

# Equitable Access to Higher Education

ASEF Capacity Building Training in conjunction with  
World Access to Higher Education Day 2019

24-27 November 2019 | Edinburgh, United Kingdom

## OVERVIEW



Organised by



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH

## OVERVIEW

The ASEF Capacity Building Training on Equitable Access to Higher Education builds on the ideas and policy recommendations developed during the [7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum \(ARC7\)](#) in Bucharest, Romania, 11-15 May 2019. ARC7, titled “**Higher Education Taking Action Towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Perspectives from Asia and Europe**”, brought together about 150 higher education leaders and 51 student leaders from the [Asia-Europe Meeting \(ASEM\) Partner Countries](#). The policy recommendations, developed by both the rectors and the students, underlined the need to ensure equitable access to higher education (HE).

The ASEF Capacity Building Training on Equitable Access to Higher Education is organised in conjunction with the [World Access to Higher Education Day \(WAHED\) 2019](#) taking place on 26th November 2019 in Edinburgh, United Kingdom. WAHED is a platform to raise global awareness around inequalities in access and success in HE, and act as a catalyst for international, regional and local action. The theme of this year's WAHED will be ‘**Advocating for Equity**’. It focuses on encouraging governments, universities and others to make meaningful commitments that will lead to greater equity in access and participation in higher education.

## BACKGROUND

### Access to Higher Education in Asia and Europe: Background and Challenges

It is estimated that by 2030 there will be over 300 million young people with a university degree, an increase from approximately 130 million in the early 2010s.<sup>1</sup> The possession of higher education qualifications is becoming increasingly important for economic and social development both at the individual and societal level. However, who will these students be and what background will they come from?

Research undertaken in 2017 to map participation in HE across the world showed that in 90% of the 50 countries where evidence exists, HE participation is unequal by social background.<sup>2</sup> The level of inequality differs, as does the dominant dimension by which inequality is understood. UNESCO data collected in the 2010s suggests that inequality in the attainment of higher education among students from lower and higher socio-economic backgrounds can range from over 50% to less than 10%, with high levels of inequality found in certain countries in Asia and Europe.<sup>3</sup>

## #KEY FACTS

### WHEN & WHERE?

24-27 November 2019,  
Edinburgh, United Kingdom

In conjunction with [World Access to Higher Education Day 2019](#)

### FOR WHOM?

- ≥ Citizens of any of the [51 ASEM partner countries](#)
- ≥ Strong command of English (written and verbal)
- ≥ Managers in higher education institutions in charge of inclusion, equity or admission policies

### COSTS

No registration or participation fee for selected participants. ASEF offers scholarships to cover travel, accommodation and visa costs. Meals are provided as indicated in the programme.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Do you need any special assistance to apply and/or participate? Contact us – we will do our utmost to accommodate your requirements.

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Have a look at the [FAQ](#).

Should you have any further questions, please e-mail us at [arc@asef.org](mailto:arc@asef.org).

Looking specifically at these regions, the evidence shows that inequalities in participation in HE by social background are commonplace. In Europe, the Eurostudent study of 2018, which looks at HE participation by parental background, shows that students whose parents did not progress to HE tend to enter HE later, study shorter programmes in non-university tertiary institutions, and are more likely to rely on paid employment when studying in comparison to those with a HE background in the family.<sup>4</sup> The data available across all Asian countries varies greatly, but that which does exist shows that HE participation can be extremely unequal.

The response to these inequalities amongst policymakers and higher education providers has been variable. In 2018, to mark the first World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED), a large study of national equity policies in HE participation and success was undertaken. This study 'All around the world: Higher education equity policies across the globe',<sup>5</sup> showed that of the 71 countries surveyed, only 32% had defined specific participation targets for any equity group and only 11% had national policies on equity in higher education. The picture in Europe and Asia does not appear to buck this national trend. The Asian countries featured in the research were below the average in terms of national policies. In case of Europe, while in 2009 each country agreed to set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing overall participation of under-represented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade, yet by 2015 only 6 had targets that included participation of under-represented groups – less than 20% of the total countries in the region<sup>6</sup>.

The challenges above have been recognized by the United Nations. For the first time university level education features in the sustainable development goals. It is key to the United Nations 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Development Goal 4, as target 4.3 highlights explicitly access to higher education:

*“By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”<sup>7</sup>*

## **WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

### **Why is capacity building in this area important?**

Universities and providers of HE are grappling with how to deal with the challenges of education and equity described above. It is not just a matter of enabling access into HE for different groups, but also supporting them to achieve their potential during their studies and after. As the demand for HE increases globally, there are students entering HE who bring a different culture to those whom the majority of institutions have been built for. Furthermore, when leaving higher education, graduate unemployment and under-employment is a growing concern in Europe and especially in Asia.

To meet the challenges above it is essential that HE institutions look to develop strategic approaches that work in their particular geographic and institutional context. While inequities in access and outcome are ubiquitous, how they manifest themselves are not. How socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, rurality and age combine, differs hugely across countries, and shapes the landscape in which institutions work. How these different factors interact make the challenges for institutions even more acute. It is essential that those who are tasked with addressing them have access to specific training that allows them to learn from global best practice and develop solutions with colleagues facing similar issues from across countries.

There are also concerns regarding the mission and role of HE. In a time where global inequality and political polarisation is higher than it has been for many years, the mission and role of HE itself is under discussion. It is imperative that HE makes a significant contribution to addressing the major challenges of the 21st century, with social and educational inequality being one of them. This capacity building programme will draw upon

the latest knowledge and expertise to help managers in HE institutions to develop their capabilities to make real change in this highly important area.

### **WHAT IS THE TARGET GROUP?**

We expect about 20 higher education professionals to join the ASEF Capacity Building Training, who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Citizens of any of the 51 ASEM partner countries;
- Strong command of English (written and verbal)
- Employees of tertiary education institutions, who are in managerial positions and in charge of inclusion, equity or admission policies.

### **WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES?**

The overall aim of the ASEF Capacity Building Training is to equip managers in HE institutions in Europe and Asia to advance equitable access and success in their institutions. The objectives are:

- Increase participants' understanding of the evidence and theory where access, success and participation in HE are concerned;
- Increase participants' understanding of the trends in global institutional practice in the field of equity, access and success in HE;
- Engage with other participants from Asia, Europe and globally to formulate approaches at the institutional and societal level to improving access and success in HE for disadvantaged groups;
- Develop action plans which participants can implement in their home institution to improve access and success in HE for disadvantaged groups;
- Build an Asia-Europe community of practice managers and practitioners who can achieve a step change in equitable access to HE by 2030.

### **PROGRAMME STRUCTURE**

The ASEF Capacity Building Training has three phases:

#### **PHASE 1: ONLINE PREPARATION**

The training will begin with an online preparation and engagement phase which will give the organisers the opportunity to learn about the participants, and the participants the opportunity to engage with the key issues in the training, as well as the work of the organisers. The phase will include:

- an invitation to participants to provide background information on their institution, position and how their work relates to equity in access/success in HE. This information will enable organisers to tailor the training towards the participants' background and challenges.
- reading and online resources to enable participants to develop their knowledge in the area.
- opportunities for participants to share their perspectives on access/success in HE via opinion pieces published via the ASEF and WAHED platforms.
- the opportunity to contribute to World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED).

#### **PHASE 2: FOUR-DAY ONSITE CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING IN EDINBURGH, 24-27 NOVEMBER 2019**

This onsite training will be delivered over 4 days at the University of Edinburgh, in the United Kingdom, in conjunction with the second World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED). Participants will be part of a global summit held in Edinburgh to recognize WAHED 2019. The aim of WAHED is to act as a catalyst for local, national and international action to

address inequalities in access and success in HE. Over 100 organisations from 30 countries engaged in WAHED in 2018.

The programme is described below:

#### **Day 1: Equitable access & success in HE: The challenges and how we will address them**

The goal of Day 1 will be to look at the global and regional context for HE participation and understand who we are as a group and what we want to achieve. On Day 1 we will undertake:

- Ice-breaking and understanding participants' goals and motivations
- Looking at global evidence on data and policy in equitable access
- Interactive small group work on institutional and policy definitions
- Identifying opportunities for development and challenges

#### **Day 2: Understanding equitable access to HE: Looking at global practice & addressing challenges**

The goal of Day 2 will be to work intensively to really understand how institutions are dealing with the challenges of equitable access/success in HE, and to look at how we as a group would address these challenges. We will also spend some time thinking about individual contexts, action plans and how to get the most out of World Access to Higher Education Day. Day 2 will include:

- Overview of trends and developments in global practice
- Guest speaker from Asia looking at good institutional practice
- Guest speaker from Europe looking at good institutional practice
- Interactive small group work looking at different scenario challenges in this area and how we would address them.

#### **Day 3: World Access to Higher Education Day**

Participants will take part in the WAHED 2019 global summit in Edinburgh. The programme will include presentations from global policymaking bodies and discussions on how we can collectively address the major issues in access & participation in HE across the world. Participants will have the opportunity to engage with colleagues from Australia, the USA and globally by live video link. There will also be the opportunity to discuss new research produced for WAHED, looking in detail at the relationship between equitable access & success in HE policies and country level outcomes.

#### **Day 4: Moving Forward**

The final day will concentrate on consolidating what has been captured so far and looking at how we can achieve real change in our institutions. The group will share action plans and look at how as a group we can remain connected and build on what has been achieved in the course. The day will include:

- Reflections on the WAHED Global Summit
- Interactive small group work looking at individual institutional challenges and formulating action plans
- Presentation of action plans
- Summary and moving forward

### **PHASE 3: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTISE**

After the training in Edinburgh has been completed, there will be opportunities for participants to continue to engage with each other and the global equitable access community. These opportunities will include follow up work on the progress that participants have made implementing action plans in their institutions and invitations to share practice via future publications and online platforms.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### What do participants get out of the ASEF Capacity Building Training?

Participants will complete the training with a key combination of practical solutions they can implement in their institutions and new networks which can strengthen their equity work. The learning outcomes will include:

#### An enhanced understanding of global practice in equitable access & success work

The training will help participants to understand the evidence and theory where access, success and participation in HE is concerned. They will learn how HE institutions have effectively addressed challenges in the field of equitable access/success in HE.

#### Developing the skills and knowledge to change the access & success landscape in their institution

Participants will develop their own action plans, which they can implement in their home institution to improve access & success in HE for disadvantaged groups.

#### Becoming part of a professional supporting network

The training will provide opportunity for interaction with the participants of the World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED), therefore, we fully expect new bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnerships to emerge. The organisers will look to maintain relationships between participants and, in Edinburgh, will further discuss how this can work. The outcomes that we are all aiming for in terms of equitable access and success will only happen by continued engagement and building on what this first capacity building training will achieve.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (2019) 'Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance', Paris: OECD - <http://www.oecd.org/education/benchmarking-higher-education-system-performance-be5514d7-en.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Atherton et al (2017) 'Charting Equity in Higher Education: Drawing the Global Access Map', London: Pearson - [https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/global/Files/about-pearson/innovation/Charting-Equity\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/global/Files/about-pearson/innovation/Charting-Equity_WEB.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO (2017) 'Six ways to ensure higher education leaves no one behind', Paris: UNESCO - <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247862>

<sup>4</sup> German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (2018) 'Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe EUROSTUDENT VI 2016-2018 Synopsis of Indicators' - [https://www.eurostudent.eu/download\\_files/documents/EUROSTUDENT\\_VI\\_Synopsis\\_of\\_Indicators.pdf](https://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EUROSTUDENT_VI_Synopsis_of_Indicators.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Salmi, J, (2018) 'All around the world – Higher education equity policies across the globe' - <https://worldaccesshe.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/All-around-the-world-Higher-education-equity-policies-across-the-globe-.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015) 'The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report' Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

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**CO-ORGANISED BY**

The Asia-Europe Foundation (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. 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 runs more than 25 projects a year, consisting of around 100 activities, mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, together with about 125 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities, and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks, and web-portals.

For more information, please visit [www.ASEF.org](http://www.ASEF.org).



The **National Education Opportunities Network (NEON)** is the professional organisation supporting those involved in widening access to higher education (HE). NEON has over 80 organisations as members, mainly universities but also some not for profit bodies and works with over 1000 professionals every year. NEON aims to enable those working to widen access to HE at all levels and in all sectors to affect change in their own organisations and communities. At the heart of NEON is a cross-sector approach bringing together higher education institutions (HEIs), schools, colleges, the voluntary sector, professional bodies and employers.

For more information, please visit [www.educationopportunities.co.uk](http://www.educationopportunities.co.uk)



**The University of Edinburgh**, established in 1582, is the sixth oldest university in the English-speaking world and one of Scotland's ancient universities. It is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the world by the 2019 QS World University Rankings. It has around 41.300 students and 10.300 staff across five main campuses in the city of Edinburgh.

For more information, please visit <https://www.ed.ac.uk/>

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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 higher education, to implement them by 2030. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is of particular importance to higher education since it enjoins UN member states to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Universities have a lot to contribute to reach this target. They need to make their admission systems and policies more equitable and support all type of students to achieve their potential during their studies and after. This visual is resembling the complexity of education pathways of individuals and indicates that strategic thinking is required to improve access to success of all students in higher education.

### Co-Organised by



### Contributing to



The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an intergovernmental process established in 1996 to foster dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. Presently it comprises 53 partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEM addresses political, economic, social, cultural, and educational issues of common interest, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. For more information, please visit [www.ASEMinfoboard.org](http://www.ASEMinfoboard.org)