Overview
Background

Rapid urbanisation is a defining global trend of the 21st century. Today, more than 55% of the world’s population live in urban areas. It is expected that this number will increase to 68% by 2050. This development brings along various socioeconomic and environmental challenges for policy makers, urban planners and urban citizens: urban sprawl and higher urban costs, rising inequality and poverty, lack of urban investments in infrastructure, weak financial and governance capacities, increased environmental degradation, etc..

To tackle these complex and interconnected issues, collective action & collaboration across institutional silos and sectors as well as disruptive & bold ideas are needed. Here, the unique creativity and potential for innovation of youth can play a crucial catalyst role in driving sustainable urban change and accelerating the realisation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11: “Making Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.”

SDG11 aims to “[…] enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management [...].”

Project Overview

The 23rd ASEF Summer University (ASEFSU23) is a 3-month long experiential learning project on “Liveable Cities for a Sustainable Future” and focuses on three of the most populated countries in ASEM: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Implemented as a 3-month long virtual Hackathon programme between September and November 2021, the project fosters cross-cultural exchanges & collaboration among youth and develop their 21st century skills.

ASEFSU23 invites 84 students & young professionals (age 18-30) from the 51 ASEM countries to participate and includes 3 main programme elements:

- 2-weeks Train-the-Trainers Programme
  20-31 September 2021

- 3-weeks Online Knowledge Building Phase with webinars and e-learning modules for all participants
  11-29 October 2021

- 12-days Interdisciplinary Hackathon for participants to collaborate & compete in groups & to find solutions to specific challenges on Sustainable Urbanisation in Bangladesh, India & Pakistan
  4-15 November 2021

The teams presenting the most innovative solutions for each country challenge will receive an award. Results of the Innovathon shall be presented at relevant ASEM meetings (e.g., ASEM Meetings for Governors and Mayors) and at national & international conferences linked to city development and urbanisation.

Further information on the project:

23rd ASEF Summer University Webpage

1 See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Urbanization Prospects;
2 See Final Declaration, 4th ASEM Meeting for Governors and Mayors (ASEM MGM4), 24-27 May 2017, Lisbon, Portugal.
Programme Elements

The ASEFSU23 includes 3 main programme elements:

**Train-the-Trainers Programme (2 weeks)**
**20-31 September 2021**

12 youth leaders from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, selected through an Open Call, will be trained in facilitation & team collaboration techniques as well as human centred design thinking. The online training will equip them to lead the ASEFSU23 Innovathon teams, comprised of participants coming from the 51 ASEM countries.

**Knowledge Building Phase (3 weeks)**
**11-29 October 2021**

During the virtual Knowledge Building Phase all participants will attend online sessions (e.g., webinars and lectures) on Sustainable Development, in particular SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and complete individual tasks & team assignments to gain a strong thematic understanding on the topic. E-Learning modules complement the Knowledge Building Phase for in-depth and self-paced learning, and will also be accessible to a wider youth audience after the project.

**Interdisciplinary Hackathon (12 days)**
**4-15 Nov 2021**

Participants will collaborate & compete in 12 teams, each consisting of 7 team members from different ASEM countries and led by a youth leader from either Bangladesh, India or Pakistan. Through a human centred design thinking process, the teams will develop proposals (analogue and/or digital prototypes) that could solve specific urban challenges and contribute to liveable & sustainable metropolitan areas. 4 teams compete per country on the following challenges, as identified by the respective local ASEFSU23 partner organisations.

- **Bangladesh (SDG11, SDG12 & SDG13):** Creating Clean Cities: Tackling Urban Waste Management
- **India (SDG3 & SDG11):** Creating Healthy Cities: Addressing Obesity among Children
- **Pakistan (SDG4, SDG8 and SDG11):** Creating Accessible Cities: Enhancing Urban Mobility

Read more about the challenges here. The most innovative solution per country will receive an award. Feedback sessions among peers as well as with representatives from local authorities, the private sector, academics and civil society are planned, and proposed solutions shall be presented at relevant ASEM Meetings and national/international conferences on city planning & sustainable urbanisation.
Participants & Learning Outcomes

Participants

The ASEFSU23 welcomes up to 84 participants from the 51 ASEM countries within the age range of 18-30 years. Participants come from multiple academic & professional disciplines and backgrounds and are selected through an Open Call for Application.

Project Results & Learning Outcomes

- 12 Prototypes (analogue or digital) created by participants to solve specific urbanisation challenges in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan
- ASEFSU23 e-learning modules with multi-media materials on Sustainable Development Goal 11, ASEM and country specific learning materials with the option for participants to receive up to 10 ECTS from University College Cork (UCC), Ireland
- 84 participants equipped with certificates of participation, upon completion of the Knowledge Building Phase and the Hackathon, conducted by ASEF, Higher Education institutions in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, as well as international leadership institutes
- Increased understanding and knowledge on Sustainable Development among participants, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 11, through non-formal and informal education & training opportunities
- Skills development and team building for participants, both on a technical and soft skill level
- Creation of an Asia-Europe youth network for future joint collaborations

Organisers & Partners

The ASEFSU23 is a collaboration led by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in partnership with Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSS), Daffodil University in Bangladesh, KREA University in India, Superior University in Pakistan, the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub), University College Cork (UCC) in Ireland, University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom, and the Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC).

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Visual Explainer

Yarns are a symbol of the cotton production and textile industry in South Asia which greatly contributed to its economy and opening up to the rest of the world. Along with this evolution, the region’s growing urbanisation has been a driving force, reshaping modern cities and societies.

Like a fabric with its distinct pattern, a city is a network of interdependencies and intertwined social interactions: a complex eco-system where every element is closely connected to each other. This intricate crisscross is a fragile equilibrium contingent on every thread which needs to be carefully sewn and integrated within the broader structure. To shape urban frameworks and images, urban policy makers and planners need intentionality and a comprehensive understanding of all its constituting elements. To weave and build liveable cities for a sustainable future, holistic and transformative visions are needed. Our ASEFSU23 participants will develop these for Bangladesh, India and Pakistan during the project.