

Meeting of National Coordinators of ASEA-Uninet, May, 2000

Protocol



First Session

After a welcome from Prof. Zandonini and some questions from the Co-ordinators concerning the University of Trento Prof. Surapone stresses a common interest in enhancing academic co-operation and, in this framework, the actions Prof. Rode started some years ago.

Prof. Rode presents the main changes which have taken place since the previous meeting and the ideas that have been sorted out in the meantime.

He points out the importance of promoting mutual co-operation activities and the reciprocal communication of the activities undertaken both at a personal level by individual professors as well as wider co-operations, so that other partners are both informed and also have the opportunity to participate.

The homepage of ASEA-UNINET, with the associated Notice Board, is a precious tool for collecting and distributing information and is also an area where each partner may present the activities already performed or to be performed at a future date, and may find useful information on the different projects.

Further information will be collected and discussed at the plenary meeting.

Another relevant point is the participation of other European countries in the network - for instance France and Germany - with the aim of steady, balanced growth.

Prof. Zandonini expresses his willingness to explore the possibility of contacting German Universities which already have co-operation links with Trento. Prof. Rode proposes the Louis Pasteur University of Strasbourg and the University of Freiburg in Germany as candidates for membership, and the meeting unanimously agrees to approach these Universities.

Prof. Rode also presents the Asian Studies Programme which has been held for the past 5 years in Thailand and will also start up next July in Indonesia involving students and young staff members. These programmes should be accessible for participants from all European ASEA-UNINET partner universities.

For the same target group an exchange concerning European studies is envisaged.

To reduce courses' expenses for the Asian participants ASEA-UNINET Universities could provide such European Studies' courses in joint co-operation in an Asian country.

The currency of membership fees is a problem to be resolved, since at present they are paid in US Dollars which has caused the fees to increase dramatically. Since the Asian currencies/Euro rate is quite stable it was decided to use the EURO for establishing fees starting in 2001.

Prof. Rode briefly reports on some aspects of the ASEF meeting on European Asian Co-operation held in Luxembourg 2 - 3 May, 2000, which he attended as the Austrian delegate. Among various topics he mentioned the still existing problems which have blocked use of some of the available EU funds, (University Networking, AsiaLink), due to the lack of an administrative body to deal with applications for projects.

Prof. Surapone underlines the fact that several Asian Universities have applied for ASEA-UNINET membership, some of whom have particularly interesting research activities.

He also presents the AUN network and the opportunity of working together and speaks about the problem of temporary employment in Asian Universities that may cause some problem for the continuity in co-operation and in receiving research funds.

Some problems arise from political conditions, but participation in ASEA-UNINET may provide support and encouragement for Asian Universities. This is demonstrated by already existing exchanges.

Prof. Rode states that private sectors are very interested in participating in the ASEA-UNINET scheme. Several Austrian companies already gave support for scholarships. Companies are interested in academic support for promoting projects and evaluation of some aspects of their activities.

Prof. Soegiono speaks about increasing university autonomy in some countries and agrees to expand ASEA-UNINET in principle to Laos and Cambodia, but stresses the importance that participating Universities must have reached an appropriate level to co-operate in research.

Prof. Banh Tien Long, after a presentation of his University, speaks about Alumni Associations as a very interesting means to spread information and for evaluation of activities performed. He deems ASEA-UNINET a very good organisation to develop co-operation and hopes more Universities in Vietnam will be able to join in the future.

He also speaks about PhD in Agriculture affirming that his Government sponsors outgoing PhD students with a special budget to complete their studies abroad. The University of Agriculture in Hanoi is named as priority candidate for membership in the network.

Prof. Torenbeek speaks about the necessity of defining how new members may state their interest in participating. His University may offer courses on European studies and more information on summer courses. They have a long experience of co-operation in the Utrecht Network, EU-China Higher Education Co-operation Programme and ACAN. A good co-operation among European members may then comprise Asian partners.

Prof. Rode speaks about the opportunity to open the European participation to potential EU member states, in particular in Central Europe, such as Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia.

One of the policies of the network is to have a wide range of subjects so that a university covering many different areas may fit in better than a very specialised one.

According to several statements of the meeting, Malaysia seems to be more UK than EU-oriented. Moreover at governmental level it seems someone in a high position is ruling the co-operation choices of the universities.

Singapore could be of interest, even if the territory is too restricted and one of the goals in the programme is to optimise costs/results. Although some companies offered their laboratories for some ASEA-UNINET courses nobody from Singapore actually participated.

Prof. Hadjiliadis presented the interests of Greece and in particular of his University (Ioannina).

He proposed another focus area for ASEA-UNINET Co-operation (Metals in Medicine).

Prof. Rode underlines that each country is completely independent in deciding the way it participates and the kind of project it proposes. One of the activities to be undertaken is to present ASEA-UNINET to the Ministries of Education or Foreign Affairs looking for support and a budget to be added to the Universities budgets.

A common policy concerning costs of tuition and exchanges are to be defined by next February.

Each member University should detail what procedure is required for waiving or reducing fees for students from ASEA-UNINET member universities.

All National Co-ordinators are requested to supply data on living costs and costs of health insurance in their countries. This data will be compiled and published on the homepage.

Prof. Zandonini, after introducing the University of Trento, stresses the fact that, although not all faculties are represented at the University of Trento, there is a close co-operation with other Universities. Verona, for instance, has the Faculty of Medicine which is one of the focus areas of ASEA-UNINET so that a participation of the University of Verona is considered very valuable and very important. All delegates agree that Prof. Zandonini should approach Verona to join the network.

Prof. Jørgensen presents his University and the co-operation with China and the Universities of Tampere, Finland and Lund, Sweden, which may be future candidates for ASEA-UNINET membership.

Prof. Revell affirms that his University has lots of student from Thailand and Malaysia too. They are interested and able to participate in all programmes. His University has special contacts with a Malaysian University with the suitable funds for participating.

Prof. Surapone speaking about pre-EU-access countries stresses the interest for Poland (because of its special position, production and education system, moreover they have excellent Universities).

A further aspect to define is the kind of exchange between Asian and European Universities.

Each university has to provide a list of Ph.D. courses offered, the documentation required to apply, and expected deadlines. On the one hand Asian Universities may offer courses in English

Second Session

After the introduction of Prof. Surapone and Prof. Rode, some questions concerning new memberships are discussed.

Verona and Budapest, Strasbourg and Freiburg are named, while Prof. Jørgensen will explore the possibility of involving Sweden and Finland. Contacts to Poland should be intensified in order to explore future membership possibilities.

Interest is expressed to develop joint student programmes.

Existing and newly proposed focus areas will be discussed at the plenary meeting in February 2001 and will also be mentioned in detail on the agenda to allow interested persons to organise materials and contributions to the discussion.

A list with the Universities already working in such focus areas will be provided to the participants to facilitate networking and co-operation.

Preservation of artistic and historical buildings and some new topics in Medical and Health Sciences should be added to the focus areas.

In Indonesia the newly established autonomy and federalism requires a large number of experts to help the local authorities and universities. A separate focus area could be established for this field.

Recognition and validation of curricula seems to be a problem since the situation is not homogeneous. In some countries each University may decide on the recognition of foreign degrees, in some others there is a central authority defining how and what is to be recognised and it is illegal to proceed in any other way. And there is a middle road: some things are defined and compulsory and others are left up to the Universities.

Some indication on the reciprocal method of recognition and more information on the use of the ECTS credit system may be of help. National Co-ordinators are invited to provide information. A common paradigm for validation and a recommendation or guidelines may be of relevance.

The Asian Study Programmes are discussed again. A one-month programme on cultural, economic and political life as provided now, seems very interesting, and a participation of one or two participants from each European ASEA-UNINET member country is envisaged.

A similar course on European studies may be provided by European members for Asian students and staff.

Each member should collect information on what the University already offers so that there is a wide range of possibilities.

European Studies Courses may be organised in Asia because it is more convenient. Moreover the EU may sponsor such courses (as already happens at Chulalongkorn University) increasing the existing offer of courses.

Some courses are already held at some of the ASEA-UNINET Universities and they are happy to provide grants to help cover living/lodging, travel and tuition fees.

The language of courses may be English. Each University may decide what is the best method to be followed and the kind of courses to propose, although a common language is very important: nowadays English is like Latin in the past.

Prof. Hadjiliadis outlines the very cheap living costs for long-term students in Greece.

Prof. Zandonini presents the European pole of excellence at the University of Trento and the Master in European Studies jointly organised with Innsbruck, Louvain and Heidelberg.

The Master offers some fellowships. A link between ASEA-UNINET site and the site of this Master Programme may be of master interest. A support from National Governments (possible average 500 Euros) may be requested and directly administered by the Universities (e.g. a grant from each country) so that in some way Governments feel committed.

Both European Studies in Asia and the Master in Trento may be harmonised with joint student programmes.

In the near future a Master in Asian Studies is envisaged: it may follow the pattern of ES courses with a month of intensive courses. For this purpose the lecturers of the European Master may be invited to spend a month in Indonesia.

Plenary Meeting 2001:

Prof. Surapone will organise the meeting in co-operation with Prince of Songkla University from February 5 to 8, 2001.

This plenary meeting will be held in Phuket which has an international airport. The campus is well organised with numerous English speaking staff,.

Arrivals may be on 4 February and participants may extend their stay with the aim of visiting local Universities.

Working groups are scheduled and more than 44 Universities will attend the plenary meeting. Informal meetings are envisaged to organise direct co-operations as well. Working groups should be stimulated in advance.

If any University delegates from Asia needs travel support (to be checked) funds coming from fees are available, requests should be sent to the Chairman (Prof. Surapone).

Ministries should be invited to send observers to attend meetings and working groups. They may be involved in consultations. (More rooms to be booked).

With the same goal someone from the European Commission may be invited: namely some Commissioner: Mr. Chris Patten responsible for External relations, Mr Brendan Cardiff or Mr Pangratis - Dg 1 Head of Unit H/2 (Asia)-.

Main Points of Agenda (besides regularia):

Co-operation will concern:

Asian and European studies, joint research activities, mobility and international Ph.D. on focus areas.

Universities and national Co-ordinators should provide:

Information (Possibly publicised on the website)

- Information on already existing co-operation.
- List of courses, summer schools, (especially on Asian or European Studies) and Ph.D. provided with any useful detail such as:
 1. Requirements.
 2. Language of courses
 3. Documentation needed to enrol.
 4. Deadlines

5. Tuition fees and Grants
 6. Accommodation Costs
 7. Support
- Information on recognition and validation of curricula (use of ECTS or similar) in their University/Country

Ask

- for possible support from the National Ministries/Government
- for the participation of a governmental representative at the plenary meeting

Involve

- other Universities following the indication concerning new membership
- and stimulate the participation and preparation prior to working groups at the plenary

Investigate

In their own University the level of interest in participating in other Universities' activities/courses