



ASEA-UNINET National Coordinators' Meeting 2022

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 17th, 2022
held online via Zoom

PARTICIPANTS

19 Zoom Participants

Executives

- Prof. Dr. **Gabriele Kotsis**, ASEA-UNINET President (Austria)
- Univ.-Prof. Dr. DDDDr.h.c. **Bernd Michael Rode**, ASEA-UNINET Honorary President (Austria)
- Prof. Dr. **Wolfgang Obenaus**, ASEA-UNINET Vice President and Regional Coordinator for Europe (Austria)
- Assoc.-Prof. Dr. **Mohamad Farizal bin Rajemi**, ASEA-UNINET Vice President and Regional Coordinator for South-East Asia (Malaysia)
- Prof. **A Min Tjoa**, Coordinator for Technology, Innovation and Sustainability Projects for Europe (Austria)
- Assoc.-Prof. Dr. **Ngo Chi Trung**, Coordinator for Technology, Innovation and Sustainability Projects for South-East Asia (Vietnam)

National Coordinators (in alphabetical order of country)

- Prof. Dr. **Gabriele Kotsis** (Austria)
- Prof. Dr. **Wolfram Schaffar** (Germany)
- Dr. **Baiduri Widanarko**, PhD (Indonesia)
- Dr. **Muhammad Iqbal Djawad**, MSc, PhD (Indonesia)
- Prof. **Ali Akbar Safavi**, PhD (Iran)
- Assoc.-Prof. Dr. **Arpah Abu Bakar** (Malaysia)
- Dr. **Imee Su Martinez** (the Philippines)
- Dr. Juan Jorge Piernas López (Spain)
- Asst.-Prof. **Bruce Ferwerda** (Sweden)
- Assoc.-Prof. Dr. **Ngo Chi Trung** (Vietnam)

Guests (in alphabetical order of country)

- Suyanti Adi **Pawiro**, SPd (Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia)
- Guillian Mecate, MPA (University of the Philippines, Philippines)

ASEA-UNINET Staff (Austria)

- **Barbara Karahan**, BA BA MA (ASEA-UNINET Austrian University Network Office – AUNO)
- **Wayu Christoph Niederhauser**, MSc (ASEA-UNINET Head Office Vienna)

Announced Absences

- Asst.-Prof. Dr. **Thakerng Wongsirichot** (Thailand)

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome and Opening
- 2) Topics of the ASEA-UNINET Executives & National Coordinators
 - Student/Staff Exchange under COVID-Regulations (Univ.-Prof. Dr. DDDDr.h.c. Rode)
 - PSU Workshop/Meeting Summary (Prince of Songkla University)
 - Thai ASEA-UNINET Membership Application Proposition (Prince of Songkla University)
 - Indonesia National Members 2021/2022 Activities (Universitas Indonesia)
- 3) Group Photo
- 4) ASEA-UNINET Plenary July 2022 in Linz, Austria
- 5) Further Topics and Meeting Closure

1. Welcome and Opening

Kotsis opens the online National Coordinators' Meeting (NC Meeting), welcomes the participants, and stresses the importance of staying in contact, especially in times of the pandemic. She presents the agenda, as shown above, as topics proposed by the ASEA-UNINET Executives and National Coordinators (NCs) and invites for topics not listed on the agenda to be added. **Schaffar** on the topic of university cooperation efforts with Myanmar requests to discuss how to address such efforts considering the regime change. **Kotsis** reminds to contact **Niederhauser** if the agenda was not received via e-mail.

2. Topics of the ASEA-UNINET Executives & National Coordinators

Student/Staff Exchange under COVID-Regulations

Rode, who is very much involved in nominating staff and students for exchanges, has encountered several problems on behalf of lack of information on the COVID-19 situation in partner countries. Specifically, he seeks to be kept informed about regulations: *Can universities accept guests from Europe? Are there special regulations for student/guest researcher/guest professor visas? Are there differences in these visas compared to tourists? What are the conditions in the health sector (e.g., are there differences between vaccinated, unvaccinated, and recovered persons, and which vaccinations are accepted)?* This knowledge would be good to know for Asian partners as well, given many and changing rules in Europe (e.g., two-week quarantines would be problematic for short-term stays).

Rode requests the ASEA-UNINET notice board be used to collate this data. **Kotsis** states such data may be challenging to collect and update; however, as mentioned during the last NC Meeting, links to resources would be helpful (i.e., governmental resources with national regulations in addition to resources shared by universities, as these can differ). A space on the ASEA-UNINET homepage could be used for this purpose and maintained by **Niederhauser**. However, as the provider changed the server for the notice board, the notice board may no longer be active (n.b. this information may be inaccurate, but this is likely a service that is currently not possible). **Obenaus** shares an example of WU guidelines and policies. What is not there however, is the national information. **Kotsis** shows an example of this.

Kotsis requests if members could collate such information themselves for the time being (institutional & governmental) and share it with Niederhauser.

Rode states NCs will play a crucial role, as they get first-hand information as contact points with others. He proposes the OeAD to implement an information page, **Kotsis** agrees and reaffirms the importance of adding the date of issue for the information.

Kotsis will work with OeAD on a proposal and will send this via email to NCs and Executives.

Farizal introduces **Arpah** as the new International Office direction and shares an infograph for student/researcher mobility in Malaysia. Steps for incoming students/researchers are shown there, including quarantine. He will share these slides with others and OeAD as example.

Kotsis asks **Karahan** if Covid tests could be paid by grants. **Karahan**: It was possible, but confirms that it is no longer possible. **Farizal** says quarantine is also costly, and these are included in Malaysia for example.

All participants NCs agree with these proposals, there are no objections.

PSU Workshop/Meeting Summary

Thakerng in pre-recorded message reports on Thai network activities (see [here](#) for slides).

Obenaus thanks **Thakerng** for the virtual network events and useful workshops, in particular the ‘*How to write a research proposal*’ workshop. He hopes this will translate into application numbers for Ernst Mach scholarships. **Tjoa** suggests this workshop as a potential model for similar workshops that could be performed by other countries in the future.

Kotsis says this workshop was likely recorded and might be used for other audiences. **Tjoa** interjects that it is not online due to copyright, but perhaps the presentation slides might be shared at least. **Kotsis** suggests it could be protected with a password to not infringe upon copyright.

Thai ASEA-UNINET Membership Application Proposition

Thakerng continues the pre-recorded message with the proposition of a Thai membership institution for the Mae Fah Luang (MFU) University (see [here](#) for slides).

Kotsis says this preliminary information will prove helpful when the university makes a formal presentation in the process of formally applying as a potential candidate member. She reflects on MFU as seeming to be a very valuable member to network and invites comments/suggestions from participants. **Tjoa** asks if PhDs are possible besides medical doctorates at MFU? **Kotsis** confirms they have multiple doctorate degrees (e.g., computer engineer, food science and tech, business administration, etc.).

Indonesia National Members 2021/2022 Activities

Kotsis hands over to **Widanarko** who presents a country report for Indonesia: 11 Indonesian members, 2 agenda topics (1. Members’ activity report and 2. Latest COVID-19 pandemic situation in Indonesia). UI attended 3 meetings in 2021, all held virtually. She introduces **Iqbal** who presents on activities and planned.

Rode often has students who would like to apply for a semester or a year doing research in Udayana University, and so far, has not overcome the problem of getting in contact with the university. The two people listed as coordinators are difficult to reach, so it is difficult to consult students. **Rode** asks her to verify the contact persons. **Widanarko** answers the university coordinators were recently changed and will ask for them to update the contact data.

Further Agenda Topics Suggested

Kotsis hands over to **Schaffar** and his proposed topic on Myanmar who says that 50% of professors who were crucial for opposition movement lost their jobs and have been replaced by other colleagues. On 6th of January, universities opened but with new staff members under a questionable recruitment process and with questionable quality. He asks participants how to best continue with programmes they have been running through Erasmus+ scheme, as he does not know how to judge the reopening.

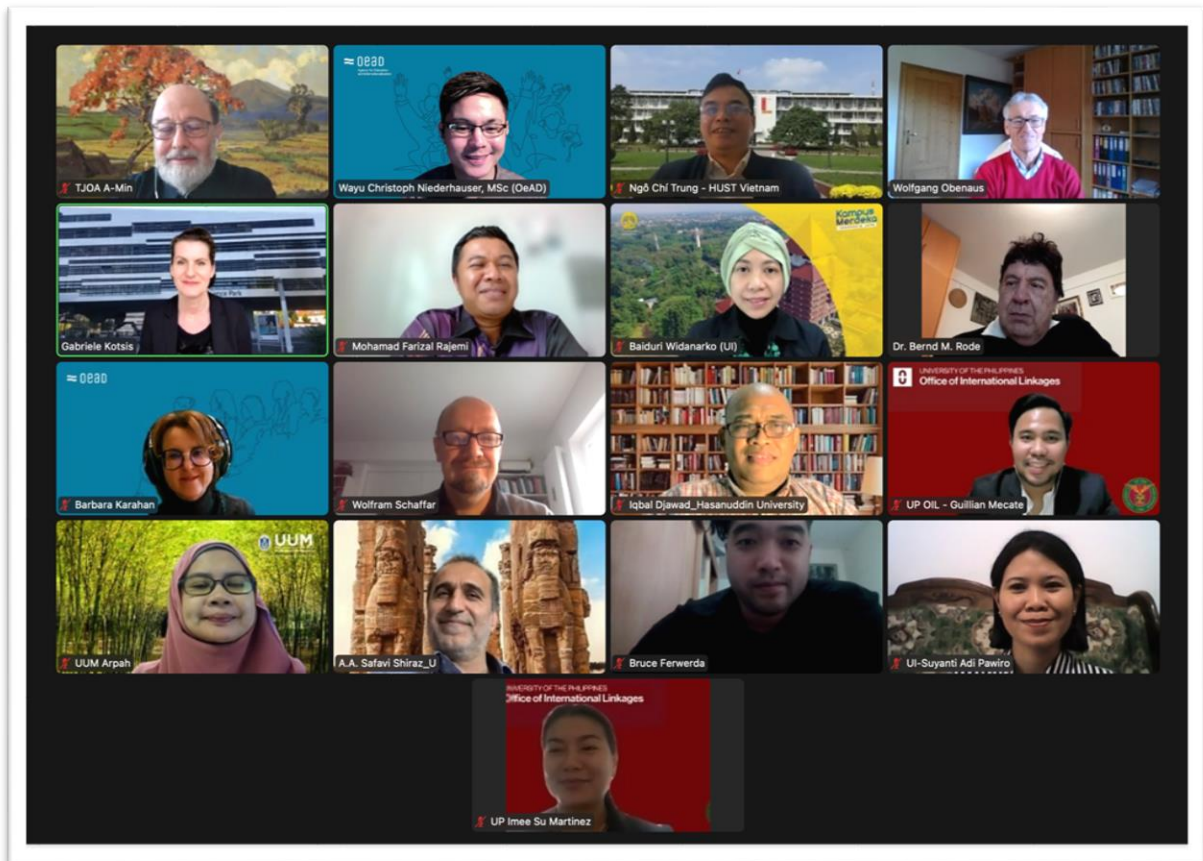
Kotsis has no personal experiences and asks others. **Obenaus** describes success in ensuring some membership in our network from Myanmar, including two official members and a third one in negotiation. The network made considerable efforts and visited potential stakeholders in Myanmar on multiple occasions to encourage them not only to become active members but also create scholarships and apply for postdoc scholarships. Unfortunately, this resulted without any kind of response despite active encouragement. Perhaps they were too shy given a presentation of ASEA as a leading network in Asia? Maybe they did not feel fit to contribute? We do not know, and we are unsure how to continue. **Tjoa** affirms interest and some e-mail communication; moreover, one of the coordinators said he is not anymore in his function. Best to ask ambassador (e.g., in Bangkok), because there is interest to strengthen the academic relationships, which are of importance (not unsimilar to some Eastern European cooperations that are now the backbone of many projects and collaborations). Provided this is allowed by the regime, the network should continue its efforts. Maybe Schaffar could ask contacts in German embassies for advice. **Schaffar** explains he used to work at the University of Vienna for seven years, and that is when they started well-structured cooperations. Maybe when they know more about the situation, they can offer their help to bring Myanmar universities into the network, but for the time being it may be best to wait and see. **Kotsis** affirms the need to update contact points because those may be not current.

Kotsis invites others to bring in national reports.

Farizal offers a brief report and thanks ASEA for two grants (to Universiti Teknologi MARA & Universiti Teknikal Melaka). There were only these two mobility activities but hopefully there will be more in the future.

Trung shares that there is a new ambassador from Austria in Hanoi. After meeting him, they talked about bilateral activities and the 50th year of diplomatic relationships between the two countries. The ambassador asked the network to cooperate in light of this, and **Trung** talked about a conference at his university which includes universities from Vienna and Graz. An anniversary event will be held in June. Finally, prime minister announced that Vietnam will be fully open on 15th March (Antigen test results will suffice, no quarantine needed). He will send further information for the website. **Tjoa** was approached by BOKU (The University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna), which will have its 150-year anniversary – they have chosen Vietnam as an ASEA university country to celebrate the anniversary in Asia. They have contacted the Vietnamese ambassador in Vienna; in 2022 there will be a bilateral celebration. These could be helpful contacts. **Kotsis** adds that the Austrian celebrations will take place in May and was invited to speak at BOKU.

3. Group Photo



Thank you for working together virtually! @ Kotsis

The group photo is available [here](#) for download.

4. ASEAN-UNINET Plenary July 2022 in Linz, Austria

Kotsis describes the current COVID-19 situation in Austria: People from most countries can travel to Austria without quarantine, although there are other regulations including tests and limitations in people for guests. She asks the participants about the outgoing situation for travelling and participation in the ASEAN-UNINET Plenary Meeting.

Trung and **Schaffar** confirm the time would work. Indonesia is not sure because they could be quarantined when coming back. **Kotsis** offers the idea of a hybrid event as an option. **Farizal** says of Malaysia, it is hard to say; end of July/early August should work but he will need to confirm on this matter. **Kotsis** asks if moving the Plenary Meeting at a slightly later point would be better? Several participants express their agreement over this suggestion. **Kotsis** will check the room availability at her university and send a Doodle. However, it should not be postponed much further as it has not happened in two years now, and a hybrid event would be an option to accommodate limitations by others. **Martinez** needs to reconfirm for the Philippines, but it ought to be fine. A later time might be better, and hybrid might be indeed helpful. **Obenaus** will have the date pencilled in, but a delay might be devastating; he doubts that 3-4 weeks would make a difference. **Kotsis** will keep the original days in July in the doodle poll and include some later dates, which are dependent on room availability at her university. She would not propose for September, in any case.

Kotsis says one of the plenary agenda items to discuss and decide on would be how to handle network membership requests by private universities. There are strong reasons for including public universities as it is currently handled (e.g., funding by Austrian authorities limited to public institutions); however, there are indications of interest by private universities who could be valuable members and would be value-added for the network. She asks participants what criteria for accepting private universities could be suggested. **Rode** states there was a topic on this several years ago, at the time concerning private universities from Vietnam. What they found is that private institutions mostly offered studies at the Master level, and every member university as per ASEA rules must have programmes and up to PhD and across disciplines. There can be ideological barriers with private universities (e.g., religious universities, or fixed political ideologies), which need to be considered in this conversation. **Kotsis** confirms that offering PhD is a must criterion. Furthermore, NCs could suggest national criteria for accepting private universities. Regarding membership status, they may not be full or regular member, but instead have a different status and a higher membership fee. Also, there is a need to discuss their participation possibilities. Likewise, should this possibility be considered for both Asian and European private universities? The network needs to start thinking about this, so it can be discussed during the Plenary Meeting.

Iqbal reflects on two types of private universities – one for profit, and one not for profit of which there are quite a few in Asia and which are sometimes run by charities and of very high quality. When the network receives specific applications for memberships, it should consider the nature of the university as well (i.e., for profit vs. run by trusts universities). **Tjoa** thinks that European private university demand may be less compared to Asian. **Obenaus** says this is a new development the network should be open about. He and **Kotsis** talked with the Austrian ministry of education about this, and the ministry expressed hesitancy for the network to be open to private universities. A very established Thai university has been waiting for two years, and the network needs to discuss this soon at the Plenary Meeting.

Iqbal says private universities are important within our education system and need to be considered. **Kotsis** reaffirms the need for a policy on this. The network should not market aggressively to private universities, but it does need openness, rules, and guidelines for accepting them. If the network develops criteria, **Kotsis** would not suggest sharing these publicly on the ASEA homepage but have an internal document instead.

Obenaus had some informal talks about this with **Kotsis** and would suggest higher membership fees and access to the network, however, they would not share resources that are funded by Austrian public taxpayer funds. **Kotsis** suggests that rules do not necessarily need to be the same for all countries to accommodate national needs, but they do need to be defined. **Kotsis** asks for preparation before the Plenary Meeting and announces there may have to be another call on this topic.

Kotsis wishes to relay the topic of private university members to NCs so that they can begin discussing criteria with their colleagues.

Tjoa wishes to stress the concept of candidate memberships. The network should also have candidate status for private universities and monitor their progress before they become full (private) candidates. **Obenaus** worries there may be a huge pull of different ideas if every member thinks of its own rules and suggests for the Austrian partners to prepare a framework to share with other members, maybe 3-4 weeks before the Plenary Meeting, which others could build upon.

Kotsis proposes to make an outline for a framework on criteria for private university membership. She will try to send it out via e-mail in March to collect feedback in April and schedule a meeting before the Plenary Meeting in June to discuss further prior to the plenary. This is intended primarily for Asian private universities, however, European partners are welcome to comment.

5. Further Topics and Meeting Closure

Kotsis introduces **Niederhauser** as **Fuchshuber**'s replacement during her maternity leave.

An informal discussion follows.

Meeting Minutes by Wayu Christoph Niederhauser and Barbara Karahan

EXTERNAL REMARKS:

Ranzi shared a report for Italy via e-mail for the NC Meeting: 1) The call for international scholarships to attend 5 MSc courses in the University of Brescia is open. 2) They are receiving international MSc and PhD students from SE Asia + Iran & Pakistan as well. 3) They are looking forward to attending the Plenary Meeting in Linz.

APPENDIX:

[Agenda](#)