



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PR 2012 09 10 0019

MEDIA CONTACT

Ms Theresa Cua

Asia-Europe Foundation
theresa.cua@asef.org
T: +65 6874 9718

Mr Riepko Buikema

University of Groningen
r.s.buikema@rug.nl
T: +31 50 363 9378

PROGRAMME CONTACT

Ms Helen Chua Balderama

Project Manager
helen.chuabalderama@asef.org
T: +65 6874 9715

MORE INFORMATION

<http://bit.ly/HxHV69>

Universities from 38 countries to tackle youth unemployment

Given rising youth unemployment, how are universities responding to improve the employability of their future graduates?

To discuss this issue, some 100 heads of universities and higher education institutions from Asian and European countries will be gathering in the Netherlands for the 3rd ASEM Rectors' Conference (ARC3). Themed, **Universities, Businesses and You: For a Sustainable Future**, this biennial conference is organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation together with the ASEAN University Network. It will be hosted this year by the Netherlands' second oldest University, the University of Groningen (1614).

About 21.4 per cent of the population under 25 within the EU27 zone are unemployed, according to the latest figures from EuroStat. Similarly in Asia, the International Labour Organization projects the average youth unemployment rate for 2012 at 11 per cent.

"To meet the rising youth unemployment, universities should provide an academic training that allows graduates to have better prospects for a lifetime of employability," says Prof Sibrandes Poppema, President of the University of Groningen.

Co-operation is key. Prof Poppema continues: "By organising quality exchange programmes, universities can equip students with invaluable intercultural skills that will serve them and their employers worldwide. Just think of the companies with offices in various parts of the world."

Universities also need to co-operate with businesses and to increase contacts between employers and future graduates. "Co-operation between businesses and universities means that we have to think about precisely what we are educating students for. The upcoming ARC3 will address exactly that: are we just training students for a job tomorrow, or are we educating people for life?" says Prof Poppema.

For the first time, students will be included in the ARC conversation to give their perspectives on the youth employability agenda. Students will be meeting for the 1st Asia-Europe Students' Forum prior to the ARC3 meeting. They will have the opportunity to present their recommendations and discuss them with the heads of universities present.

The conclusions of the conference will be shared with the upcoming 4th Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers of Education (ASEMME4), to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2013. #####

Notes for the Editors:

For further information on the upcoming ASEM Rectors' Conference, or if you would like to get in touch with **Dr Sibrandes Poppema** for an interview, kindly get in touch with **Ms Theresa Cua** (Theresa.cua@asef.org) or **Mr Riepko Buikema** (r.s.buikema@rug.nl) to arrange one.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which currently comprises of 46 member states plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat (www.aseminfoboard.org). ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since engaged over 17,000 direct participants through more than 600 projects in the realms of economy and society, environment, education, public health, arts and culture and human rights and governance. www.asef.org

In 2012, ASEF is commemorating its 15th Anniversary and invites everyone to take part in celebrating **Connected Histories, Shared Future**.



Founded in 1614, the **University of Groningen (RUG)** enjoys an international reputation as one of the oldest and leading research universities in Europe with around 28,000 BA, MA and PhD students and more than 5,000 staff members. More than 10% of the student population is international, whereas 20% of the academic staff comes from abroad. Through research on themes such as 'healthy ageing', 'energy and sustainability' and 'sustainable society' the University of Groningen is contributing to some of the major social issues of the 21st century, using to the full the added value of cooperation with other knowledge institutes, government, industry and citizens in both Europe, Asia and other parts of the world. www.rug.nl



The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967. The main objective of the **ASEAN University Network (AUN)** is to strengthen the existing network of co-operation among leading universities in ASEAN, by promoting co-operation and solidarity among ASEAN scholars and academicians, developing academic and professional human resource, and promoting information dissemination among the ASEAN academic community. www.aun-sec.org