of joint concern**
- Provide an intellectual space for **exchange and peer learning**
- Show concrete **good practices** from Asia and Europe to **inspire each other**
- Create **policy recommendations** to the ASEM Education Ministers on how to take action towards the sustainable development goals

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE OF #ARC7

The **ARC7 Students' Forum** | 11-15 May 2019

- 8-week Online Preparatory Phase with webinars, individual and team tasks
- 3-day Students' Forum and joint sessions with the Rectors' Conference
- Plenary and working group sessions, skills trainings, and study visits

The **ARC7 Rectors' Conference** | 12-14 May 2019

- 2-day Rectors' Conference and joint sessions with the Students' Forum
- Thought-provocative panel discussions and interactive working group sessions

KEY FACTS ON ARC7

WHEN

Students' Forum
11-15 May 2019

Rectors' Conference
12-14 May 2019

in conjunction with the 7th
ASEM Education Ministers'
Meeting (ASEM ME7)
15-16 May 2019

WHERE

Bucharest, Romania,
hosted by the National
University of Political Studies
and Public Administration
(SNSPA)

PARTICIPANTS

150 university leaders, policy
makers and representatives
of non-governmental
education organisations

51 student leaders

From 51 Asian and European
countries

METHODOLOGY

ARC7 is an experiential
learning space, where
interactive sessions ensure
cross-sectoral conversations
and real-scenario workshops
add value to existing
practices in Asia and Europe.

TOPIC OF #ARC7

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call for action to shape a better future for all. Universities have a key responsibility to tackle complex societal challenges of our times, manifested in these Goals. ARC invites Asian and European higher education and student leaders to share how their organisations contribute to policy development and take action towards the Agenda 2030 and to get inspiration from their peers' strategies.

ARC7 offers a creative space for knowledge exchange on implementing a whole-of-institution approach on sustainable development, teaching the next generation of leaders and thinkers to act sustainably and ethically; conducting research that leads to positive change in our world; and engaging communities outside the walls of academia. The conference also explores how university and student leaders from Asia and Europe can work together towards "a future we want".

ARC7 explores how higher education can take action towards achieving the sustainable development goals on 3 different levels:

- Taking Action at Home – SDGs as Core Pillars of University Governance
- Taking Action at Community Level – SDGs as Drivers of University Social Impact
- Taking Action at International Level – SDGs as a Catalyst to Reorient Internationalisation

SUBTHEMES OF #ARC7

Theme 1 | Taking Action at Home SDGs as Core Pillars of University Governance

*University leaders should support the integration of sustainable development throughout their institution. They should involve all the institutional stakeholders in the development of SD related strategies and include reporting and monitoring mechanisms to keep track of and foster progress. This was recommended by the International Association of Universities (IAU) to university leaders based on the findings of the survey titled *Higher Education Paving the Way to Sustainable Development: A Global Perspective*¹ in 2017.*

This ARC7 theme discusses what strategies can institutions adopt to make SDGs a core part of their everyday practice. Possible questions to be addressed are:

- *What visions and strategies work in promoting sustainable development at universities?*
- *How do we justify the contribution to the global public good in view of rising pressures to focus on the benefits of the own country, industries, to deliver the research and the skills that society needs today?*
- *How can internal and national quality assurance systems serve and enhance SDGs in university governance?*
- *What are the challenges of implementing sustainability strategies in higher education and how can be success measured when there are no "one-size-fits-all" indicators?*

Theme 2 | Taking Action at Community Level SDGs as Drivers of University Societal Impact

Universities can enhance sustainability in their social, economic and environmental dimensions by delivering education and research to communities. However, social sustainability has had considerably less attention in public dialogue than economic and environmental sustainability. Although in Europe, for example, a growing number of universities collaborate not only with employers (90%), but also with local communities

¹ VAN'T LAND, Hilligje; HERZOG, Frédérique. Higher Education Paving the Way to Sustainable Development: A Global Perspective (2016). IAU, September 2017. <https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/higher-education-paving-the-way-to-sd-iau-2017.pdf>

(88%), primary and secondary schools (87%), and vocational institutions (73%)², the current and potential role of SDGs in these partnerships is less emphasized.

This ARC7 theme discusses how universities engage in joint knowledge production and research beyond the campus, for the benefit of the community in Asia and Europe. Possible questions to be addressed are:

- *What kind of partnerships with which actors are working to increase social impact?*
- *How do universities influence local communities through SDGs to inspire sustainable development actions?*
- *How can the global goals be translated to local and university strategies?*
- *How can sustainable research, teaching and community engagement projects be financed?*

Theme 3 | Taking Action at International Level **SDGs as Catalysts to Reorient Internationalisation**

Internationalization is high on the agenda of universities, most often targeting student learning and student mobility, according to the findings of the 4th Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education carried out by IAU³. Student and staff learning should be central to any internationalization partnership process. Indeed, internationalization, including at home, should be shaped to foster international exchange and understanding. When linked to mobility, internationalization comes with a variety of challenges. Often motivated by funding, academic standards, language, recognition of foreign qualifications, it is also often challenged by perceived or real social and cultural barriers⁴. These dimensions are of joint concern for both Asia and Europe. Student and staff mobility between the two regions is notably imbalanced - about 1,5 times more Asian students study in Europe than Europeans in Asia⁵. Knowledge mobility is equally unbalanced. Yet open dialogue and exchange between knowledge systems is conducive to new and innovative approaches to many challenges we face and share.

This track of ARC7 explores how internationalization related activities, could be reoriented to help address the SDGs. Possible questions to be addressed are:

- *What kind of international partnerships do universities engage in (Why? To what end?)? What is the shared purpose of these? Do they, and if so how do they contribute to addressing the SDGs?*
- *What do students and staff get out of these partnerships in terms of teaching, research, and further international understanding?*
 - *More equitable and ethical cooperation in international relations*
 - *Better understanding of Asia and Europe*
 - *Defining learning gain and its contribution to sustainability*
- *How can universities better promote intercultural learning and dialogue to explore regional cultural richness, and to optimize regional development?*

Expected Outputs

Policy Recommendations

- The participants of the Rectors' Conference will discuss a set of Policy Recommendations prepared by the partner organizations of ARC (EUA, IAU, AUN) in collaboration with a focus group of rectors from Asia and Europe, and the finalized content will be delivered to the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7).
- The Students' Forum participants will develop another set of Policy Recommendations for the ASEM Education Ministers based on the skills they acquire during the preparation period and based on the knowledge they exchange.

² European University Association. Data from the forthcoming EUA TRENDS 2018 survey, conducted between March and August 2017, collected responses from 303 higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area. <http://eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/eua-welcomes-commission-initiative-putting-education-at-the-heart-of-a-more-social-europe>

³ EGRON-POLAK, Eva; HUDSON, Ross. Executive Summary of IAU's 4th Global Survey report. Internationalization of Higher Education: Growing expectations, Fundamental values. IAU, April 2014. <https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau-4th-global-survey-executive-summary-2.pdf>

Disseminating content on the topic and the SDGs

- Insight papers on the themes of the conference
- Op-eds and opinion articles from students on the conference subthemes
- Summary and background papers to the policy recommendations

Side events related to the topic

- Capacity-building workshops and conferences, along the topic of ARC7
- Targeting university and student leaders, managers of the ARC community
- Hosted by ARC7 partners or participants in different ASEM countries

Ecosystem & Synergies

ARC7 is prepared with the intellectual support of the following organisations and networks, building on their work and designated to contribute to that, as the only multi-stakeholder platform with a focus on Asia and Europe collaboration.

Ministerial Meetings

- ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (and other ASEM Ministerial Meetings)
- European Higher Education Area Ministerial Meetings and the Bologna Policy Forum Meetings

Senior Officials' Meetings

- ASEM Meeting of Senior Officials in Education (SOM)
- Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) by UNESCO

Regional & International Organisations

- Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) as the ARC Secretariat
- ASEAN University Network (AUN)
- European University Association (EUA)
- International Association of Universities (IAU)
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
- European Students' Union (ESU)
- Erasmus Mundus Students' and Alumni Association (EMA)
- Asia-Pacific Rim Universities Association (APRU)
- Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, Regional Institute of Higher Education (SEAMEO RIHED)
- UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

CO-ORGANISED BY



Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). ASEF promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy, public health and media.

The work of ASEF's Education Department (ASEFEdu) focuses on the themes *access to quality education* and *youth employment*, and, hence, contributes with its projects to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially to Goal4: *ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all*.

For more information, please visit the www.ASEF.org.



National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA)

The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), established in 1991 as a school of governance, is a landmark in the Romanian academic setting. SNSPA promotes academic excellence in Political Sciences, Sociology, Administrative Studies, International Relations, Diplomacy, European Studies, Communication Sciences, Psychology, Management. SNSPA teachers are experts in their fields; they incorporate current and global perspectives into the curriculum and promote innovative and original thinking.

Currently, the university is home to more than 6,000 students enrolled across 9 departments. Thousands of graduates from their academic programs have successfully entered careers in academia, government, industry and nonprofits. SNSPA is a member of several international university alliances (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, Romanian-U.S. Fulbright Commission, International Association of Universities, European University Association, European Association for Public Administration Accreditation) and collaborates with public institutions and business organizations across a wide range of different fields.

For more information, please visit www.SNSPA.ro/en.



Ministry of National Education (Romania)

The mission of the Ministry of Education is to provide an educational environment to ensure the harmonious development of all its beneficiaries by promoting excellence and ensuring equal access to education.

For more information, please visit <http://edu.ro>.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



ASEAN University Network (AUN)

<http://www.aunsec.org>

Founded in November 1995, the ASEAN University Networks' (AUN) main objective is to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among leading universities in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region.

European University Association (EUA)

<http://www.eua.be>



The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. It was formed in 2001 as the result of a merger between the Association of European Universities (CRE) and the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences. EUA supports and takes forward the interests of individual institutions and the higher education sector as a whole.



International Association of Universities (IAU)

<http://www.iau-aiu.net>

Created in 1950 under the auspices of UNESCO, the International Association Universities (IAU) brings together more than 650 institutions and organisations worldwide for exchange and action on common concerns in the area of higher education.



European Students' Union (ESU)

<http://www.esu-online.org>

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 44 National Unions of Students from 38 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents over 15 million students in Europe.



Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

<http://esn.org>

Established in 1989, Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is the biggest student association in Europe. ESN works for the creation of a more mobile and flexible education environment by supporting and developing the student exchange from different levels and providing an intercultural experience also to those students who cannot access a period abroad ("internationalisation at home").



Erasmus Mundus Association (EMA)

<https://www.em-a.eu>

The Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA) is a not-for-profit organisation representing a community of more than 12,000 members, students and alumni of Erasmus Mundus Master and PhD courses, from over 170 countries. EMA's headquarter is in Brussels, Belgium but the organisation is fully managed by volunteers all around the world.

SUPPORTED BY

European Students' Forum (AEGEE-Europe)

<https://www.aegEE.org>

International Association of Political Science (IAPSS)

<https://www.iapss.org>

ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)

<https://www.aseM-education.org>

Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU)

<https://apru.org>

European Youth Press (EYP)

<http://www.youthpress.org>

The European Union (EU)

<https://europa.eu>

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VISUAL CONCEPT

The United Nations General Assembly identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that encompass many aspects of contemporary society. The goals serve as globally-recognised standards that call upon stakeholders across all sectors, including education, to implement them by 2030. Achieving the SDGs, however, is a complex interplay that requires both strategic thinking as well as creative and innovative methods. Solving a Rubik's cube - one of the most famous educational toys ever - resembles this multifaceted process: it takes not only analytical skills and imagination but also hands-on action in solving the puzzle to get all the colours, sides and patterns right within the given time. Like the pieces in a Rubik's cube, the SDGs are interconnected and any decision to move towards a certain direction has an impact on the overall pattern and outcome. The 7th ASEF Rector's Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) is the platform for students, rectors, policy-makers and education ministers to showcase the interdisciplinary role of higher education in this serious game of developing and sustaining our societies. While the optimal solution may not be the easiest nor the quickest, we know we are moving the pieces in the right order by taking turns in drafting policy recommendations and making commitments towards the SDGs at ARC7.

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