



PRESS RELEASE

8TH ASIA-EUROPE CLASSROOM NETWORK CONFERENCE

26-30 October 2009

Hotel Comwell, Sønderborg, Denmark

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Outstanding online intercultural learning projects commended at 8th Asia-Europe Classroom Network Conference

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) recognised three of the best online intercultural learning platforms through the Asia-Europe Classroom (AEC) Award at its 8th Asia-Europe Classroom Network (AEC-NET) Conference.

The annual AEC Award recognises innovative, effective and sustainable online projects for Asian and European students to learn from each other. These interactive and intercultural online projects are planned and facilitated by secondary and high school educators from Asia and Europe.

Six finalists were shortlisted from more than 30 entries from schools in Asia and Europe to contend for this year's award. The three winning projects will receive a cash grant of 2,000 EUR each to further develop their project or as seed funding for new online collaborations. This year, the shortlist included projects coordinated by schools in Ireland, Greece, Singapore and Finland.

"ASEF is committed to facilitating and encouraging innovative use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in intercultural learning," said ASEF Executive Director Ambassador Dominique Girard, who was a member of the panel of judges. "The judges focused on how the project had engaged students and invoked a sense of curiosity and awareness for other cultures amongst the youth."

The three winning projects are "Local Traditions and Ceremonies - Weddings are made in Heaven", "WHAZZUP?", and "Backpackers' Passports". (See annex 1). In "Backpackers' Passports", about 200 participating students developed a series of three-day itineraries of their home countries for backpackers. Led by Pioneer Secondary School of Singapore, it involved schools from Denmark, Estonia, India, Portugal, the Philippines, Cyprus, Sweden, and France.

Third time winner Ms Yuen Chai Lin, a head of department at the Pioneer Secondary School in Singapore was the project coordinator for the "Backpackers' Passports". "Students take ownership of their own work through such a participatory learning process. AEC projects go a long way in cultivating cultural understanding and tolerance," she shared.

The AEC Award is given under the framework of the Asia-Europe Classroom Network (AEC-NET) Programme. Now in its 8th year, the focus of this year's Conference is on "*The Impact of Climate Change and Sustainable Development Within the School Community in Asia and Europe.*" The Conference specifically aims to raise the environmental awareness of teachers in Asia and Europe, thus enabling them to initiate concrete action for protecting the environment in their own school community.

The 8th AEC-NET Conference is organised by ASEF in collaboration with the Sønderborg Municipality, and with support from the Danish Ministry of Education, Hørup Centralskole, Nyborg Friskole and Herfølge Skole. More information about the AEC-NET Conference can be found at <http://aec.asef.org>

Media wishing to conduct interviews with organisers and participants may contact:

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About the organisers:



The **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** advances mutual understanding and collaboration between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of common web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focussed on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations.

Established in February 1997 by the partners of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEF reports to a board of governors representing the ASEM partners. ASEF is the only physical institution of the ASEM process. Since 1997, the Foundation has initiated projects engaging 14,000 individuals from Asia and Europe. ASEF works in partnership with other public institutions and civil society actors to ensure its work is broad-based and balanced among the partner countries. www.asef.org



The Municipality of Sønderborg is among the largest municipalities in Denmark, with a population of around 77,000 people. Sønderborg has the longest coastline in Denmark, making it an ideal place for maritime activities. The largest part of the community lies on the island of Als, which is connected to Jutland by two bridges. Culture is one of Sønderborg's strongpoints, history, music and sports being some of its key areas. One of the country's most famous battles, the Battle of Dybbøl has been fought here, and is worth re-experiencing at the Sønderborg Castle, or in and around the historic centre of Dybbøl.

Sønderborg also boasts of world-class educational institutions, which gives priority to the teaching of Science, perhaps accounting for Sønderborg having the largest concentration of engineers in Denmark. The municipality is ambitious on several subjects. Environmental responsibility is high on the Municipality's agenda, as Sønderborg aims to become Europe's first CO2-neutral community in 2029. The Municipality also seeks to become Denmark's best place for children to grow up and go to school, and to become the European capital of Culture by 2017. www.sonderborg.dk

With the support of:



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Asia-Europe Classroom Network

AEC Award Winners for 2009

The **AEC Award** seeks to encourage innovative, effective and sustainable online intercultural learning platforms by secondary and high school educators to connect students from Asia and Europe.

Each year, six short-listed finalists will compete for three AEC Awards each of a cash grant of 2,000 EUR. The cash prize can be used by the winning team to further develop the winning projects, or to initiate new ICT collaborative projects.



Short-listed projects are judged based on:

- Its effectiveness in advancing intercultural understanding among secondary and high school students
- Effective application of ICT tools in promoting intercultural learning
- Level of participation and involvement of students in developing the project
- Quality of overall presentation of the project

JUDGES

- **Mr Jørn LEHMANN**, Vice Mayor of Sønderborg, Sønderborg Municipality
- **Amb Dominique GIRARD**, Executive Director, Asia-Europe Foundation
- **Dr Xianli ZHU**, Economist, UNEP Risoe Centre on Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development

2009 AEC AWARD WINNERS

AEC Projects are online collaborative projects developed by members of the Asia-Europe Classroom Network. Each project incorporates a component of intercultural exchange and learning through the use of ICT.

The 2009 AEC Award Winners are:

- **Backpackers' Passports**
The "Backpackers' Passports" offers a platform for students to gain better appreciation of cultural diversity through accounts and exchanges between fellow students in Asia and Europe. The project aims to develop a series of personalised and unique virtual tours by the participating students. Through research and regular online interactions, they develop a three-day backpacker's itinerary of their home country.

Project Co-ordinator:

Ms Yuen Chai Lin (Head of Department, NT Stream, Pioneer Secondary School, Singapore)

- **Local Traditions and Ceremonies - Weddings are Made in Heaven**
Local Traditions and Ceremonies – "Weddings are Made in Heaven" tasks Asian and European students to research and present the practices of traditional wedding ceremonies in their own culture. In any culture, a wedding ceremony is typically rich in symbolism. Students will explore similarities in cultural practices and symbolisms between Asian and European cultures through their online interactions.

Project Co-ordinators:

Dr Zafeiroula Kagkalidou (School Adviser, Directorate of Secondary Education, Greece)

Mrs Aggeliki Arvanta (Teacher, 5th Gymasio Serron, Greece)

Mr Michalis Feidakis (Information Society Executive, Hellenic Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Greece)

▪ **WHAZZUP?**

The "WHAZZUP?" project provides a common platform for participating students to share their interests, passions and concerns through personalised accounts and blogs. Students' curiosity is invoked and the learning process is natural. Through externalising and conceptualising their learning and then getting feedback and responses from their peers, they will be able to gain a deeper understanding of whatever it is they are studying.

Project Co-ordinators:

[Ms Sinikka Laakio-Whybrow](#) (Teacher, Kaarina Senior High School, Finland)

[Ms Merja Laine](#) (Teacher, Kaarina Senior High School, Finland)

An Excellence Award was given to each of the remaining three shortlisted projects:

▪ **Local Industry and Enterprise 2008/2009**

The "Local Industry and Enterprise 2008/2009" offers a platform for each student to research and present their findings on a local industry or enterprise. A key focus is on the social and environmental impact both locally and globally. Through a process of peer sharing and reflection, students are expected to gain greater insights to businesses in both Asia and Europe. This third edition leverages from and builds on the success of the experience of the past two years.

Project Co-ordinator:

Ms Angela Rickard (Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth Co. Kildare)

▪ **Mastering Media – Fact or Fiction? The Truth Behind Reality TV**

This project tasks participating students to give an account of their reactions to reality shows in Asia and Europe. Through a comparative study of global TV formats, students can better comprehend the power of the mass media and the entertainment industry. They are then tasked to examine the rationale for participation in reality shows as a reflection of universal behavioural patterns in contemporary society. The project focuses on the dynamics between (media) production, participants and the audience in modern media environment, as well as concepts of morality, scandal or hype.

Project Co-ordinators:

Ms Maija Ojutkangas (Teacher, Messukylä Upper Secondary School, Finland)

Ms Jonina Altschuler (Teacher, Messukylä Upper Secondary School, Finland)

▪ **TraditionalGames@VirtualHomestay**

"TraditionalGames@VirtualHomestay" is a project where participating students are required to develop more in-depth understanding of the games as well as facilitate learning by their partners through video demonstration of the game. All student participants are tasked to analyse the similarities and differences of the traditional games. Lastly, students will explore their creativity by conceptualising and designing a game and gather peer evaluation from their online team partners.

Project Co-ordinator:

Ms Yong Caiyu (Teacher, Pioneer Secondary School, Singapore)

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For further information on the Asia-Europe Classroom Network, please see <http://aec.asef.org> or contact:

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