

Meeting of National Coordinators of ASEA-Uninet, Vienna/Austria, 9-12 April, 2006

Protocol

Agenda:

- Reports of the Asian and European Coordinators
 - Reports of the European Coordinators
 - Reports of the Asian Coordinators
- Presentations and Formal Acceptance of Universities Seeking Membership
 - Presentation of the Korean University of Technology and Education, South Korea
 - Presentation of the University of Karachi, Pakistan
- Agenda for Plenary Meeting 2007 in Vietnam
- Discussion of Focus Areas and Programmes
- Formal Matters and Administrative Procedures

Reports of the Asian and European Coordinators

The Chairman, Tu, welcomes the participants, reviews the agenda and gives an overview of the matters to be discussed. He asks the participants for their input.

The European and Austrian Coordinator, Rode, welcomes the participants and describes the social agenda planned for the meeting.

Report of the European Coordinators

In the course of Austria's presidency of the EU, the European Coordinator had the chance to engage in discussions with Commissioner Barroso and Commissioner Figel', from which he got the clear perception that the EU is very interested in intensifying links with Asia. ASEA-UNINET has a good reputation with the EU Ministers of Education, and the Swiss EU Minister has asked the Swiss Rectors' Conference to represent his country in the forthcoming meeting in Vietnam.

As far as Austria-specific events are concerned, there is good and bad news. Technology grants have increased from EUR 600,000 to EUR 1,000,000 per year, the number of grants in the Ph.D. and post-doc areas has risen. The North-South Dialogue Scholarship programme, organised and financed by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign affairs, now focuses on countries some of which do not even have universities. This results in such curiosities as bringing over Ph.D. candidates from Rwanda. There should be a sharp differentiation between help against hunger and financing Ph.D. students. For the ASEA-UNINET side, the North-South Dialogue programme is being replaced by technology grants which are open exclusively to ASEA-UNINET focus countries.

With the establishment of the Austrian University Network Office (AUNO), a support centre was established at the beginning of 2005. The office is located in Vienna, and the staff consists of two people in Vienna (Stefitz, Dengg) and Ostermann, who remains located in Innsbruck. With a supporting budget manifold opportunities now exist for ASEA-UNINET. Perkmann-Berger has been temporarily employed to revise all ASEA-UNINET files starting from the early 1980's until now. This will eventually be included into a database comprising the historic development of ASEA-UNINET. There is another database that is being worked upon, containing all graduates, including their recent contact information and affiliation. For Austria alone, this will amount to 1,000 graduates. If other European member countries did the same, the result could be a powerful entity of networked databases.

There is now an increasing number of cooperations with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, which results in 100 Ph.D. students being sent to Austria every year (for the duration of three to four years), with Pakistan paying for the costs of living and the costs of health insurance. Besides, there are post-doc and institutional link programmes. One of the biggest projects is the installation of a Technical University with a joint "Fachhochschule" (University of Applied Science) in Lahore. This university will be run by Austrian management for the first (maybe ten) years and will give a good opportunity for younger Austrian research staff to gain international experience.

The bad news from the Austrian side is the new legislation for foreigners. It proves considerably more difficult for foreign students to come to Austria. Whereas in former days the application in the home country for a D Visa and residence permit was sufficient to enter Austria (D Visa) and then collect the residence permit there at a later date, the applicant now has to wait for notice of the residence permit in his/her home country. Applicants also have to prove financial security for one year in advance. A work-around for this is the employment of Ph.D. students as researchers, for which the application can be submitted within Austria. The admission statement of the university and the acceptance statement of the supervisor could well be interpreted as the contract giving proof of this. To work on amendments of these laws and to alleviate student exchange with non-EU countries, an inter-ministerial working group has been installed.

Revell reports on the EU-ASEAN University Network Programme (AUNP). The AUNP office in Bangkok has started to produce very good results but was closed at the beginning of 2006. The projects were limited in length to no more than two years, and thus a majority of the projects reached only a fraction of the possible outcome. The bureaucracy of the EU lead to a somewhat Kafkaesque situation.

Universities in the U.K. will face a change in funding from September 2006. All students will then have to pay a significant contribution of GBP 3,000 per year (~ EUR 4,400) across all subjects throughout the U.K., with the exception of Scotland. The academic field interprets this as a bad outlook for poor families, and the discussion in the public goes something like "Would Isaac Newton be able to go to Cambridge now?". Autonomy has been taken back by the Labour government, and middle income families generally do not opt for purely academic fields of studies. All this is seen as a step back to medieval times. For foreign Ph.D. students, it is often very complicated to attend important conferences in other EU countries due to visa problems.

Locatelli explains that the visa system in Italy is the direct opposite of the Austrian one. Ph.D. students should not be considered researchers as issuance of the working permit takes too long. The procedures and applications regarding visa laws vary greatly in all EU countries.

The fees in Italy amount to less than EUR 1,000 per year. The University of Trento is rated as one of the most international universities in Italy. Bill Gates set up a research centre for systemic bio-engineering. An advanced informatics programme exists with India and there are two ongoing Erasmus Mundus projects, one in computer science, the other one in sustainable development. In the framework of Asia Link there are joint curricula, specifically designed to meet the needs of partners. As Erasmus Mundus programmes need at least two European partner universities, she suggests to fuel communication within the European ASEA-UNINET members.

Rode suggests starting a joint initiative for a visa solution for bona fide scientists. This could also be a topic for ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting process). As the Austrian Minister of Education, Science of Culture, who will meet with the coordinators in the evening, is the President of the Education Council of the European Union, he motivates the coordinators to talk to her about this problem. All in all, the visa issue can be a tricky matter when one thinks about the interference between national and supranational law.

Rifa also encourages the European members to increase communication among each other. He proposes to use Spain as a bridge to extend the geographic area of ASEA-UNINET to Latin America.

Voss reports that Denmark is still very focused on internationalism. Danish students are paid EUR 7,000 per year for studying in Denmark. Ph.D. students even get EUR 40,000 per year. EU foreigners are required to pay the tuition fee of EUR 14,000 per year and to present EUR 7,000 on their bank account. For masters programmes some new scholarships have been granted, covering cost of living and tuition fees. For non-EU citizens to avoid tuition fees, Danish universities are engaging in cooperations and exchange programmes (incl. joint degrees). Research visas are no problem at all, neither are the residence and working permits for the researcher's spouse.

Zwaagstra complains about the EU-wide struggle between education vs justice/immigration. The two forces seem to work against each other, with a slight advantage for the latter one at the moment.

Report of the Asian Coordinators

The Asian Coordinator, Piniti, suggests for each of the countries' coordinators to present for themselves.

The National Coordinator for Indonesia, Edwan, reports on the change of coordinators at Indonesian universities in the last years. There have been communication problems between the university coordinators and the National Coordinator, but these have hopefully been resolved. Now, there is a new coordinator at the University of Indonesia. Adjorno is the new and very active coordinator for the Sepuluh November Institute of Technology Surabaya, and at Diponegoro University the Rector and university coordinator, Eko, is looking forward to going into retirement. There have been problems with the late information of Indonesian authorities on the interview dates. Edwan is working on a small book on the Austrian education system as well as ASEA-UNINET to be distributed among all rectors.

There is an ongoing Asia-Link project in the field of software engineering and open source software with Prof. Tjoa's group at the Technical University of Vienna and a Pro-Eco Link programme on solid waste management in Bandung.

Indonesia would like to offer a summer school on informatics which is to be proposed next year.

The annual summer school will take place in early July 2006 in cooperation with Gadjah Mada University.

The Institute of Technology Surabaya now has three professors in Austria (civil engineering, planning and computer engineering).

Rode suggests to have the official letters for the interviews sent every September. Coordinators of member universities should be selected among former ASEA-UNINET graduates or at least have the latter ones support the corresponding vice-rectors. For the Asian Studies programme 2006, there are a few places left to be filled by other European members.

Guevara reports on scholarship programmes for young university staff, a visiting professor programme (seven professors at the moment) and a three-year Ph.D. scholarship programme. The six-month North-South Dialogue scholarships were in most cases granted in mathematics and chemistry. She wishes for more applications from other disciplines. Around 100 Austrian students participated in the Asian Studies programme 2005, for which the University of the Philippines has always tried to select the best lecturers. The Philippines seek to strengthen collaborative research by intensifying their links with European universities. The ASEA-UNINET membership has proven to be very rewarding. When it comes to visa issues, there is a problem with the legalization process of the documents.

Rode explains that fake foreign documents are a problem for all Austrian universities. That is why they insist on double legalization (once by foreign authority, once by Austria). The solution could be found in the form of MoU's as in the case of Pakistan, where the Austrian Embassy legalizes a list previously compiled and verified by the Higher Education Commission Pakistan. The autonomy of Austrian universities has also raised some problems, as each one of them is allowed to make their own application regulations now. In order to reduce the number of documents to be legalized, it would be wise to restrict it to the last university diploma.

The Asian and Thai Coordinator, Piniti, comments on AUNP. It was supposed to be a 5-year programme with a budget of EUR 2,000,000. Brussels delayed it for two years, and when finally implemented, every document from the Programme Management Office in Bangkok had to be sent to Brussels at least once. In the course, many linkages were established between EU and ASEAN countries, but when the project ended in February 2006, only half the budget was used. The EU did not allow the money to be used for the many programmes applied for. There is a database available with all the projects.

Rode comments that problems with Asia Link were reported to the EU several times, some officials even took part in ASEA-UNINET meetings. He feels the main problem with Asia Link projects lies in the lack of peer review. The reviews are done by bureaucrats, who do not have adequate insight. He proposes that the ASEAN countries approach the EU in this matter jointly.

There are various opinions about Asia Link applications but it seems that accepted projects have in common that the necessary reformulations be done in "baby language" and that the bureaucrats somehow like the project, even for no apparent reasons.

Piniti outlines the administrative changes in Thailand. There are now 25 new universities and most of them want to become part of ASEA-UNINET. The problem is that not all of them can be accommodated. At the present all 15 member universities are public. He then gives an overview of the year 2005. He announces that a group of ASEA-UNINET university coordinators and administrative staff from Thailand will visit Austria in May 2006.

Rode states the criteria for ASEA-UNINET member universities as agreed upon in earlier years, the most important one being post-graduate education (Ph.D. and post-doc in almost all fields, or with an emphasis on special fields, preferably science and engineering). In order to limit the number of new members from Thailand, there could be a competition started among the applicants and each year the winner would be accepted.

Trung reports on recent activities of ASEA-UNINET projects in Vietnam. He emphasizes the good cooperation of his country with Austria.

Tu explains a new staff development programme of the Vietnamese government which sends young researchers abroad.

Rode highly recommends to the Vietnamese side to make use of the ASEA-UNINET interview committee, which visits Thailand and Indonesia twice a year, in order to make the selection process for Vietnamese candidates work more efficiently.

The Dutch have a local office in Jakarta where it is possible to conduct verified phone interviews.

Rifa as a psychologist mentions that it is very important to also include non-verbal communication in the interview process.

Locatelli is in favour of video conferencing as a means to conduct cost-saving interviews.

Presentations and Formal Acceptance of Universities Seeking Membership

Presentation of the Korean University of Technology and Education

Edwan gives a presentation on behalf of the Rector of the Korean University of Technology and Education, and shows an information video.

Piniti mentions that he has not yet received a formal proposal from this university.

Rode suggests for the Koreans to follow the general procedure, i.e. for the university interested in membership to send an official application to the chairman through the regional coordinator. The applying university has to be willing to give a personal presentation at the plenary meeting (the next one will be held in Vietnam), and define their input into the university network.

Rifa recommends discussing the geographic target areas. He also expects all members to be very active in the network.

Rode answers that once Europe and ASEAN states were defined as the target areas for ASEA UNINET. Exceptions are only to be made through an associate membership status for particular interests. This should be considered a regulation for the present and the near future and will not lead to an automated geographic extension. In the case of Korea he thinks that there are many benefits for the network as a whole and especially for the ASEAN member countries.

Piniti explains that "ASEAN+3", as an expansion of the ASEAN area consists of the ASEAN states plus China, Korea and Japan.

Rode mentions to take into consideration that the two regions are balanced in terms of universities but not in terms of countries represented.

The chairman concludes that the Korean University of Technology and Education just follow the procedure.

Presentation of the University of Karachi, Pakistan

Rode presents the University of Karachi. There has been a long-standing partnership between the applicant and the Austrian side. It has proven to be an absolute success story and the input is obvious. With the multitude of institutional link programmes, it now seems to be a natural consequence to put them under the umbrella of ASEA UNINET. He specifically mentions the development of Pakistan's higher education under the leadership of H.E. Atta-Ur-Rahman, which has led, among other beneficiaries, to glass-fibre interconnection between universities and an unequalled library in electronic form for the academic world in Pakistan.

Siddiqui expresses his delight at attending the meeting and the gratitude of the Pakistani Government and the University of Karachi. He then gives a brief introduction of his university, stating the facts and figures.

Iqbal further explains the need and desire of Pakistan to further engage in international activities, especially with the European region.

Piniti has no reservations for Pakistan to enter ASEA UNINET as an associate member.

The chairman agrees with Piniti.

Rifa says that the benefit for ASEA UNINET with the acceptance of the University of Karachi is clear.

Revell is curious as to what contributes to the success story of universities in Pakistan, as opposed to the struggles of European universities in their countries.

Siddiqui answers that one of the fundamental changes has been a transition in university setup. Quality enhancement has top priority, universities are now on the right track.

Iqbal adds that Atta-Ur-Rahman convinced Pakistani leaders of the role of higher education for the development of society.

The university of Karachi was accepted unanimously by the plenum as an associate member and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as an associate country.

Agenda for Plenary Meeting 2007 in Vietnam

The next plenary meeting will take place in Nha Trang from February 4 - 8, 2007. Further information can be found in the following documents:

- A brief introduction to Nha Trang
- Agenda of Plenary Meeting 2007 - Draft
- Map of Nha Trang

Trung stresses the importance for visa application well in advance. ASEAN states do not require visas for Vietnam.

Rifa suggests inviting officials from embassies to increase their motivation to help the network on the administrative level.

Rode mentions that Austria and Thai officials have always attended ASEA UNINET plenary meetings. The university coordinators should make the meeting public among rectors, officials etc.

Discussion of Focus Areas and Programmes

Piniti suggests compiling the focus areas defined in Oxford into an action plan.

Rode sees the focus areas as a declaration of interest and would like to have a real discussion about them at the plenary meeting. He proposes for the national coordinators to send out letters to the university coordinators, asking what has been put into practice and to collect the information. This should then be sent to the chairman to make a compiled paper.

Piniti suggests that the national coordinators get in contact with the contact person mentioned in the individual focus area.

Rode reports on the focus area Computational Chemistry. There are several close cooperations with institutions in Thailand, a cooperation with Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia and Karachi University in Pakistan. The cooperations range from the exchange of students and scientists to joint publications. The costs are shared between ASEA UNINET and universities.

Iqbal suggests to add Organic Chemistry to the list.

Rode would rather have it called Natural Product and Biological Chemistry. Iqbal is named as the contact person.

Piniti mentions that it is sometimes difficult to get financial support, given the multitude of collaborations.

Rode says that the agreements on cost sharing are still existent. The share is based on the per-capita income of the collaborating countries. He sees the Asia Development Bank as a good source of funding and proposes to add the funding topic to the agenda of the plenary meeting as well as to invite representatives of Asian agencies to Nha Trang.

Iqbal proposes holding a donors' conference workshop at the Plenary Meeting in Vietnam, in which concrete programmes are to be presented. He says UNESCO is a good source of funding as well as the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#) and the [International Foundation for Science \(IFS\)](#).

Locatelli suggests collecting all sources of funding and presenting them on the ASEA UNINET website. This could be developed into an operational tool as well.

Rode proposes to put this collection on a link page. The national coordinators are free to create the corresponding web pages.

Piniti explains that the [ASEAN Foundation](#) accepts proposals submitted to the ASEAN secretary. The money comes from the partners (EU, Japan, Korea) and the procedure takes approx. six to twelve months.

Orru says that the EU has designed special goals outside the 7th framework which are funded independently.

Piniti wants to put the focus on active fields.

Rode recommends omitting focus areas where there has not been any activity for the last two years.

Huck reports that the University of Freiburg has two Asia Link programmes running with Vietnam and a DAAD sponsored collaboration with Gadjah Mada University.

Iqbal reports that the H.E.J. Research Institute of Chemistry has cooperations with Bangladesh, Malaysia etc. but will now be focussing on ASEA UNINET member universities.

Edwan suggests that the contact persons of each focus area give a short presentation at the Plenary Meeting.

Iqbal proposes to present only success stories, maybe in the form of a 5-page booklet.

Edwan thinks it will be better to wait for the report and make the decision afterwards.

Rode says it would be best if there were only a few examples in such a booklet, with a description of one or two pages for each.

Rifa inquires if there is a demand for Spanish language courses among the universities. He thinks there are no activities from the Asian states in this field. For those interested there is now a possibility for financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Spain. A letter of interest could be presented to the Ministry in May.

Rode mentions that the Romance languages department of the University of Innsbruck has very close links with Chulalongkorn University.

Rifa further explains that the University of Oviedo has a very good reputation in teaching Spanish to foreigners. Their language centres are open to ASEAN member universities, and there are numerous funding opportunities for outgoing teachers and scholarships for incoming Asian students.

Edwan explains that lecturers of the Italian language are sent on a regular basis to the Institute of Technology Bandung.

Siddiqui says that the University of Karachi has a centre for Italian language and culture as well as a Japanese and Chinese centre. But there is clearly demand for more language teaching.

Locatelli is surprised by the interest in the Italian language and asks if there is need for a European studies programme. The University of Trento is offering intercultural study programmes for graduates and especially teachers.

Guevara shows great interest in Spanish language courses. There has been an ongoing lecturer exchange with Spain in the field of language and with France in Business Administration, all supported by scholarship programmes, but no programmes with Italy yet.

Piniti suggests including into the focus areas

- Rifa as contact person for social sciences,
- Scholz for music,
- Thöni for economics and
- Locatelli for humanities and culture.

After talks with H.E. Elisabeth Gehrler, Rode presents a draft of a resolution on the Austrian visa and immigration laws. Following a period of discussion the delegates signed the resolution. A copy was handed out to every coordinator to do with it whatever he/she thinks is best.

Formal Matters and Administrative Procedures

Membership fees remain unchanged.

The budget for a plenary meeting is roughly EUR 50,000 when it takes place in Europe and EUR 30,000 in Asia.

There is a brief discussion as to which Asian countries could apply for membership to ASEA UNINET at next year's meeting. Rode points out that this has always been the decision of the chairman and that only member universities are given financial support for participating at the plenary meeting. Cambodia for example presented itself in Trento but has so far failed to submit an application.

Rode reminds the coordinators to make more use of the notice board on the ASEA UNINET website. The installed filter was necessary to prevent spam mails from being sent to everyone on the mailing list.

Rifa proposes to install an internal mailing list to inform members about current activities in an informal manner.

Rode answers that this can be done simply by sending this message to Margaret Ostermann who will then distribute it among all members. Very soon the notice board's information e-mail will again contain the message body. When it comes to the homepages of the member universities, it is a pity that sometimes only one to two layers of the site are available in English.

Orru suggests that the ASEA UNINET homepage also contain the network's current activities and an agenda thereof.

Iqbal proposes to post forthcoming events of ASEA UNINET on the website.

Rode can imagine including an additional button on the homepage to show the activities. The corresponding page would then contain the title of the event, the content and a link.

Piniti suggests including mobility and scholarship programmes into the focus areas.

Rode proposes to collect the following data for the plenary meeting:

- multilateral programmes, i.e. EU or other programmes, e.g. Erasmus Mundus
- bilateral programmes, i.e. one to one or to several others
- unilateral programmes, i.e. where one institution offers grants

These programmes should be summarized and sent to the national coordinator so that they can present what their countries have to offer. The information should be kept as specific as possible, e.g. applicable fields, target group and duration. This list can then be published on the ASEA UNINET website or distributed among the coordinators.

Iqbal suggests sending out a form to the coordinators.

Pinitis proposes to hold a workshop and a colloquium for scholarships.

Iqbal proposes to hold regular workshops under the umbrella of ASEA UNINET, as the University of Karachi is likely to do soon, for greater transparency of the network.

Rode thinks that workshops in Asian countries are a good means to spread information to a broader audience at universities. A possible source of financing is the [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#) which grants financial support in this area.

Rode tells the coordinators that a new network folder will be designed in the very near future.

For the sake of continuity, coordinators should not be changed very often. When it comes to new European members, he explains that Cypress has shown interest, as well as Sweden.

Piniti answers that he has been trying very hard to convince Thai universities that the coordinator be appointed by name and not by position, but this has not been completely fruitful.

Rode would like to invite private sector companies to ASEA UNINET meetings and give them the chance to enter into talks. They may then become supporters.

Piniti will try to invite the Director of ASEF to the plenary meeting in Vietnam.

Iqbal thinks that companies could be very interested in specific workshops.

Piniti suggests asking the EU Ambassador to Vietnam to present the EU policy in the plenary meeting. There are also some EU companies in Vietnam that might be interested in joining the meeting.

Tu gives a summary of the meeting and expects to receive the list of all participants to the plenary meeting by June/July.

Rode asks the coordinators about complaints and suggestions. He recommends to post information about prospective applicants to the network on the notice board well in advance.

Trung invites all coordinators to join the 50th anniversary of Hanoi University of Technology.

Pictures of the reception on April 10

hosted by H.E. Elisabeth Gehrer

(click on pictures to enlarge)







List of Participants

Attendants:

Prof. Dr. Ha Duyen Tu, Chairman of ASEA-UNINET

Prof. Dr. Piniti Ratananakul, Asian Coordinator and National Coordinator of Thailand

Prof. Dr. Bernd Michael Rode, European Coordinator and National Coordinator of Austria

Dr. Edwan Kardena, Asian Vice-Coordinator and National Coordinator of Indonesia

Dr. Ngo Chi Trung, Asian Vice-Coordinator and National Coordinator of Vietnam

Mr. Tim Zwaagstra, representing the Vice-Coordinator for Europe and the National Coordinator of The Netherlands

Prof. Dr. Norman Revell, National Coordinator of the United Kingdom

Dr. Amelia P. Guevara, National Coordinator of the Philippines

Prof. Dr. Héctor Rifà, National Coordinator of Spain

Prof. Dr. Carla Locatelli, National Coordinator of Italy

Ms. Marcella Orru, University of Trento, Italy

Dr. Frands Voss, National Coordinator of Denmark

Prof. Dr. Pirzada Qasim Raza Siddiqui, University of Karachi, Pakistan

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, University of Karachi, Pakistan

Mr. Martin Huck, representing the National Coordinator of Germany

Ms. Karin Stefitz, local staff

Mr. Michael Degg, local staff