



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

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Bucharest, Romania

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

RECTORS' CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

Table of Content

Introduction.....	3
ARC7 Rectors' Conference Policy Recommendations to the 7 th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7)	3
<i>Mr Uku LILLEVALI, Estonia</i> Summary of the Discussions on Theme 1 Taking Action at Home: SDGs as Core Pillars of University Governance	6
<i>Dr Alexandra ANGRESS, Germany</i> Summary of the Discussions on Theme 2 Taking Action at Community Level: SDGs as Drivers of University Societal Impact.....	10
<i>Dr Natalia BICHURINA, Switzerland/Russia</i> Summary of the Discussions on Theme 3 – Part I Taking Action at International Level: SDGs as a Catalyst to Reorient Internationalisation	14
<i>Dr Gabriel WEIBL, Slovakia</i> Summary of the Discussion on Theme 3 – Part II Taking Action at International Level: SDGs as a Catalyst to Reorient Internationalisation”.	18

INTRODUCTION

The ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC) is the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEM MEs). Since 2010, ARC has been contributing through Policy Recommendations to the deliberations of the Ministers and the ASEM Education Process.

The 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference was hosted by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), in Bucharest, Romania, on 12-14 May 2019. It brought together over 150 leaders of higher education institutions, experts, government officials and 51 student leaders from 51 Asian and European ASEM partner countries to discuss how can higher education take action towards the sustainable development goals.

At the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference, higher education institution leaders from Asia and Europe discussed the role of higher education in driving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with attention to three areas:

1. Taking Action at Home: SDGs as Core Pillars of University Governance,
2. Taking Action at Community Level: SDGs as Drivers of University Societal Impact,
3. Taking Action at International Level: SDGs as Catalysts to Reorient Internationalisation.

The Conference resulted in Commitments by higher education institutions (HEIs) from both regions, and also proposed Policy Recommendations to feed into the deliberations and outcomes of the 7th ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM ME7). The policy recommendations were proposed and reviewed by the ARC7 organising partners – European University Association (EUA), International Association of Universities (IAU), ASEAN University Network (AUN) – discussed and finalised by the ARC7 Rectors' Conference participants.

This background paper aims to reveal some of the discussions and good practices presented by participants during the conference, supporting the policy recommendations or reflecting at their content.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all rapporteurs who have joined the conference in Bucharest and contributed their time and expertise to summarise the working group discussions featured in this background paper.

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely based on the conference participants' contribution, and they do not represent the opinion of the authors or the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).

ARC7 Rectors' Conference Policy Recommendations for the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7)

15-16 May 2019, Bucharest, Romania

The ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC) is the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meetings (ASEM MEs). Since 2010, ARC has been contributing through Policy Recommendations to the deliberations of the Ministers and the ASEM Education Process.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call for action to shape a better future for all. The SDGs are universal, transformative and rights-based, and explicitly refer to higher education and research.

At the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference, higher education institution leaders from Asia and Europe discussed the role of higher education in driving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with attention to three core areas of institutional activity: 1) institutional governance; 2) societal impact; and 3) international partnerships.

The Conference resulted in **Commitments** by higher education institutions (HEIs) from both regions, and also proposed **Policy Recommendations** to feed into the deliberations and outcomes of the 7th ASEM Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM ME7).

Commitments by Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions contribute to building the environmental, economic, social, cultural and intellectual conditions required for a sustainable future for all through their three institutional missions (education, research and community engagement). Higher education institutions have the capacity to engage with the different SDGs through a whole institution approach, i.e. through actions in the areas of teaching, research, governance, campus resource management and through the values and ethics lived in the academic community and shared with society at large. They are committed to stepping up their actions and allocate the necessary resources.

Building and sharing capacity to contribute to global transformation

Higher education inter- and multidisciplinary curriculum, research, knowledge development and dissemination are key to addressing the Goals. Higher education institutions engage in local and international partnerships, involving other education and research organisations, governments, NGOs, businesses and other society actors. These partnerships should be (re)considered in the context of the SDGs, in their ability to transcend disciplinary, political, social and cultural boundaries, and as a contribution to peace, inclusion and solidarity.

Providing lifelong learning for a global community

Higher education contributes through research and education to sustainable societies in the global context of demographic changes, technological developments and evolving societal demands. Higher education institutions from both regions therefore pledge to provide lifelong learning opportunities for the benefit of the global community. Higher education institutions are committed to equip learners from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds with the necessary knowledge and skills to learn and adapt to new tasks and situations.

Embracing internationalisation as part of a global commitment towards sustainable development

Universities from Asia and Europe pledge to envision internationalisation as part of a more global commitment towards sustainable collaborations, translated into connected institutional strategies with globally sustainable and equitable objectives. The Agenda 2030 provides a key opportunity to reassess the goals, purposes and means of higher education internationalisation, and to address standing issues, such as imbalances in research capacity and mobility exchanges. Achieving the SDGs requires better and more ethical cooperation in research and education, in terms of access,

equal opportunities, and geographic balance. A better engagement with the SDGs is necessary in all university endeavours. This should be reflected in research projects and partnerships, curricula reform, informal learning opportunities, as well as international, purpose driven student and staff exchange and inter-university collaboration.

Policy Recommendations

Universities from Asia and Europe recommend the ASEM Education Ministers to

1. Orient the ASEM Education Process towards the Agenda 2030

Ministers are invited to include the SDGs into the goals, priorities and activities of the ASEM Education Process (AEP). This would enable the Process to play an active role towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030, and also stimulate each individual ASEM Partner country to make the Agenda 2030 part of national education and research strategy.

2. Support higher education institutions to engage with the Agenda 2030

ASEM governments should encourage and support higher education institutions to address SDGs in strategy and actions for education, research and community engagement. Governments should recognise these initiatives, as part of the national contribution to the Agenda 2030. They should ensure that rules and regulations, including funding rules, and national quality assurance and research assessment frameworks support the development of inter- and multidisciplinary research, use of innovative teaching approaches and development of transformative curricula, and the engagement in local and international cooperation. Governments have to ensure that higher education institutions enjoy the necessary autonomy, academic freedom and appropriate accountability as key conditions for the exchange of knowledge and development of competences that our societies require to reach the SDGs.

3. Incentivize and support education and research collaboration among universities and with other societal actors, at national and international levels

ASEM governments should create a positive environment for collaboration, among higher education institutions and with other parts of society, to advance education, knowledge, and innovation, and in line with the higher education third mission. Governments should not only valorise collaboration with enterprises, NGOs, local communities or national authorities, but also community engagement, community-based learning and citizen science.

4. Develop research and knowledge-based policy agendas and informed decision-making in democratic societies

ASEM governments should develop policy agendas informed by internationally reviewed and recognised inter- and multidisciplinary research, and close collaboration with universities and other civil society actors, considering multi-stakeholder perspectives, economic, environmental and social aspects, and the prospective impacts for national, local and global society. This would also be a means to enhance and strengthen democracy, distinguish national interests from nationalistic ones, and counter populism, fake news, alternative truth and conspiracy theories, that seek to undermine and discredit both, international initiatives, such as the Agenda 2030, and research and education.

5. Acknowledge and support the role of higher education in contributing to equity, inclusion and lifelong learning

ASEM governments should develop policies and strategies for social inclusion and lifelong learning, encompassing all education sectors and forms of learning, and all stakeholders, including higher

education and research. They should encourage and recognise the contribution of higher education institutions to lifelong learning, through research, education and outreach to society. There is ample evidence that diversity enhances the quality and relevance of research and education. The experience of inclusion and equity as a shared value in education and research, and the ability and opportunities for lifelong learning will also prepare future graduates to contribute to peace and sustainable development, as part of the work force and through active citizenship.

6. Support higher education internationalisation in line with the goals of the Agenda 2030

The 2030 Agenda provides an appropriate framework to rethink internationalisation as a part of a fair and equitable approach to education. ASEM Governments should review their national strategies for internationalisation, including legislative frameworks, enabling institutions to pursue fair and/or equitable and ethical internationalisation that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. This would require the set-up of appropriate funding schemes, including truly transnational funding schemes. It also requires incentives for more ethical internationalisation, in terms of equal opportunities, learning gains and geographic balance, and incentives for professional development. Likewise, fair and adequate recognition mechanisms of diplomas, period of studies abroad and prior learning need to be established or strengthened.

Conclusive words

The leaders of higher education institutions in Asia and Europe and ARC7 participants express their hope and expectation that the above commitments and policy recommendations will enable ASEM governments, institutions and all education stakeholders under the ASEM Education Process to contribute jointly and proactively to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Using the framework of the SDGs provides an opportunity to relate national priorities and interests to the wider context of a global environment and a global realm of knowledge and research. It enables Asian and European governments and higher education institutions to develop stronger education and research partnerships to generate a better future for all.

Background:

The 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference was hosted by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), in Bucharest, Romania, on 12-14 May 2019. It brought together over 150 leaders of higher education institutions, experts, government officials and 51 student leaders from 51 Asian and European ASEM partner countries to discuss how can higher education take action towards the sustainable development goals.

The policy recommendations were proposed and reviewed by the ARC7 organising partners – European University Association (EUA), International Association of Universities (IAU), ASEAN University Network (AUN) – discussed and finalised by the ARC7 Rectors' Conference participants.

Summary of the discussions on Theme 1 | Taking Action at Home: SDGs as Core Pillars of University Governance

Rapporteur: [Mr Uku LILLEVÄLI](#), student at the Lund University, ASEFEdu ALUMNI

Higher education institutions have the capacity to engage with the different SDGs through a whole institution approach, i.e. through actions in the areas of teaching, research, governance, campus resource management and through the values and ethics lived in the academic community and shared with society at large.

The ARC7 Rectors' Conference participants have committed themselves to „Building and sharing capacity to contribute to global transformation“ [see the ARC7 Commitments by Higher Education Institutions [here](#)], because they believe inter- and multidisciplinary curriculum, research, knowledge development and dissemination are key to addressing the Goals. Higher education institutions engage in local and international partnerships, involving other education and research organisations, governments, NGOs, businesses and other society actors. These partnerships should be (re)considered in the context of the SDGs, in their ability to transcend disciplinary, political, social and cultural boundaries, and as a contribution to peace, inclusion and solidarity.

Discussion initiators of the working group were sharing with each other how they engage with the different SDGs through actions in the areas of teaching, research, governance, campus resource management.

[Professor Bundhit EUA-ARPORN](#), President of Chulalongkorn University in Thailand [see his presentation [here](#)] contextualised university governance by highlighting six roles of the higher education: educators, knowledge creators, societal problem-solvers, innovators, connectors and agents of change. Based on this, he exemplified how Chulalongkorn University pursues the Agenda 2030 by promoting open and impact-driven innovation, transdisciplinary approach in teaching and research, and consistent community development. In specific, he highlighted:

- The School of Integrated Innovation, which combines different disciplines to enable innovative solutions to contemporary issues through demand-driven research, innovation and curriculum, which are ensured via comprehensive collaboration with markets, industries, government, and university networks.
 - The aim to commercialise research through four strategic areas: a) ageing society, b) food, energy & water, c) inclusive community & smart city, and d) digital economy & robotics.
 - Complementing the previous by consistent community development through engaging with the markets (e.g., via Siam Innovation District), industries and government (via University Technology Centre), and university networks.
 - Sustainable campus, which includes a) Committee on Sustainability, b) Committee on Campus Planning & Design, c) Office of Physical Resources Management, d) Safety, Health and Environment Unit, and e) CU Green Office Program and other initiatives.

The first entirely online university in the world was invited to explain how they made the sustainable development goals an integral part of their governance, and in what different ways they are pursuing SDG4 and its sub goals. [Dr Àngels FITÓ BERTRAN](#), Vice President for Competitiveness and Employability at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) shared that utilising the digital tools has allowed UOC to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all [find her presentation under this [link](#)].

To exemplify, digital learning opportunities have enabled UOC to provide access to higher education to older students, supporting hence life-long learning - e.g., 48% of the graduates are aged 30 or more, compared to 5% in traditional on-site universities). They are also providing more equitable opportunities for the disabled - e.g., in 2017-2018, there were around 1400 students with an official disability certificate of 33% or more (SDG4.5.). UOC provides refugees with scholarships,

language courses, stand-alone subjects and postgraduate specializations (SDG4.5). The university also presents significant opportunities for virtual mobility collaborating with other higher education institutions, providing digital competencies, blending learning opportunities, and internationalising the curricula. UOC also has joint international programmes with UNWTO, UNITAR, WHO and others to enable learners to acquire competencies to promote sustainable development and global citizenship (SDG4.7).

After the very concrete examples a system-wide approach was discussed. [Dr Regina VALUTYTE](#), the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs at the Mykolas Romeris University in Lithuania described the system-wide obstacles that restrict higher education institutions in Lithuania to pursue SDGs. She has emphasized mainly the lack of strategic understanding of what should be done institutionally and on a national level to achieve a more inclusive and equitable higher education [see her presentation [here](#)].

Firstly, the higher level of primary and secondary education in larger cities, shown in average higher examination results in city schools, inevitably implies that students outside the larger cities do not have equitable access to the same level of education, which hinders them from entering the higher education. Secondly, the selective state funding system is based on the prior achievement of students, meaning that the state does not finance all those willing to study. Thirdly, there is no explicit national policy framework for widening access to higher education. Fourth, the lack of vision and strategy from the government regarding the state of development, and fifth, the inadequate quality assurance in higher education.

As a response to the obstacles, Dr VALUTYTE emphasized the need to: 1) Include diversity, equity and inclusiveness as one of the pillars in the policy of a higher education institution, 2) Broaden the policy framework and a roadmap of initiatives for development and implementation, 3) Widen participation of underrepresented groups as part of the institutional goals, and 4) Include social dimension in institutional study and research framework.

Dr VALUTYTE stated the necessity for universities to have well-established connections with different stakeholders within the community, such as secondary schools, local governments and organizations, and others. As good practices of how her university promotes sustainability, she described: a) increasing access to university-level education via the project Registruokis 4MM (free personal development for students motivated to improve their state exam results), b) Widening opportunities for students from conflict zones (e.g., providing financing) via the project Eblaw, which focuses on Ukraine, and c) The presence of partnership networks that allow students gain practical experiences by solving real-life problems of the partnering organisations.

The good practice sharing session concluded with an example from China. [Professor Sidong XIONG](#), the President of Soochow University in China shared how his university strives towards SDGs through its four-pillar mission: 1) quality education, 2) solution-based research development, 3) sharable social service and 4) connecting people from differing backgrounds and cultures [see his presentation [here](#)].

To exemplify the best practices, Prof XIONG focused on the first three:

- Quality education consists of, firstly, equal opportunity, which Soochow University pursues by assuring that a) at least 7% of the freshmen each year are from poverty areas, providing them with free tuition and living stipend, b) customizing courses upon necessity, such as languages and computer science, c) assuring gender equality for all disciplines. And secondly, high-quality education, which includes a) providing new disciplines to adapt to social development (new energy, big data, AI, new medicine, etc), b) evaluation system being teaching- and research-oriented, and focused on internationalization, and c) assuring synergies between research and teaching, online and offline teaching, and domestic and international education.

- Research development involves firstly, innovative research to provide solutions to current challenges in disciplines like haematology, nanotechnology, immunology, materials science, and others. And secondly, entrepreneurial nature of the research, providing opportunities for research-based companies with market potential.
- Social service includes, firstly, public healthcare, which is considered an obligation and intrinsic function of Soochow as a public university (there are 17 affiliated hospitals with annual outpatient cases of 20 million, children hospital and a nursing school). And secondly, Soochow University encourages its students in fundamental disciplines (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) to work in remote, rural or poverty areas after graduating by incentivising the students with free tuition, better scholarships and calling them back to universities for a master's education.

The presentations were followed by discussing the guiding questions the first being **which SDGs are the most important to drive universities' contribution to Agenda 2030**. The core argument revolved around assuring a quality education (SDG 4), which was by discussants considered as a cornerstone that enables universities to pursue the Agenda 2030. Given the interrelated goals within the agenda, the importance of partnerships between universities and other institutions, companies, NGOs and others (SDG 17) was emphasized, especially the collaboration with markets and industries. Also, it was discussed that the partnerships should target the specific context that universities are in. For instance, if the basic education in a country is lacking, universities could support teaching and incentivising students to become teachers. Other points that arose were the focus on the internationalisation of the education and on assuring the good health of stakeholders within universities and communities.

The second main focus of the discussions was to explore what institutional approach(es) could ensure effective and operative implementation of SDGs in higher education institutions. Numerous determinants were found to support the institutional approach necessary for effectively implementing SDGs in discussants' universities.

- The necessity to have a sustainability perspective within universities' vision and mission statements, and strategies. This includes adapting the sustainability-tilted strategies throughout the universities in all faculties, also involving communities where universities are operating.
- Sustainability coordination body that establishes and implements a central sustainability roadmap and action plan, which integrates sustainability in other strategies.
- Assuring that necessary measures are taken to implement sustainability strategies, including adopting relevant key performance indicators and evaluation parameters, as well as assessment tools and follow-up mechanisms. As an example, annually monitoring which research has been conducted in relation to the SDGs.
- Integrating sustainability in an interdisciplinary manner in all curricula, to assure that universities prepare students with critical thinking, ethical citizenship, and a holistic competence base, which is necessary to solve the multifaceted present-day issues, such as climate change, migration, extremism and others.
- Promoting integrating research with SDGs and sustainability aspects, in order for universities to directly contribute to solving the contemporary issues through research outputs.
- Motivating all key stakeholders, students, staff, lecturers and others in the entire approach.
- Supporting life-long learning among the stakeholders within both the university and community.

- Benchmarking best practices against other universities and using sustainability to promote the competitiveness of universities and their partners, such as businesses.

The discussion also included several mentions of the role of the state and national strategies in supporting universities to pursue Agenda 2030, including:

- Communicating the Agenda 2030 in all parts of the society and monitoring and following up how different stakeholders apply the sustainability focus.
- Aligning the goals of higher education with other sustainability-related themes, such as poverty elimination.
- Shaping the public strategy and funding to support Agenda 2030, including enabling universities to promote the Agenda 2030 through scholarships and other mechanisms.

This was connected to the rectors' second policy recommendation calling upon ASEM Governments to „Support higher education institutions to engage with the Agenda 2030“. *„ASEM governments should encourage and support higher education institutions to address SDGs in strategy and actions for education, research and community engagement. Governments should recognise these initiatives, as part of the national contribution to the Agenda 2030. They should ensure that rules and regulations, including funding rules, and national quality assurance and research assessment frameworks support the development of inter- and multidisciplinary research, use of innovative teaching approaches and development of transformative curricula, and the engagement in local and international cooperation. Governments have to ensure that higher education institutions enjoy the necessary autonomy, academic freedom and appropriate accountability as key conditions for the exchange of knowledge and development of competences that our societies require to reach the SDGs.“* [read the ARC7 Rectors' Conference Policy Recommendations [here](#)].

Conclusion

The participants of the sessions all seemed to agree in the importance of making university governance more sustainability-focused and arrived at numerous factors that support this transformation. From the university perspective, this first includes the need for senior management to recognise sustainability as a core part of mission and vision statements and strategies, followed by the implementation of these strategies across different faculties and functions of the university, including also the surrounding community. The latter involves assuring the consistent coordination of the implementation, monitoring and improvement of sustainability-related aspects in curricula, research and community development, accordingly to the contexts of different universities. The participants also acknowledged that states could greatly support the previous by strategically aligning the goals of the higher education with other sustainability-related focal areas on a national level and providing appropriate financing for the higher education to support Agenda 2030.

Summary of the discussions on Theme 2. Taking Action at Community Level: SDGs as Drivers of University Societal Impact

Rapporteur: Prof Dr Alexandra ANGRESS, TH Aschaffenburg, Germany

The second theme of ARC7 explored the role of university as a driver to enhance sustainability in a societal dimension through delivering education and research to communities beyond the campus. The exchange of experience and expertise coupled with concrete best practice examples from both Asia and Europe with discussion from participants, explored opportunities and challenges of enhancing the potential of universities to engage in joint knowledge production and research to the benefit of communities in both regions.

The working group discussions centred around the question of how universities influence local communities through SDGs to inspire sustainable development actions; how global goals such as the SDGs can be translated into corresponding university strategies and community outreach initiatives; and how funding can ensure sustainable research, teaching and community engagement projects.

Discussion initiators shared exemplary partnerships to increase social impact, ranging from employers, alumni, entrepreneurs, community organisations and NGOs in the field of refugees. One key message emerging from the debate relates to HEI's role in contributing to equity, inclusion and lifelong learning through education, research as well as through outreach to society and communities (in Europe this community outreach is also referred as universities' "3rd mission" besides education and research). Best practice examples such as the presentation from Sweden demonstrated how a medium sized university can successfully contribute to regional development. They embark on a mission to take action on identified SDGs with new regional and sectoral partners, against a backdrop of considerable economic, labour market and societal challenges deriving from a significant increase of in (im)migration and incidence of escalated violence/attack in a school. University West established several partnerships, for example with employment agencies and refugee NGOs to establish itself as the regional reference centre for the provision of quality education and lifelong learning opportunities and active citizenship education.

A presentation by [Mag Friedrich FAULHAMMER](#), Rector of Danube University of Krems, Austria, the leading public university in Europe for continuing education, demonstrated of how his university has succeeded in using SDGs as a driver of its university impact at community level. They had to align the following frameworks: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (25 September 2015); the Ministerial Council Decision by the Austrian Federal Government (12 January 2016) and the respective latest Framework Agreement ("Leistungsvereinbarung") between the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Research and the university in the period of 2019-2021 (the agreement forms the legal basis for government funding of the universities in Austria). In this context, Danube University of Krems managed to identify a strategy relating to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and to translate this into a mission relating to providing expertise in teaching and research to work to overcome societal challenges with societal impact as key principle underpinning this mission with corresponding strategic goals and key strategies. Two approaches have been adopted to implement this key principle via appropriate actions at university level: the first is transdisciplinarity bridging basic and practice oriented research with academic disciplines and society; the second is lifelong learning encompassing societal, technological and organisational developments: The rationale that lifelong learning along with the continuous willingness of citizens to take part in continuing education is an effective response to the global challenges facing society [find his presentation [here](#)].

How to implement this in concrete and sustainable terms is and remains a challenge, given autonomy is a philosophical tenet of university identity. It is therefore essential to identify ways to motivate university staff to embrace new strategies while ensuring the necessary framework conditions in which the latter are willing and able to carry out research (which always in turn needs a critical mass). Providing financial incentives to carry out innovative research is necessary for the provision of informed decision making in society, to address these new challenges and to create a

basis of empirical facts. Recent developments and large-scale demonstrations by the young generation illustrate that this approach can only be successful and sustainable in the long run when students are on board as both stakeholders and drivers of change.

The experience of the University Brunei Darussalam (UBD) shared by [Dr Joyce TEO Siew Yeon](#), Assistant Vice Chancellor and Vice President, underlined the potential impact universities can have in creating and supporting a variety of concrete relevant programmes and initiatives to support community outreach and the link to society. Equipping students with the forms of social entrepreneurship and experiential learning includes a so called "Discover Year". It can be organised in the form of a community outreach programme or as an internship programme with student placements to promote - in the context of Brunei's national entrepreneurship agenda - an entrepreneurial mindset of students. It also encompasses start-ups from UBD with networks of alumni as well as student initiatives such as medical students reaching to certain regions (such as Kampong Kapok) for Diabetes Awareness relating measures or eco related forms of competitions such as the Shell-eco marathon Asia (with the team name "AUFA" in Arabic meaning "committed to a promise" to strive for victory in the competition) [view her presentation [here](#)].

The need to underpin SDG related initiatives with appropriate local/national language was identified as one success factor for HEIs to take action at community level, as illustrated by the International Islamic University of Malaysia. The so called "Sejahetera" Platform Model is an initiative launched by the university that can be broken down into 6 actionable steps, explained [Prof Tan Sri Dzul kifli ABDUL RAZAK](#), Rector of the university. First, the university has to find a suitable localised name (the Malay "sejahetera" could be translated with meanings centred around peaceful and prosperous), then frame the activity as volunteerism and obligation to society. Next the students have to identify a problem and work on it in multi-disciplinary teams including community members. They are encouraged to adopt a data driven approach and to use acknowledged R&D reporting formats, to complete documentation for submission to university. Finally, they have to conclude with impact assessment and follow-up work to sustain the initiatives endorsed by the university. [You can find the 6 steps in his presentation [here](#).]

Collaboration with new partnerships on regional and sectoral level and a university opening itself up to society are success factors illustrated in the presentation of by [Prof Martin HELLSTROM](#), Vice-Chancellor, University West, a university with around 15,000 students in (Mid)Sweden. With a focus on Work Integrated Learning (WIL) the university's main concept is to provide mutual cooperation as key element of success and open lab platforms that provide the opportunity for inviting society to the academy. The fundamental values are all people enjoying equal rights, democracy and diversity contributing to social welfare, justice and sustainable societal development. The vision of the HEI is to create knowledge and make it accessible to a greater extent based on the core values of generosity, pro-activeness, and inclusiveness while also being "crazy enough" to reflect a probing and innovation friendly culture. The university's social and societal commitment is above all the result of several economic and societal developments (i.e. crash of Swedish automotive company in the region, influx of a large number of immigrants; violence at school escalating) challenging the economic and societal values and benefits of the region. This led to the university and students in particular taking action to make the university become an important driver in the region: they are engaged in a strategy to make the university more accessible and open up to better reflect its role and responsibility in society and fostering democracy and its underpinning values and rights. Based on an identification of the developing potential of the region the university made the strategic decision to offer more courses and fewer programmes to break down mental barriers and combine work and studies, to stand up for democracy and integration of refugees and migrants, in particular. Key to success was the establishment of collaborations with regional and sectoral partners (such as Scholars at Risk, the Support Group Network "Restad Gård" and 14 municipalities in the region, "Kommunakademin Väst"). This resulted in impressive number of concrete initiatives such as working together with refugees, teaching students and teachers, providing internships in these fields, offering the universities platforms, establishing so called "double cups", tandems of university staff/employers, meetings with employment agencies with the latter being present regularly on campus as well as the organisation of international conferences about inclusion, validation and immigration. Overall, mutual collaboration provided impact going beyond the merely

socially related SDGs, leading also to projects relating to industry/innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) or Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) with concepts for mobility such as e-car sharing for families or circular economy engagement with companies in the region. [find the presentation [here](#)]

Key outcomes and lessons learned from the exchange of experience, expertise and discussions in the workshop are summarised here as follows:

- Incentivising research and collaboration were emphasised to advance research and knowledge-based policy agendas and decision-making for democratic societies based on multi-disciplines, civil society, multi-stakeholder pertaining to the economic/environmental and societal dimension of Agenda 2030 Agenda. Acknowledging the role of HEI to ensure equity and inclusion and support an innovation agenda in line with the SDGs.
- Building awareness and translating the SDGs into appropriate local/national language and initiatives that are in line with the context and mission of the HEIs are important success factors identified in the workshop.
- Integrating SDG as reference into respective HEI policies ensures to make the SDGs sustainable given the context of autonomy as key principle universities are operating in. Official referencing to SDGs can also serve as a vehicle to reinforce a multidisciplinary vision and/or help foster collaboration also inside the university in times of discontinuity or disruptions as SDG can help cement key principles in the respective university vision and encourage staff collaboration in a trans/interdisciplinary way.
- Lessons learned from regionally operating smaller/medium sized universities show local mission are worth supporting by appropriate funding through government. Government related funding should therefore reflect this accordingly with giving support to these local missions and not be restricted to traditional research.
- One of the key challenges is to identify appropriate ways and measures for HEI to inspire students and staff to focus on solving global issues. Success factors identified were students as driving force and leadership of HEI.
- A discussion about the role of university rankings in the context of SDGs revealed that it is essentially a question of making SDGs explicit and visible as critical element in external relation dimension and building a culture where they are integrated, thus it was agreed to give framing priority over ranking .
- Universities need to establish themselves as champions and drivers of the Agenda 2030 and incorporate them at appropriate functional level (ranging from strategies over committees to operational plans) and every function that should be tested against the delivery of the identified goal to ensure they can perform their role and realise their potential fully.

SDGs were identified as metaphors for change: the approaches presented convincingly demonstrated a variety of concrete possibilities of how HEIs can realise SDGs with a focus on the societal dimension by engaging local communities and civil society and providing sustainable teaching and research possibilities. Translating these global goals into local actions creates added value with SDGs acting as triggers of change and community action in Asia and Europe.

Summing up, the workshop demonstrated that SDGs can indeed act as catalyst for change i.e. by opening up and reaching out to partners at community level identifying diversity as an opportunity to engage communities and providing practice-oriented education and skills with a strong focus on SDGs; ensuring research capacities with appropriate funding and partnership schemes and mechanisms, establishing a platform of meetings with researchers and communities and also reach out to non-academic and policy decision makers; ensuring funding and also forms of

academic recognition (with credit points or considering them as volunteerism as obligation to society) with stakeholders in decision making, strengthening research and innovation within university and outreach to relevant community actors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, participants of the workshop recommended to ASEM governments to acknowledge the role HEI plays in community engagement and capacity building in the region with SDGs acting as catalyst for change. Governments should not only develop frameworks for appropriate policies and strategies for social inclusion and lifelong learning but also create incentives to reward HEI that are active in the field: these are often smaller and middle sized HEIs as players in the region such as demonstrated by the good practice example of Mid-Sweden University. Government funding needs to also appropriately reflect this community engagement of universities in addition to traditional mechanisms and criteria of research funding allocation often benefitting mostly big research universities.

The key message of the workshop, which aligns with the policy recommendations of the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference for the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7), relates to the provision of lifelong learning opportunities for a global community with HEI in both regions acknowledging their role and responsibility in the provision of the latter as well as the perceived need to build commitment to support learners from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to (continuously) learn and adapt to new global challenges arising from demographic changes, technological developments and evolving societal demands.

In more concrete terms, the focal role of HEI societal impact underlined the need to create a supportive incentivising education and research collaboration context in which HEI and partners can engage where appropriate, on a regional, national and international level. ASEM member countries should therefore provide a suitable framework for collaboration between HEI and other actors of society to stimulate and advance education, knowledge, research and innovation. In this context it is essential to recognise and valorise the role HEI play in terms of collaboration with enterprises, local communities and NGOs as well as community engagement and community-based learning.

Another recommendation relates to the perceived need that HEIs to help develop more research and knowledge-based policy agendas that are based on internationally validated and acknowledged multidisciplinary research. Related to this is the provision of fundamental support for democratic societies to make informed decision that provide for political leverage and acknowledge international commitments such as for Agenda 2030 which is implemented in close collaboration with universities and other actors of civil society.

Summary of the discussions on Theme 3. Taking Action at International Level: SDGs as a Catalyst to Reorient Internationalisation Part I.

Rapporteur: [Dr Natalia BICHURINA](#), President of the Eurasian chapter, Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA)

This report is summarising the discussions, good practices and recommendations that were shared in Working Group 3B on the topic of reorienting internationalisation, facilitated by [Mr Giorgio MARINONI](#), Manager for HE and Internationalization Policy at the International Association of Universities (IAU). There were four discussion initiators delivering presentation in the working group, who all made their specific policy recommendations as well.

[Prof Joanne PAGÈZE](#), Vice-President for Internationalisation, University of Bordeaux, France, underlined in her presentation the need for rethinking the internationalisation of higher education. A sustainable, inclusive model of internationalisation should be adopted. On the one hand, it should concern all the students (as of today, only 2% of students in the world are mobile, which looks like an elitist dynamics). On the other hand, it should include the academic staff. So far, the topic of internationalisation has often been nearly exclusively part of the international offices' staff work, while academic staff was somewhat left aside [find her presentation [here](#)].

Prof PAGÈZE argued that internationalisation at home is a strong support for SDGs, while SDGs are, in the same time, a good basis for such internationalisation. Internationalisation at home is understood as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum of all students within domestic learning environments” (according to Beelen & Jones, 2015).

A need for seeing a classroom as a holistic concept was underlined. Thus, internationalisation should not be translated solely in delivering classes in English, so that they can be understood by international students. Instead, the process should go in a learning-and-teaching modality, taking into account the diverse identities of participants and their interaction. In other words, there is a need to shift from a language-centric approach to an internationalised learning approach. Prof Pagèze stressed that this does not only concern international students, as all student groups are diverse. Hence, the experience of working with international students can later be used in the work with local students. Universities also need to be seen as a whole, as communities, including formal and informal learning. The issue of “invisible” international students was also mentioned: in the case of France, these are French-speaking students from other countries, bringing in their diversity, but being largely unnoticed, as the major internationalisation efforts are oriented towards language learning/providing courses in English. The need to move towards internationalized learning outcomes, even global educational sustainability outcomes was pointed out.

Prof PAGÈZE presented the case study of EQUiP project: The Educational Quality at Universities for inclusive international Programmes. This three-year Erasmus+ project, bringing together seven European universities, elaborates modules exploring:

- Teaching and learning in the international classroom (shift from linguistic to holistic approach in the classroom)
- Internationalising course design
- Feedback and reflective processes
- Intercultural group dynamics
- The role of language and linguistic diversity (seeing diversity as a resource)

[Mr James TANG](#), Secretary-General, The University Grants Committee of Hong Kong, China, made a contribution from the perspective of a funding body, i.e. The Hong Kong Universities Grants Committee (UGC), with 8 funded universities. UGC is the non-statutory body which advises the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government on the funding and strategic development of higher education in Hong Kong; UGC members are appointed ad personam by the Chief Executive, including lay members and academics. Mr Tang argued that, seeing from that perspective, playing

a role in internationalisation and connecting it to SDGs is a challenging topic. The funding body has a dual role, as it is situated between the government and the universities. Thus, on the one hand, it is responsible for maintaining academic freedom and autonomy; yet, on the other hand, it should hold universities accountable, as they are funded with public money [find his presentation [here](#)].

UGC-funded universities are highly internationalised: in 2018/19, there are about 18,100 non-local students enrolled in UGC-funded programmes, i.e. about 18% of the total student population. In this case, the notion of the so-called “non-local students” includes students from mainland China, together with the rest of the world, without making any difference. He agreed with the previous speaker that a different language is needed to address the issue of internationalisation. There is a need for setting clear goals, which would take in account diverse stakeholders (governments, universities, etc.).

Universities should also be encouraged to engage with the local community. As an example, Mr TANG mentioned HKUST Connect, a community engagement initiative that builds on the University's efforts in raising civic awareness and developing sustainable partnerships by supporting a broad and diverse set of collaborative activities that link the University and its larger community (local, state, national, global).

The recommendations to ASEM governments proposed by Mr TANG were the following:

- Funding body should set clear goals in consultation with the Universities;
- Funding body should provide necessary financial incentives;
- Universities should be given autonomy and encouraged to be innovative in advancing SDGs in areas including research, curriculum and organising relevant activities;
- Universities should be encouraged to engage with the community;
- Universities should be encouraged to collaborate with international partners.

The issue of funding was thoroughly discussed, namely the need for international funding schemes across disciplines. The participants agreed that in order to achieve SDGs, there is a need for having large international and interdisciplinary teams working together. Yet, the absence of an international research funding seriously impedes such work: each country has its own funding bodies; besides, these are usually confined to specific disciplines rather than being interdisciplinary. The UN has a roadmap, but no funding mechanisms; the EU has funding mechanisms, but it is mostly for Europe. Hence, the need for global funding, lacking as of today. The way the institutions are operating (universities usually being large institutions) should also be modified: e.g. reducing carbon footprint, etc.

Internationalisation should include staff development in general, i.e. both administrative and academic staff. It was mentioned that many of the university staff are not international: they are often locals having worked for the university for many decades, and sometimes not well informed about the new internationalisation tendencies. While getting non-academic staff abroad for several months would be an important financial burden, some measures should be defined and taken for their internationalisation. E.g. training for staff should be provided.

The participants agreed that the vocabulary used to speak about internationalisation should change: e.g. from “teaching materials” to “learning and teaching modalities”, including “informal and formal curricula and campus life,” to underline that internationalisation cannot be understood as unilateral, and that students should have their say too. Besides, it was mentioned that portfolio-based programmes, driven by student choice, should be developed (the logic behind it being that if students have more say, they would be more encouraged to come to a particular university in another country). Yet, it was suggested that it belongs to universities within their institutional autonomy to decide on such matters.

It was discussed that in the draft policy recommendations, ethical internationalisation implies equity (and not used in the sense of “doing ethical research” here, as one of the participants interpreted it). While national strategies of internationalisation might focus on economic gains for

the country (attraction of human capital), such strategies could create brain drain and inequality of countries, which should be avoided.

[Prof Katherine BELOV](#), Pro-Vice Chancellor (Global Engagement), University of Sydney (USYD), Australia, pointed out that at the University of Sydney 40% of students come from abroad. Hence, they are seen as the norm: "For us international students are just students," she argued. Drawing on a number of case studies, Prof BELOV presented what the USYD is doing for achieving SDGs:

- A culture of research excellence achieved by multidisciplinary centres establishing partnerships and networks. A focused global engagement strategy implies targeting like-minded partners to tackle major world problems, like climate change, food security etc. This includes innovative partnerships with "unusual" partners, such as the recent partnership established with the Taronga zoo in 2018 (Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Advanced Studies, a unique four year-course arising from the partnership between the University and Taronga Zoo in Sydney. The course provides extensive training in wildlife conservation by incorporating the study of biodiversity and evolution, animal science, and animal behaviour and management. The course is first of its kind in the Australia and the Southern Hemisphere).
- Fostering an aspirational culture that enables each member of the University to thrive.
- An example of best practice is using the batteries developed on campus to light up the campus: namely, solar powered lamp posts incorporating low-cost zinc-bromide batteries outside the Great Hall at Sydney University. The battery technology has been developed by Gelion Technologies, a spin-off from Sydney Nano Institute. The fleet of mobile lighting systems is intended to improve campus sustainability and increase night-time safety on campus.
- Gender equity (completely balanced at USYD: 59% of students are female; women represent fifty-three percent of members of Senate and the University Executive, and 52 percent of Academic Board members are women).
- Student engagement: such as field trips to One Tree Island research station on the Great Barrier Reef; participants of the International Leaders Program course studying from the Aboriginal leaders about their relation to the land and their ways of living in the world.
- Global classroom project: a common course for students at King's College, University of Toronto, University of Sydney. The course will be jointly designed and co-taught by instructors from partner institutions. Another project, run together with the university of Utrecht, aims at establishing a virtual centre allowing for sharing resources, seminars and meetings, while using VR to make it feel more real. This can be used as an example of how to use technologies to connect students/researchers across the world, without them having to fly to the other side of the world [find her presentation [here](#)].

Recommendations for ASEM universities presented by Prof BELOV:

- Universities should continue to support the objectives of the SDGs and develop sustainable strategies, individually and in partnership with other universities, for making progress towards the goals.
- Universities should drive sustainability through their own actions.

[Amb Prof Adam JELONEK](#), Rectors' Proxy for Internationalisation, introduced the internationalisation strategy and practices of the Jagellonian University in Poland. This university is one of the most internationalised in Central Europe, with 10% of international students, coming from all the continents. Yet, the vast majority of international students come from the so-called "close neighbourhood", outside the EU, namely from Ukraine and Belarus (the Ukrainian constitute

the highest share of international students (45%). While this is the case for students, the research infrastructure is essentially Western-European. Thus, he argued, the university transfers Western-European experience to the East and the South of Europe (Balkans) [find his presentation [here](#)].

One of the achievements is an open campus: 20% of its activities are destined to the city population. Another particularity is that students are free to build their portfolio of activities depending on their interests.

Recommendations to ASEM universities by Prof JELONEK:

- The idea of sustainability at every university should reflect a holistic concept for the development of the university itself.
- PEOPLE: equity and inclusiveness. Supporting students' innovations in sustainable development. Promotion of equity and inclusion. Elaboration of standards in inclusive education, namely in the context of disability, cultural diversity and gender.
- PLANET: green and open campuses. The fundamental meaning of the term sustainable university is broader than the term green university or green campus, the latter terms cannot be used as equivalents to describe a sustainable university. At the same time, both terms, green university or green campus, may be used to describe ecological sustainability of a university.
- PROSPERITY: market-oriented teaching programs. Broadening access to the global labour market for vulnerable groups (co-operation with local industry and business).

During the discussion, it was argued that there is a need to create a dedicated fund for the implementation of the SDGs. Very specific steps for implementing a strategy to achieve SDGs should be defined. The barrier of not having quick access to funding was first brought up. Another suggestion was that funding should also concern students, including undergraduates, in order to "set a researchers' mind set" and make them competitive as researchers.

At the same time, while there is a need for funds for internationalisation, such funds should not be a "tool for a forced migration," as one participant put it. E.g. there should be funds for continuing research back home after a period abroad. Erasmus Key Action 1 was mentioned as an example of best practice.

Imbalances in mobility exchanges were discussed: in the past, mobility used to go from East to West. There is a need for it to go in both directions, as well as from East to East or from West to West, all this without being limited to one region.

It was argued that the exchange should concern not only students, but also staff. Internationalisation should not be limited to international programmes, but include research, education, campus life, and administration, in order to transform the institutions from the inside.

Summary of the Discussion on Theme 3 “Taking Action at International Level: SDGs as a Catalyst to Reorient Internationalisation” Part II.

Rapporteur: [Dr Gabriel WEIBL](#), Lector and researcher, Comenius University, Slovakia

This report is completed in order to capture the discussions in the working group and thereby provide a background to the policy recommendations that were delivered by the ARC7 Rectors' Conference participants to the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7). This report is concerned with the Working Group 3A facilitated by [Mr Sebastian SPERLICH](#), Head of Section for Sustainable Development, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

This report starts with the recommendations of the presenters which offer a first look at the activities of the individual universities; this is followed by their current take on internationalisation and then the SDGs, including the ideas on internationalisation strategies as a catalyst to the SDGs. The questions and the discussions are integral parts of this report, because they helped to expand on some of the ideas expressed in the presentations and brought to light additional information. The report ends with a summary of the discussions, some of these discussions took place immediately after the individual presentations, in these cases they are mentioned after the particular presentation.

Recommendations

The common denominators are reference to the global dimension of the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) aspects of internationalisation and focus on the SDGs as well as on the mobility, funding, curricula and degree recognition. At the same time, each institution recommended some specifics based on their individual experience determined by the university structure, geographical position, institutional development over time and its strategy in terms of staff and student recruitments, as well as the university premises and set up and attention to different assessment metrics. All four universities hold multiple awards on a continuous basis, recognized at national, regional and international levels.

For instance, the experience of the Jindal Global University in India is that of a non-profit social science and humanities institution, whose mission is to introduce the social back to sciences, without undermining the importance of the other hard and STEM sciences. The Jindal Global University also aims to offer private university education at local cost, with the global element infiltrated to all aspects of the university. It sees potential, human and scientific, respectively technological, in the BRICs as well as in the developing countries of the developed world, because of the population size and the demographics makeup of the societies, emphasizing the youth in comparison to the aging population of Japan or Germany. It considers the developing world an ideal “SDG laboratory”, highlighting the special case of India, which is believed to be the only place where societies live at such wide-ranging levels of development, from the 19th, 20th to the 21st century. Hence, the second recommendation of Prof Bharadwaj (Look towards developing countries, especially India). The university consists of one building, sat in a green clean environment and students are free to attend any additional courses upon their enrolment and standard degree fees [find the presentation [here](#)].

There were three major Recommendations made by [Prof Ashish BHARADWAJ](#), Dean and Executive Director of the Office for Rankings, Benchmarking & Institutional Transformation at Jindal Global University, India;

- Global programmes, curriculum, courses, faculty & research
- Look towards developing countries, especially India
- Emphasis on social sciences, humanities and arts

The idiosyncrasies of Coventry University in the UK, lie in contrast to the humanities and social science dominance of the Jindal Global University, Coventry has a technical and industrial past, located between London and Birmingham it used to be a technical college and became a university in 1992, it became fairly large with a few campuses around the UK, with the newest addition in Poland, the university is predominantly engaged in teaching. Hence, the university's attention to

the metrics especially the study satisfaction, because of their holistic approach to teaching and services [find the presentation [here](#)].

There were four recommendations by [Prof Alpaslan ÖZERDEM](#), Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research at Coventry University, United Kingdom;

- Transformation of 'mind-set' at all levels at your institution – from principles to governance, systems and applications
- Ethical internationalisation and global research partnerships
- Linking global citizenship identity amongst our faculty and students
- Responsible metrics to measure SDG mainstreaming in higher education

The University of Porto, founded in 1911, is currently Portugal's most international university, thanks to its quality and active approach to cooperation worldwide. It emphasizes: 1) quality of education, research and innovation; 2) social and economic valorisation of knowledge and 3) international cooperation, under the motto - "Virtus unita fortius agit" (Union is strength). It aims to create scientific, cultural and artistic knowledge, to reinforce the commitment with the community and society in general and to contribute to the global social, economic and cultural development in a sustainable perspective. It is strong in research and quality education as it is committed to the academic community, students and internationalisation [find the presentation [here](#)].

There were three recommendations by [Prof Maria de Lurdes Correia FERNANDES](#), Vice-Rector for Education, Academic Affairs and International Cooperation, University of Porto, Portugal;

- Reintroduce funding programmes for international cooperation (e.g. Erasmus Mundus ACP), create or reinforce others, with emphasis on SDG
- Introduce SDG in the Quality Assessment of HEI (Higher Education Institutions)
- Introduce the values of SDG in the curricula of all qualification levels

The International University (IU) of the Vietnam National University (VNU) was the first public English-speaking university in Vietnam, established in 2003. It awards two types of degrees, IU degrees and IU partner's Degrees (Nottingham University, University of West England in Bristol, Auckland University of Technology, Houston University, and the University of New South Wales) [find the presentation [here](#)].

There were three recommendations made by Dr Tran Tien Khoa, Rector of the International University, (VNU-HCMC), Viet Nam delivered by [Dr Huan VO](#), Deputy Head of the Office of External and Public Relations;

- Legislative frameworks that enhance higher education internationalization
- Funding schemes for students/staff mobility (including staff development)
- Recognition of different systems.

Internationalisation

The Jindal Global University aims to offer international experience at the local and regional level, which was their starting point 10 years ago, now their portfolio consists of 250+ collaborations with 50+ countries and 187 student exchange collaborations, which represent 20 countries. The internationalisation of the Jindal Global University is based on 10 factors¹. These can be considered to be integral part of the university's success, attributed to:

- 1) the international aspect of its faculty members;
- 2) its international network of collaborating partners and
- 3) its strong emphasis on social sciences, humanities and the arts.

¹ 1) student exchange; 2) faculty exchange; 3) dual degree programmes; 4) summer and winter schools; 5) study abroad programmes; 6) joint teaching; 7) joint research; 8) joint publications; 9) joint executive education programmes and 10) joint conferences.

Prof Ashish BHARADWAJ emphasized this by stating that in the “hard sciences they teach us how to build and the social sciences teach us when to build, what to build, and most importantly, why to build in the first place. They help us to think critically.” More explicitly in terms of the SDGs, Jindal Global University puts emphasis on cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation, having been awarded as the greenest campus in India for the second consecutive year. It also focuses on the first generation of female students and on teaching practices, the role of technology, innovation and intellectual property, through its research initiatives and institutes (JIRICO, JsiE, JIBS, IIHed and JILDEE).

Joining the ethical internationalisation and global research partnerships, as expressed in the second recommendation of Coventry University, set the tone of international research engagement, themed as follows:

- 1) protect – safety & security;
- 2) pioneer – intelligent products & processes;
- 3) discover – creative cultures;
- 4) regenerate – sustainability & resilience; and
- 5) transform – health & wellbeing.

Prof Alpaslan ÖZERDEM added that from this perspective, the notion of global citizenship is important so that these five efforts do not hang in the vacuum. Global citizenship is a two-way street, as it needs nurturing for example in terms of mobility experience, on the other hand as he noted, it helps with ownership of the university run projects.

The University of Porto is a comprehensive HEI, engaged in a variety of international cooperation, mobility and projects. It aims strategically for excellence in teaching and research and also diversifies its mission and know-how to the third sector. It continues in the country's tradition of openness and seeks to be the driving force for national and regional development. It sees interrelations between the SDGs and internationalisation, since 2014 establishing 14 capacity building projects in higher education around the world (Rec-Mat, BUzNet, NutriSEA).

The Vietnam National University explained that the decision to teach all of their courses in English was an important decision, partly out of necessity, in order to provide international education to young people and to equip them with language skills, as back then people faced many limitations in terms of travel abroad. Eventually the international student mobility component grew and so the different varieties of international double degrees became more available. More recently, the university invests in recruiting overseas PhD and MA level students to their staff, to increase the effectiveness of the learning environment, although it is more difficult to attract individuals with overseas PhD degrees to return for academic positions.

All three recommendations made by the university refer to different aspects of internationalisation, in their case the national legislature is needed for IoHE as well as frameworks for degree recognition. This sparked one of the discussion topics in terms of the rate of returnees and the brain drain, this is perceived as a lesser issue nowadays, as such graduates are considered now, as prospective overseas research and academic partners who Dr VO said they are very proud of. In addition, from the SDGs point of view and the long-term perspective, these count as successes and as sustainable development, because of the established networks which can also work as active student mobility motivators. Vietnamese students prefer to study close to home, but these overseas networks and geographically more distant regions represent greater diversity, thus are more challenging in terms of adjustment. These potentially offer greater learning opportunities than neighbouring or culturally similar countries. However, a more credible and internationally recognized validation of the Vietnamese higher education system would also help in retaining young people and would more likely assist in navigating their choice of HEI to a Vietnamese rather than to a foreign provider.

The Sustainable Development Goals

All four speakers structured their presentations in the same format, first focusing on the internationalisation efforts and showcasing their institution, followed by the references to the SDGs

with attention to their function of catalyst. Different SDGs were prioritized by the four HE institutions, however, the SDG 4, was targeted by all universities, followed by the SDGs 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 16, which were the priority of at least two out of the four institutions. However, the degree of progress and commitment varies between the universities and between the individual SDGs.

Table 1. The SDGs targeted by the four universities

University	SDGs
Jindal Global University, India	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16
Coventry University, United Kingdom	2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 16
University of Porto, Portugal	3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17
Vietnam National University, Viet Nam	4, (10)

The Jindal Global University's commitment to the SDGs is through its focus on the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, which envisaged "a world of universal respect for human rights & dignity, rule of law, justice, equality & non-discrimination". India itself is a challenge for the Jindal Global University, at the same time, it represents a SDG puzzle in the sense that despite of the country's developed IT industry and the space programme there are still issues with water quality, human rights, corruption and the large number of people living below the poverty line. During the Q&A questions were asked on how to solve these complex issues with humanities and social sciences to which the answer was to see things more comprehensively and not omitting the value and need for the hard sciences, but also the emphasis should be on skills that withstand those under the threat of automatization and robotization. They divide SDG related research into 3 categories:

- Impactful research on: mental health, health law & access, environmental policy; pedagogical tools & techniques and inclusive education; gender issues, rights of minorities, LGBTQ and migrants; development policy, labour market, economic growth; innovation policy, IPRs, patents and competitiveness; CSR, social innovation/entrepreneurship, impact investing; sustainable living, eco transport and electric mobility; massive body of research on law, justice & governance.
- Inclusive institutional policies on maternal-paternal issues, childcare and differently abled; grievance redressal for sexual harassment & raping.
- Enhanced opportunity for students through non-discriminatory and transparent admission process; first generation students and merit-means scholarships; and community engagement.

Prof Alpaslan ÖZERDEM was humble in regard to the SDGs and stressed that Coventry University's "SDG experience" is in its preliminary stage. Nevertheless, the SDG strategy is in place and consists of four main efforts over the period of the next five years:

- 1) linking local with global;
- 2) global engagement in research;
- 3) partnership in a true sense – ethical and reciprocal; and
- 4) international perspective-based curricula and mobility.

The five year period serves as a time to map and match, "a sort of a DNA match", the SDG related activities with those the university can engage with, bridging the national, regional and local levels, through the SDGs 16 and 17, for example in terms of the national industrial strategy with the city's cultural activities, such as the 2019 European City of Sport and 2021 UK City of Culture. Coventry's SDG strategy is closely related to its internationalisation, particularly in terms of the ethical approach to research and collaboration, which is partly determined by the colonial past of the UK in the regions where the university wishes to engage. The priority SDGs matched with concrete research interests are: SDG 2 with Food security; SDG 3: Health and well-being at all ages; SDG 4:

Inclusive and equitable quality education; SDG 6: Sustainable management of WatSan; SDG 11: Sustainable cities; and SDG 16: Peaceful and inclusive societies.

The University of Porto's engagement to SDGs is founded on the premise of committed development of innovative joint initiatives, both domestic and international, coupled with the creation of meaningful synergies with external stakeholders. The second tier is cooperation towards development, in terms of partner universities from developing countries. According to Prof Maria de Lurdes Correia FERNANDES, this represents win-win collaboration, if the partnership is built on mutual trust and respect. North-south engagements are targeted (the Intra-ACP and Intra-Africa), as well as the north-north cooperation. Hence the SDGs are interwoven into the internationalisation efforts of the university. When it comes to the individual SDGs, the university focuses on:

- SDGs 4, 10, 16 – Platform for Syria, support, training and integration of highly skilled Syrian refugees.
- SDGs 4, 10 – Capacity building for teachers at East Timor National University.
- SDGs 4, 16, 17 – Classes without frontiers, which engages international students as lecturers in their final academic year.
- SDGs 4, 16 – Junior University – the largest national program.
- SDGs 7, 11, 15 – EE + @FLUP Promotion of greater efficiency and sustainability in the energy field, and U-Bike Portugal.
- SDGs 3, 17 – Discoveries CTR Regenerative and Precision Medicine, DOCnet – a system analysis NETWORK towards precision medicine.
- SDG 5 – Bonds, Limits and BioLoce.
- SDG 11 – Future cities, Safe cities.
- SDG 14 – Simultaneous removal of organic and inorganic pollutants.

In terms of the SDGs, International University of Vietnam focuses on two main goals, quality education and lifelong learning. The aim is to ensure inclusive, equitable², quality education and skills for employment (jobs and entrepreneurship) and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The engagement of SDG strategies is closely related to the internationalisation efforts. The internationalisation strategy focuses on two main points, first the collaborative training programmes, including credit articulation programmes, and second student and staff exchange, including staff engagement with research. This sets the framework for an effective learning environment for educators (lecturers) and scholarships and is considered the SDG focus. The future of this is the adequate knowledge acquisition and promotion sustainable development and global citizenship. Thus, the SDG 4 is being spilled over to the SDG 10 with the goal to reduce inequality within the country.

The topic of SDGs versus internationalisation sprang into discussion about the reciprocity of exchanges, as Prof Maria de Lurdes CORREIRA FERNANDES proclaimed, by the balance between in and outbound mobility which can inspire more levelling on the social scale. Dr Sebastian SPERLICH added, that based on the last year's recommendation of ethical internationalisation and SDGs was that the introduction of measurement encourages better quality education.

Q&A, Discussions and Remarks

The secretary general of the International Association of Universities (IAU), Ms Hilligje VAN'T LAND informed the session of the upcoming new global report from the IAU on the Internationalisation of Higher Education (IoHE) and added that from the higher education and research point of view, the SDGs offered a good framework for the report. She believes, that the SDGs offer additional frameworks and opportunities to build cross border synergies and encourage institutional cooperation.

² Ensure all learners acquire relevant knowledge & skills needed for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, culture of peace; & non-violence, global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity.

Prof Alpaslan ÖZERDEM, answered the question earlier, also in regard to the operationalisation of the SDGs, he said that ownership from the top is very important, the Vice-chancellor's office at Coventry University is very aware of that. The top down process would not suffice, in order to gain appreciation of the importance of the SDGs. Thus, Coventry is gently raising awareness about them among its staff and students. One such way is by showing that much of what the university does already overlaps with the SDGs, so the staff and the faculty don't see it as another layer of responsibility; this enables for them a more creative perspective.

The recruitment of large numbers of overseas PhD students can be counter-productive in regard to the SDGs, as can be the short-term outlook of their fulfilment. This is because in some cases teaching subsidises the research. Another, long term strategy for when universities embrace the SDGs can be the ability to tap into funding schemes that target SDG topics, as these will presumably grow larger in the near future. However, the universities should omit thinking in binary fashion of internationalisation and the SDGs, as it can often be a win-win situation. For example, cooperation with international agencies and topics that are of interest to UNESCO can be attractive to students who want to engage in research and PhD study.

Prof Ashish BHARADWAJ, from the Jindal Global University, was referring to their student recruitment trajectory, which has been a dynamic process, not only because of the university's humanities and social science specialisation. It relied on local and international cooperation, for example in terms of educating the first generation of female students and offering study programmes to the future government sector of some countries and the renewed Colombo plan.

The audience was wondering whether there is a need to spell out and focus on SDGs, since often they are already present and part of all levels of people's lives and are manifested in the multidisciplinary approach to research. In terms of representation, for example in the Russian Federation women are more educated than men, regardless of the need to fulfil gender equality requirements.

Prof Maria de Lurdes CORREIRA FERNANDES from the University of Porto pointed out that the Times Higher Education already started to assess the level of SDG engagement, with the University of Auckland in the top position. This was her remark on the sufficiency of the SDGs as a benchmark. She argued that the SDGs would be a sufficient measure and policy orientation in terms of assessment if the engagement and attitudes towards the SDGs went that way, meaning the attitudes to world, life and education. In that case the quality must be measured through these aspects.

The speakers also admitted and recognized that the majority of HEIs are more competitive than cooperative. However, they stated that if there was a policy towards shared SDGs this could help to change this institutional competitiveness, perhaps not rapidly but more deeply than is the current situation.

They also answered Mr Sebastian SPERLICH's question on what would universities welcome from governments, funding was high on the list, but other tools were also important, for example, for the governments embraced the SDGs themselves. Then when it comes to funding to develop SDG related curricula, government support is necessary. Furthermore, in the case of students and researchers' mobility, the university representatives proclaimed, the SDG based collaborations and topics can be a catalyst in this regard, thus the internationalisation and the SDGs can mutually support each other.

Finally, mobility and reciprocity in mobility should be part of internationalisation, because it helps when preparing individuals to become global citizens and in places where funding is limited, the reciprocity could save resources, respectively if the Erasmus+ programmes included a greater variety of global destinations this would help to relieve the financial burden and would broaden the participants' horizons.

Another discussion gravitated around the measures, as Prof Maria de Lurdes CORRERIRA FERNANDES suggested earlier, the audience agreed that the HEIS need carrots and sticks and that sticks can be some metrics, some of which can the SDGs be part of.

Returning to the mobility aspect of internationalisation, both abroad and at home, in order to follow the sequence of the discussion, Dr Huan VO from the International University of Vietnam pointed out the issue with degree recognition. Many countries in his region lack elaborate mobility schemes and at issue is not the lack of the HEIs' ambition, but the fact that motivation for internationalisation, including degree recognition is failing at the national level. Sometimes the reason is, that the national governments are afraid to be perceived as interfering with the autonomy of the universities. Hence, the international recognition of degrees would be helpful, or for example at the global level. The Bologna Process, respectively gradual adoption of its mechanisms by the HEI could be investigated. Similarly, when it comes to the questioning of the tangible value of mobility and study abroad, the SDGs framework could be one of the contributing factors, in terms of the quality of the experience and the recognition criteria.

In their final remarks, presenters were asked to mention a topic they hadn't had time to discuss, two of them had a say. Prof Maria de Lurdes CORREIRA FERNANDES would welcome legislation on informal learning, she also said that some of the SDGs recommendations need to be better spelled out; otherwise they run the risk of being very general and not relevant. It would give better understanding of this concept; or there will be more emphasis put on internationalisation rather than the SDGs.

Dr Huan VO reinvigorated the dichotomy of the degree and diploma recognition, autonomy of the HEIs and the role of the government, respectively the types of legislation they may adopt. From the historical perspective and he experience, at this point he would be in favour of universities having even more autonomy.

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