



ASEM Dialogue Facility Support

EuropeAid/132672/C/SER/MULT

Study: 'Stocktaking and Analysis of ASEM'

Outcomes and impact, conclusions and policy recommendations

Final report June 2014



This project is funded by the European Union and implemented by



By: Jacques PELKMANS (CEPS & College of Europe) & Weinian HU (CEPS & Gent University)

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Transtec and do not reflect the view of the European Union.

Table of Contents	2
Table of Acronyms	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
Chapter 1. Purpose and structure of the report	9
Chapter 2. Stocktaking: on ‘topics’ of ASEM summits and the FMMs	10
2.1 On topics of ASEM summits from 2006 onwards.....	10
2.2 On topics of ASEM FMMs from 2007 onwards	12
Chapter 3. Stocktaking: on ‘follow-ups’ of ASEM summits and FMMs since 2006	14
3.1 Follow-ups from the four ASEM Summits	14
3.2 Follow-up by and after ASEM Foreign Ministers meetings	18
3.2.1 The 2007 Hamburg 8 th ASEM FFM.....	19
3.2.2 The 2009 Ha Noi ASEM 9th FMM	19
3.2.3 The 2011 Gödöllő ASEM 10th FMM	20
3.2.4 The 2013 Delhi ASEM 11th FMM	21
3.3 ASEM Declarations: what possible role?	22
Chapter 4. On ASEM working methods	25
4.1 A short survey of ASEM working methods.....	26
4.2 Implementing the ASEM working methods	27
4.2.1 Addressing clustered issues and initiatives, and providing political guidance.....	27
4.2.2 Roles of the ASEM Coordinators, the hosts of next summits and of FMMs.	29
4.3 What working methods have been ignored?	30
4.3.1 Issue-based leadership	30
4.3.2 The ASEM Virtual Secretariat	31
4.4 What working methods have been applied partially?	34
4.4.1 Overall coordination.....	34
4.4.2 Visibility, public awareness, and links with stakeholders.....	36
4.5 What working methods cannot be verified?.....	39
4.5.1 Role of the ASEM Coordinators.....	39
4.5.2 Regular contacts between ASEM embassies.....	39
4.5.3 The roles of the Asia-Europe Business Forum, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting and the civil society.....	40

4.6	An analysis of the three ASEM coordination initiatives.	41
Chapter 5.	Conclusions and policy recommendations	46
5.1	Conclusions.....	46
5.2	Policy recommendations	49
Annexes		52
Provisional Outline		71

Table of Acronyms

ACSG	ASEM Chairman's Support Group
AEBF	Asia-Europe Business Forum
AECF	Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework
AEPF	Asia-Europe People's Forum
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEP	Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership
AVS	ASEM Virtual Secretariat
DG	Directorate General
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMM	Economic Ministers' Meeting
EU	European Union
FMM	Foreign Ministers' Meeting
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
IBL	Issue-Based Leadership
IFAP	Investment Facilitation Action Plan
MRA	Mutual Recognition Arrangement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting
SOMTI	Senior Officials' Meeting on Trade and Investment
TASC	Technical Support to the Coordination of ASEM Process
TEIN	Trans-Eurasia Information Network
TPAP	Trade Promotion Action Plan
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to assess, in an empirical and factual manner, the recent functioning of ASEM ever since the 2006 Helsinki ASEM summit. First, it takes stock by presenting data on the topics in four ASEM summits or four Foreign Ministers (FMM) meetings, and their distribution over the three ASEM pillars:

- Pillar 1: political,
- Pillar 2: economic and related,
- Pillar 3: people-to-people & cultural & education.

This section includes considerable empirical details on the ‘follow-ups’ both from summits and from FMMs. There is also a brief section on ASEM Declarations. Second, we present a detailed scrutiny of the implementation and functioning of the ASEM ‘working methods’, insofar as this is possible from the ‘outside’. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations.

In accordance with its broad mission, ASEM works on an incredibly wide range of policy issues and at many levels, from summits all the way to technical expert meetings. This broad mission is pursued whilst remaining faithful to ASEM’s character of informality, networking and flexibility. Not only does ASEM work consistently on issues in all three ‘pillars’, the combination of its flexibility and the commitment to operate in all three pillars enables ASEM to address topical priority issues following but also shaping the international policy agenda.

All three pillars witness a great deal of ASEM activity. There is no clear bias between pillars, all three have their peculiarities, e.g. pillar 1 is less suitable for technical follow-ups. The second pillar has grown in activities over time more than the other two: no less than 100 ‘follow-ups’ were held after Helsinki until the end of 2013 (54 for pillar 2 and 16 for pillar 1). Other (non-follow-up) ASEM activities amount to 36, of which 22 in pillar 2. Nowadays ASEM features 28 ‘regular’ ASEM meetings (often annually), ranging from 7 ministerials (5 of which in pillar 2: finance, economic, transport, environment, labour & employment; besides culture and education in pillar 3 to High Level groups or seminars, conferences and workshops. Notably, pillar 3 is able to bridge understanding between Asia and Europe on some controversial subjects, e.g. interfaith dialogue, by using ASEF as a platform. These do not include the ASEM summits, the FMMs or the SOM meetings. The many ASEM ‘regulars’ express implicitly, if not explicitly, the ASEM common interest by their permanence, reflecting a need felt in governments on both sides, while helping to build trust between ministers as well as officials from Asia (writ large) and Europe. Although ASEM remains summit-driven, the many regular encounters demonstrate a degree of maturity in Asia-Europe relations. Very few announced ‘follow-ups’ fail to take place. However, amongst those very few, one is conspicuous : there has been a repeated failure after the 2005 Rotterdam meeting of the Economic Ministers meeting (EMM) to meet again at ministers (and EU Commissioners) level, despite several calls in summit and FMM chair statements. We offer a tactical and a structural explanation but these are conjectures (based on interviews and discussions), as no official statement about this failure has ever been made public. We also see some modest but useful scope for trade & industry ministers (EMM) to support selective WTO initiatives as well as engage in information

exchange, if not eventually confidence building measures, between the three partly overlapping mega-FTAs currently being negotiated (TPP, RCEP, TTIP).

The role of the FMM has clearly been that of the 'guardian' of ASEM in between summits. The emerging tradition of ASEM declarations is not easy to interpret: whereas ASEM summits and other intergovernmental ASEM Declarations seem to reflect a felt need to elaborate a kind of 'policy guidelines' or agreed policy views, it is much less clear what the significance is of Declarations as the outcome of other dialogues.

The way ASEM works and is organised implies that ASEM is very much a process by governments, for governments and of governments. This process is usually not for citizens, except sometimes in the margin. This fundamental characteristic is a formidable hurdle to overcome in any ASEM communication strategy.

As to ASEM working methods, it is clear that the ASEM summits and FMMs have followed the instructions at ASEM6 (Helsinki) and updated the clusters of topics for attention. Even when questioning ASEM's support for positions or reforms which are beyond ASEM's mandate, one has to realise that ASEM is not meant to be operational: the nature of ASEM is precisely in the evolving political dialogue process itself. ASEM leaders' wish to strengthen the role of Coordinators has been duly pursued and implemented; this is also true for the summit-to-summit coordination with future hosts of the ASEM summit. Some aspects of the ASEM working methods have been ignored. One example is the idea of 'issue-based leadership' (IBL), meant as a stimulus for individual ASEM partners to assume leadership in certain areas. Moreover, it was hoped that, in particular, ASEM developing countries could thereby participate more fully and effectively, not least given the ASEM principle of dialogue with equal partnership. We show that issue-based leadership was never taken seriously. Another example consists in the quasi-permanent search for more effective and durable technical support of the splintered and extremely decentralised ASEM process, without any institution and with inevitably limited memory given that officials shift to other positions in national administrations all the time. We discuss three of such initiatives: the virtual secretariat, TASC, and the ASEM Chair Support Group. This 'enhanced coordination' remains a weak spot in ASEM. Some ASEM working methods were applied partially. For about half of the sectorial SOMs, coordination worked quite well. The authors had difficulties verifying a few ASEM working methods [role of ASEM Coordinators, contacts between ASEM countries' embassies, and the role and place of the three gatherings closely connected to the ASEM summits (AEBF, ASEP, AEPF)].

Overall, the controversy over ASEM's conceivable institutionalisation has never gone away. Partners' preferences even about a functional and modest technical secretariat remain quite diverse, despite the fact that, in e.g. education, the ASEM ministers established a secretariat in Bonn only for educational initiatives and their follow-ups. May be, ASEM is spending (or wasting) too much time trying to avoid a 'secretariat' rather than assuming a more functional attitude and assign ASEF or a tiny new outfit, with explicitly no other than a purely technical/informational role. However, we discuss alternative perspectives on this issue as well, since some officials involved in ASEM are of the view that the lack of a technical secretariat is a minor problem in actual practice and other ways would seem to work. One firm

view consists of a careful tradition in many administrations to organise a well-prepared and timely hand-over of the ASEM dossiers and tacit ASEM knowledge to successive officials, thereby maintaining ASEM 'memory' and the ASEM spirit. The authors also registered a fear that even a decision on a tiny technical secretariat might induce bureaucratic debates on who would be appointed, where the location would be, who would pay what budget and other matters, distracting officials from substantive ASEM business.

When trying to appreciate our policy recommendations, it is good to first acknowledge that the core function of ASEM worked well and the ASEM mission has been lived up to. *Not* having ASEM would have made healthy and wide-ranging Asia-Europe relations much more cumbersome or in any case more fragmented, possibly creating lingering suspicions or perpetuating a lack of mutual understanding. Preventing these problems, obstacles or inhibitions is precisely the paramount motive why, in 1995/6, ASEM was initiated. In critical discussions about ASEM one has to be clear about object and objectives. If the object is the ASEM of today, having proven itself over 18 years, the objectives of proposing changes leading to improvement are by definition rather constrained. If the objectives of an assessment reflect preferences of making ASEM more 'effective' in problem solving, rather than exchanges of policy views, or rather than explanations of one's vital national interests (etc.), such concerns may well be legitimate, but they would lead to a different ASEM than the ASEM of today. This should not be read as excluding that a major effort, e.g. by independent think-tanks of Asia (writ large) and Europe working together, of creating a convincing rationale for redesigning ASEM would not be worth its while. It almost certainly is. Nowadays, economic development in Asia, geo-politics and e.g. the WTO have drastically changed from the mid-1990s, whilst, at the same time, the Asia-Europe relationship has matured. The 20th anniversary of ASEM in 2016 would seem to be an excellent occasion to organise a profound reflection on ASEM, led by independent thinkers first. However, for the purposes of the short run, one has to accept that there are no strong signals suggesting that ASEM is interested in changing its mission or format.

A fundamental problem of ASEM might be its 'ownership'. ASEM is a large 'collective' and hence it risks to suffer from typical 'collective action' problems. All governments together 'are' ASEM, yet nobody seems to 'own' ASEM, with the remit or responsibilities that come with it. In a way it is admirable that ASEM works, despite this possibly fragile incentive structure. Therefore, one vital route to cement and ascertain ASEM's viability, might be to reflect seriously about how to strengthen the 'ownership' of ASEM. This is relevant at two levels. The 'higher level' problem of ownership manifests itself not so much in summits or FMMs but in the attendance of many other ASEM meetings (often after peer pressure). If one were to consider minimal structures reflecting some sense of 'ownership', these should not be regarded as 'institutionalisation' of ASEM, but as mechanisms facilitating effectiveness, continuity, joint preparation of substance and possibly even publications and dissemination of other tangible results. The central guiding principle is that such ASEM activities generate (better prepared) benefits, and indeed these benefits may be transmitted to a wider public. That is what 'ownership' is all about: managing the precious 'asset' of ASEM activities in ways which yield more tangible results. The 'lower level' ownership problem of intra-ASEM coordination and information, if not commitment to the nitty-gritty that it takes to work

productively in a huge grouping as ASEM, has become an unproductive evergreen in ASEM. It is not difficult to solve the problem, if only one is willing to solve it. One cannot seriously argue that such matters, nitty-gritty as they are but nonetheless indispensable, imply a degree of commitment that goes beyond 'ASEM' as a loose grouping. Or that they constrain government in any serious way. Or that they are costly. The ASEM summit should formulate a clear instruction to solve these problems so that inhibitions at lower levels can be avoided.

Finally, there is some modest scope for ASEM to play a cautious bridging role in information exchanges and technical seminars on the three mega-FTAs RCEP, TPP and TTIP, as ASEM members are in all three. Eventually, it might be possible and helpful to lift such efforts to the EMM level. On a voluntary basis, it might eventually also be feasible to formulate confidence-building measures, including the 'reaching-out' on regulatory and standard aspects to third countries, such that the three mega-FTAs do not create or 'harden' substantive or principles-based cleavages in world trade and investment.

Chapter 1. Purpose and structure of the report

In the preparation of the 10th ASEM Summit, to be held in Milano in October 2014 with Italy as the host, the EU has commissioned the present report. The purpose of the report is to assess, in an empirical and factual manner, the recent functioning of ASEM ever since the 2006 Helsinki ASEM Summit. Since ASEM, despite its impressive size, is purposefully a rather loosely arranged grouping of 49 countries (plus the EU and the ASEAN Secretariat), since it has no formalised notification system or ‘memory’ (although it does have regular meetings of designated ASEM officials of national governments), and since numerous prime ministers and ministers as well as officials rarely participate in ASEM for more than just a few years – hence, may experience only one or two ASEM summits and/or one or two ministerials or other ASEM activities – , most participants in the ASEM process may not be in the position to oversee, let alone, assess what ASEM is doing, what actually happens in between ASEM Summits, how ASEM is ‘organised’ (be it with ‘light touch’) and whether this ‘works’, what the impact of ASEM Summits for follow-up activities is and what changes and constant properties of the ASEM process since Helsinki provided the direction of the future of ASEM. The present report is *not* meant to be an overall assessment of ASEM. It serves the more modest goal of trying to elaborate an empirical assessment of the main outcomes of the many ASEM activities (without going into details, so as to keep the size of the report manageable), of the impact in terms of follow-up ASEM activities at various levels, and of the ASEM working methods, first agreed in 2000 and subsequently under quasi-permanent discussion. This factual approach is at the same time the strength of the report – it informs ASEM participants in a detached and empirical manner – and its limitation. The present authors have provided conclusions, again largely of a factual nature, as well as policy recommendations, which of course comprise an element of judgment, as this was requested by the EU. However, with the detailed information in the main text and many annexes, ASEM participants are able to form their own judgments, which may but need not coincide with those of the authors.

The report consists of five chapters. First, following this introductory chapter, a *stocktaking* of traceable ASEM activities since the 2006 Helsinki ASEM summit will be made, with respect to topics and ‘follow-ups’ (chapters 2 and 3). Second, and following the Helsinki Summit recommendations on focused areas for action as well as reinforced institutional mechanisms, the developments with respect to *ASEM working methods* will be explained and assessed to the extent that this is possible for outsiders. There will also be some attention for institutional mechanisms (chapter 4). These three empirical chapters are supported by 12 often very detailed annexes. Chapter 5 incorporates the conclusions and policy recommendations.¹

¹ These conclusions and policy recommendations do not, of course, necessarily represent the official positions of the European Union or the EEAS. They are the responsibility of the two authors.

Chapter 2. Stocktaking: on ‘topics’ of ASEM summits and the FMMs

Section 2.1 will present data on topics in the four summits of Helsinki, Beijing, Brussels and Vientiane. Section 2.2 will present data on topics of the four FMMs held in Hamburg, Ha Noi, Gödöllő and Delhi. Short conclusions are provided in each case.

2.1 On topics of ASEM summits from 2006 onwards

Over the four ASEM Summits from Helsinki, via Beijing, Brussels to Vientiane (2006 – 2012), a total of 63 topics can be identified. Some of the topics are closely related and can be regarded as a single theme. When grouping overlapping or closely related themes together, 52 topics can be distinguished².

Of those 52 topics, 17 have been incorporated in Summit Chair Statements of all four ASEM Summits. They are listed in Table 1 according to the ASEM pillar they belong to.

Table 1

ASEM topics present in all four ASEM summits (2006 – 2012)

no	Political (pillar 1)	Economic (pillar 2)	Cultural/peoples (pillar 3)
1	Afghanistan		
2			ASEF
3	ASEM coop./future	ASEM coop./future	ASEM coop. / future
4		Climate change	
5	Counter terrorism		
6			Cultures/civilisations
7		Disaster relief / management	
8		Econ ministers meet.	
9			Education
10		energy	
11			Interfaith dialogue
12	Iran		
13	Korean peninsula		
14		Labour & employ.t	
15		Sustainable develop.t	
16	UN reform		
17		WTO	

² Thus, the topic ‘ASEM’ shows up in four only slightly different ways ; the topic ‘labour & employment’ groups two overlapping themes ; ‘education’ is mainly seen as ‘human resource development’, but at times incorporates ‘cultural’ themes ; several closely related themes are brought together as ‘environment’; idem, for themes grouped as ‘finance’ ministers ; idem, for the topic ‘regional integration’.

Note: 'education' can be regarded as 'economic' – an input in a wider perspective of development - or 'cultural' & peoples-to-peoples. The 2001 ASEM Vademecum classifies education under pillar 3 (essentially as a non-market activity) and this is followed by the authors (and indeed, often ASEF is involved, equally suggesting pillar 3). Note that, in other respects, the Vademecum will not be followed because of the unusual choices made (e.g. public health, food security, environmental issues and migratory flows are all classified as 'political', which is unconventional; it requires ministers other than foreign affairs to address these questions).

Another six topics were presented three times in the ASEM Summits: human rights, Myanmar and transnational crime /drugs in the political pillar and food security, health security and science & technology in the economic pillar. The other 29 topics, present only once or twice, are listed in Table A1 in the annex.

This simple survey of four summits allows some tentative conclusions:

- i. ASEM deals with many topics. This is in accordance with the ASEM tradition and with the 2006 Helsinki Declaration on the future of ASEM. In this Declaration, ASEM sees its mission as very broad: "...vital role as a framework for dialogue and cooperation, serving as a prime point of convergence between Europe and Asia". Under a heading "Defining broad perspectives..." , it first lists a host of policy areas and emphasizes subsequently that ASEM "will address such policy areas while remaining faithful to its character of informality, networking and flexibility" while offering opportunities, too, for an informal dialogue on "topical priority issues... following but also shaping the international policy agenda". These avowed properties set it far apart from APEC, for example, which is focused on economic cooperation (ASEM's second pillar). Moreover, although APEC is also based on voluntarism (and no treaty underlies its work), its history comprises plenty of concrete commitments and calendar-based 'action plans' on trade liberalisation (e.g. Bogor with deadlines of 2010 and 2020 for resp. developed and developing APEC countries; a voluntary MRA as an 'arrangement' having been signed as a framework by all 21 APEC countries) ³.
- ii. Going by the data, the pillars 1 and 2 appear to be of greater importance to ASEM than pillar 3. However, that conclusion is not correct. Outside summits (and FMMs), ASEF is the permanent (and only) ASEM body and it is entirely devoted to the third pillar in a 'hands-on' fashion via numerous programmes. Indeed, summitry is inherently unsuitable to promote people-to-people interchange, cultural encounters and discourse in the civil society; one needs a special institution to bring that to life and build on experience, networking and a stream of innovative ideas. Readers can observe in tables 1 and A1 what themes or topics are classified under what pillar and verify for themselves. However, following the Seoul 2000 ASEM summit, a Vademecum of ASEM was published by the European Commission in July 2001. On p. 14 of this Vademecum, a very different classification is suggested in the form of a flowchart. If the authors were to follow that flowchart, our conclusions on the weight of pillars based on the number of activities / initiatives would change considerably. The authors have chosen not to do this because the classification is at least unusual. Thus, under the political pillar themes like 'environment' and 'health' are included which normally would be classified as economic. In addition, a 'Justice & Home Affairs' cluster is also classified as 'political' including anti-

³ APEC shows some resemblance to ASEM, hence, the comparison. It is also of some importance that 11 ASEM countries are equally members of APEC.

corruption and anti-money laundering initiatives (which seems questionable, since they are 'economic' crimes). We do follow the Vademecum in assigning all educational activities under the cluster 'human resource development' to the third pillar⁴. Therefore, if and when ASEM leaders or others would be concerned about a 'balance' between activities of the three pillars, it is crucial to clarify on what classification basis one makes such statements.

iii. It is sometimes held that ASEM attaches much more importance to the first than to the second (economic) pillar. In the actual debates amongst leaders and informal discussions in each ASEM summit, this might possibly be correct. This is likely to be accentuated further by the prominence of the FMM (meeting in between summits) as well as by the fact that the members of SOM typically come from foreign ministries and the EEAS, having a natural inclination to emphasise the political context and diplomacy. However, going by mere counting of data, the first pillar is less prominent. How important that finding is, is hard to assess. In any event, in the four Chair Statements of the summits, one identifies 20 topics in the first pillar against 30 for the second pillar⁵. Going only by topics which keep coming back (in each summit, table 1), it is six against nine, respectively. Going by those subjects appearing three out of four times, both have three topics. One explanation might be that ASEM has gradually developed a large number of 'regular' (sectorial) ministerials and/or seminars or High Level meetings and most of these are in the second pillar. Section 3.2 will provide data on the 'ASEM regulars', activities on certain topics which are regularly held in between summits. Insofar as such meetings are linked to the drafting of Summit Chair statements – usually by ASEM contact officers and ASEM coordinators, followed by extensive consultation in the SOM – it automatically leads to many topics ; however, that would not mean that the Summit has actually discussed these issues or areas, merely approved the text.

2.2 On topics of ASEM FMMs from 2007 onwards

The four Foreign Ministers Meeting (= FMM) since the 2006 ASEM Helsinki summit took place in 2007 in Hamburg (G.), Ha Noi (VN), Gödöllő (H.) and (in 2013) Delhi (IN). A total of 62 distinct topics can be identified. Some of these topics are (very) closely related and could be regarded as a single theme. Taking some closely related topics together, reduces the number of topics more than for the summits, namely to 50. We present summary information on the FMM topics, their frequency and the division over the three ASEM pillars. The overlap with the topics of the summits will be provided as well.

Out of those 50 topics (some grouped together, see Table 1), only three have been incorporated in FMM Chair statements all four times. These are (i) ASEM aspects (relevant for all three ASEM pillars), (ii) climate change (pillar 2) and (iii) counter terrorism (pillar 1). ASEM itself as a topic was referred to in seven distinct ways in various FMMs.

No more than five ASEM topics appeared three times in FMMs. Four of them are in the political pillar, which – for foreign ministers - seems hardly surprising: Afghanistan, Iran,

⁴ But including in the cluster the Asia-Europe Young Leaders symposium and seminars on cultural heritage which clearly do not belong to education.

⁵ Again, this conclusion hinges on our conventional way of classifying topics. It would be different if the Vademecum classification would be employed, with more topics in pillar 1.

Myanmar and Korean peninsula. The other topic is the repeated call on ASEM Economic ministers to meet and discuss relevant subjects of ASEM and global trade and investment. Whereas related activities were pursued with considerable frequency (e.g. SOMTI, TPAP activities, IFAP activities and the business summit AEBF), the Economic ministers actually never met after the 2005 Rotterdam meeting.

The remaining topics are listed in Table A2. Again, a few closely related topics have been grouped together. It is striking in Table A2 that, of 43 topics, only 5 are found in the third pillar. As with the summits, the economic pillar has more topics, be it that the difference with the first pillar is more pronounced for FMMs: 25 items in the economic pillar against 14 in the political one.

Generally, the overlap in FMM topics with the summits is large. Depending on how one measures (and how one groups closely related themes), the overlap can be even larger. The three topics appearing four times in the FMMs studied are also four times present in summit Chair statements (often with similar wording). Out of the five FMM topics appearing three times, four appear four times in summits and one three times. Ten additional topics that are found four times in the summits are all found in FMMs, be it less frequently. Out of the six topics found three times in summits, five are also found in FMMs (only transnational crime & drugs is absent in FMMs). Out of the 29 other summit topics, ten topics cannot be traced in FMM statements after Helsinki⁶. Conversely, out of the 43 topics listed as other FMM topics (Table A2), only six are never mentioned in the summit statements⁷.

This simple survey of topics of FMMs held after the 2006 Helsinki ASEM summit allows some tentative conclusions:

- i. ASEM deals with many topics, whether in the summits or the FMMs. The conclusions about the accordance with the ASEM tradition and its mission as well as the contrast with APEC (see section 2.1) apply equally to the FMMs.
- ii. The same goes for the second conclusion in section 2.1 (about pillar 3 and ASEF).
- iii. The third conclusion in section 2.1 – on the predominance of the 2nd pillar over the 1st, at least when going by the number of themes in the statements of the respective Chairs – is also valid for FMMs. The predominance of the 2nd pillar is even slightly greater. It is possible – but hard to verify without extensive interviewing and access to minutes – that the same explanation, the ‘regular ASEM activities’, may apply because the ‘regulars’ are mostly linked to the 2nd pillar.

⁶ They are : ageing, biodiversity, environment (other than climate change), green economy, ICT, least developed countries, partnership for peace & stability, people-to-people, Timor and tourism.

⁷ They are : cyber security, Danube & Mekong basins cooperation, worldwide commodity price fluctuations, Libya, non-traditional security challenges and Western Balkans.

Chapter 3. Stocktaking: on ‘follow-ups’ of ASEM summits and FMMs since 2006

3.1 Follow-ups from the four ASEM Summits

There is a lingering concern in ASEM circles that ASEM Summits are to some extent ‘stand-alone’ events and that the Chair Statement - often full of announcements of ASEM activities - is not followed up very well. It is anything but clear whether such assertions are based on a few cases of unsatisfactory follow-up or whether there is a discernable pattern. In case a lack of follow-up is found to be frequent enough, ASEM may have or develop a credibility problem. This section will analyse the facts given the data that were at the authors’ disposal. A ‘follow-up’ is defined, for present purposes, as an ASEM activity (or several activities), recognised in the ASEM calendar and specifically referred to in the Chair Statement. This is denoted as a ‘direct follow-up’. There are also other ASEM activities, not mentioned in the Chair Statement of the preceding Summit; we shall survey those, too. Finally, there are many ASEF activities (see Box on ASEF in chapter 4). When ASEF activities are not directly related to ASEM⁸, they will not be counted here.

Table 2 gives a concise survey of direct follow-ups of four ASEM Summits, starting with Helsinki. Over the seven years period since the Helsinki ASEM Summit, many direct follow-ups can be observed (in total, 170). In some years there are on average two ASEM activities every month, in other years a little less, but still an average of almost two per month. Therefore, it simply cannot be argued that there are few follow-ups. ASEM activity in between Summits is lively and multi-varied. It would also be incorrect to hold that, although there are many ASEM activities, there is nevertheless a lack of follow-up because a number of announced activities or those referred to in the Chair Statements would often be conveniently forgotten, later. Tables A3 – A6 in annex show in great details that such assertions have no basis whatsoever. Indeed, there are very few announcements or references in the four Chair Statements which have remained without direct follow-up..

Table 2

Direct follow-ups of four ASEM Summits: 2006 - 2013

(following)	Pillar 1 (polit.)	Pillar 2 (econ.)	Pillar 3 (cult/edu/people)
Helsinki	3	31	12
Beijing	6	29	15
Brussels	4	20	16
Vientiane	3	20	11

Indeed, there are very few announcements or references in the four Chair Statements which have remained without direct follow-up. One conspicuous case is the repeated call for ASEM Economic ministers to meet but until today they have not met since 2005 in Rotterdam. Other instances include:

⁸ Note that ASEF helps organising several ASEM ministerials such as those on Education and workshops like the regular informal ASEM seminar on Human Rights.

(after Helsinki) the (failed) continuation of cooperation after the first ASEM Prosecutors-General meeting,
 the call (in Beijing) to revitalise ASEM investment focal points which was not heeded,
 (in Brussels) a task for SOM to stimulate ASEM partnerships on energy security,
 the continued support for public-private partnerships for ASEM connectivity (in Vientiane)
 as well as (no) activity about 'piracy at sea' (par. 34 of Vientiane), although it ought to be noted that naval and other cooperation around the horn of Africa, near Somalia, between various participating ASEM countries worked well.

Besides the ASEM activities directly linked to the Chair Statements, other ASEM activities, not literally flowing from what is noted in the Chair Statement, have also been organised. Table 3 shows that most of these (22) have taken place in pillar 2, another 11 in pillar 3 and 3 in pillar 1. The lower numbers after the Brussels summit are probably due to a better, more inclusive preparation of the draft of the statement, linked to the list of activities in the annexes to the Chair Statement.

Table 3

Other initiatives (not, literal follow-ups) in ASEM: 2006 - 2013

(following)	Pillar 1 (polit.)	Pillar 2 (econ.)	Pillar 3 (cult/edu/people)
Helsinki	1	5	1
Beijing	2	11	5
Brussels	-	4	3
Vientiane	-	2	2

When assessing the 'follow-ups' of Summits, one has to first realize what the limits are of this empirical approach. First, there are a number of ASEM summit topics which may give rise to follow-ups in the diplomatic domain and/or international organisations. These 'follow-ups' are invisible to outsiders. Interviews have indicated that no systematic ASEM follow ups are practiced as a rule, but ASEM countries may of course refer to ASEM Summit conclusions or positions. Second, dependent on the summit, the Chair statement is more or less comprehensive as to ASEM activities. It is certainly not automatically the case that one can safely rely on the Chair statement in order to know what ASEM does or is planning to do. In Helsinki, for example, the Chair opted for a relatively short statement which does not cover all activities. This seems to be reflected in Table 3, where after Helsinki and after Beijing relatively many ASEM activities are not 'direct follow-ups' from the Chair Statement. With longer Statements and better preparation of drafts, the Chair is better able to refer to nearly all initiatives of ASEM.⁹ Third, ASEM has developed a (growing) number of 'regular' activities and

⁹ The best example is the Chair statement of the Brussels ASEM summit. In a number of cases, one can much more easily recognize how preceding ASEM ministerials have influenced the ASEM summit and its statement. That is, there is "upward" follow-up in these cases. Examples illustrating this point include: para 35 on energy security ; para 24 on the social protection floor, an activity following Beijing ; para 53 on disaster relief and protection, follows from various earlier initiatives (then, without a call for follow-ups).

ministerials which are sometimes explicitly recognized in the statement but not on other occasions, but which have grown into stable sectorial or otherwise specialized meetings. These ‘regulars’ reduce the fragility and unpredictability of an ASEM Summit-led tradition of encounters and initiatives. For ASEM countries’ governments, regular ministerials on specific policy domains express the ASEM ‘common interest’ by a certain permanence in exchanging best practices, exploring better policies and appreciating one another’s existing policies and interests. The regularity of these encounters helps to improve trust between ministers and top officials from Asia and Europe whilst fostering openness towards and understanding of each other’s positioning. Table 4, below, will list these ‘regulars’, both ministerials and other. The regulars are mostly mentioned in the Chair statement but it is less and less the case that one could regard these meetings are a direct ‘follow-up’ of a summit. On the contrary, these meetings develop a routine which may well include strong messages ‘upward’ to the summiteers which ‘follow-up’ these ministerials as it were, and give it greater political exposure and leverage. Fourth, there is the activities calendar of ASEM which should not be ignored as it is getting closer, in some of its work, to the main activities of ASEM.

Tables 2, 3 and A3 – A6 enable certain tentative conclusions:

- (1) Although, undoubtedly, ASEM is Summit-driven, this does not mean at all that there is little else in between summits. On the contrary, in the aftermath of the ASEM summits, many ASEM activities have been undertaken in many policy domains and at several levels, be they direct follow-ups or other activities.
- (2) There are instances where a follow-up would be expected and data shows that the activity did not take place. As noted, these are very few. This is not surprising because the mechanisms of ASEM are geared towards an emphasis on productive exchanges, on respectful openness towards other positions and on finding common grounds. ASEM largely mimics the ASEAN or East Asian tradition of avoiding confrontation or sharp expressions of conflicting points of view as well as any country’s loss of face. ASEM heads of governments will seek to express what binds them, not what separates them. The conspicuous exception remains the several calls for the ASEM Economic ministers meeting to convene to ‘follow-up’ on the Hanoi Declaration of Closer Economic Partnership.
- (3) With 100 activities, pillar 2 dominates ASEM activities in Table 2, pillar 3 having 54 and pillar 1 only 16. This distribution may well reflect the more diplomatic nature of many Pillar 1 exchanges that, at least inside ASEM as such, do not lend themselves for direct follow-ups so easily.

The question whether and to what extent ASEM is still summit-driven is important given the history and routines of ASEM. Table 4 lists all the regular meetings at various levels (prior to the Beijing ASEM summit) that can be interpreted as ‘follow-ups’ with a higher degree of permanence, without there being any discernable formal structure or ‘organisation’ in the bureaucratic sense. FMMs and SOMs are not included (but see chapter 4), neither are new initiatives when only one such meeting had been held up until October 2008.

Table 4

Regular ASEM ministerials or other encounters/seminars (2007 – Oct.2008)

Nr.	ASEM policy domain or subject	Last date
	MINISTERIAL meetings	
1.	ASEM Finance Ministers meeting	June 08 ; 8 th
2.	ASEM Environmental Ministers meeting	Apr 07 ; 3 rd
3.	ASEM Culture Ministers meeting	Apr 08 ; 3 rd
4.	ASEM Labour/Employment Ministers meeting	Oct 08 ; 2 nd
5.	ASEM Economic Ministers meeting	April 05 ; 5 th
	Other ASEM regular meetings	
6.	Informal ASEM Human Rights seminar	Sep 07 ; 8 th
7.	ASEM Customs Enforcement/procedures WG	Mar 07 ; 10 th
8.	ASEM ASEP (Parliamentary Partnership)	Jun 08 ; 5 th
9.	ASEM Counter terrorism conference	Apr 08
10.	ASEM symposium on Urban forestry	Jun 06 ; 2 nd
11.	ASEM Interfaith Dialogue	Jun 08 ; 4 th
12.	AEBF (Asia-Europe Business Forum)	Oct 08 ; 11 th
13.	ASEM conference on E- Commerce	Nov 06 ; 5 th
14.	ASEM DG conference on the management of migratory flows between Asia and Europe	Dec 06 ; 5 th
15.	ASEM workshop on HIV/Aids	Jun 07 ; 2 nd
16.	ASEM Young Political leaders conference	Oct 07 ; 2 nd
17.	ASEM Youth Interfaith Dialogue	Jun 08 ; 2 nd
18.	Customs DG / Commissioners meeting	Oct 07 ; 7 th
19.	Asia-Europe Peoples Forum	Oct 08 ; 7 th

Note : 'last date' refers to the last date of a meeting held before the Beijing ASEM summit and the number of meetings held (e. g. 5th).

Table 4 lists no less than 19 regular ASEM meetings, 5 ministerials and 14 other 'regulars'. Two of the latter are held just before the ASEM summit, all other ones are really stand-alone activities. Table 4 does not even include a series of meetings under TFAP and IPAP which are little known as no documentation or press releases are available as far as the authors know. These dedicated regular meetings are not always recognisable as TFAP/IPAP meetings. Thus, from Annex 5 (on TFAP /IPAP activities) of the Helsinki summit overall report published by the Finnish government, it appears that 4 'regulars' in Table 4 are, in fact, TFAP activities ¹⁰. In addition, TFAP incorporates a WG on Intellectual property (4th June 06), meetings on Standards and Conformity assessment (12th in May 06) and a seminar as well as a WG on government procurement (2nd March 01). Furthermore, IPAP has an Investment Experts group (7th , June 03). Altogether, ASEM has become an active 'community' for governments and, occasionally, for non-government participants. The authors assume (which may or may not be correct) that the regularity of the meetings – in the absence of an organisation which might try to

¹⁰ These are meetings on eCommerce, DG Customs /Commissioners meetings, Customs procedures WG and Customs Enforcement WG (the latter two are combined in Table 4).

perpetuate activities for their own reasons - can be seen as evidence that they fulfil a need ¹¹. For several ministerials, the absence of any organisation or secretariat is compensated by ASEF which provides, on request, support services, which facilitates continuity and probably strengthens a kind of 'memory' for these ministerials.

When verifying the Vientiane Chair Statement (more than 4 years later), and other sources, one can observe that 2 'regulars' have become defunct (conference on e-commerce and the workshop on HIV/Aids), whereas at least another eleven 'regulars' should be added. This means that no less than 28 ASEM 'regulars' exist nowadays. First, two additional ministerials, resp. for Transport (2nd) and for Education (4th) have emerged, implying that in between ASEM Summits no less than seven ministerials are likely to be held once or even twice ¹². It is conceivable, but far from certain, that so many ministerials might render the ASEM Summits less prominent in terms of policy substance, outside the area of foreign policy in the wider sense. Furthermore, the Asia-Europe Environmental Forum (an ASEF initiative), the Asia-Europe Economic Forum (AEEF), the 2nd seminar on nuclear safety, the 3rd ASEM sustainable development seminar on water management, the 4th ASEM rectors conference, the 3rd ASEM meeting of governors and mayors, the 4th ASEM seminar on quality assurance in higher education, the 2nd ASEM Business/Universities Forum and the 2nd ASEM vocational education symposium have developed into new regulars.

These additional 'regulars' give more structure to ASEM, without any form of institutionalisation and without losing flexibility. They reduce the unpredictability of an ASEM-summit-led tradition of encounters and initiatives. They express, at least implicitly if not explicitly, the ASEM common interest by their permanence. They help in exploring better policies or best-practices whilst contributing to a better mutual understanding of one another's policies and positioning. The regularity should also help build trust between ministers and officials from Asia (writ large) and Europe. Furthermore, the initial idea of ASEM summits giving guidance or plain instructions about 'follow-ups' - though obviously still of some importance due to the summit 'leadership' - is more and more complemented by (regular) ministerials or other well-established encounters trying to influence or contribute to the ASEM summit statement, "upwards" as it were. Thus, ASEM is summit-driven, without any doubt, and this provides prominence, press attention and political leadership. But by 2014 ASEM has grown in other ways and in many policy domains, not necessarily dependent on ASEM summits but on perceived or explicitly expressed mutual interest in specific areas.

3.2 Follow-up by and after ASEM Foreign Ministers meetings

The degree of similarity and overlap in topics and announcements or instructions for follow-ups between post-summit FMM Chair statements and the Chair statements of preceding ASEM summits is large. Indeed, FMMs tend to position themselves as the 'guardian' of ASEM in the

¹¹ In interviews and confidential discussions, a more cynical interpretation of this 'demand' for ASEM activities in governmental circles is heard as well: the rapid growth in 'regular' ASEM activities, as in Table 1 and later extensions to other policy areas, may also be driven by a benign form of 'ASEM tourism', especially for lower, specialised officials. Since this cannot be measured (if it exists at all), we refrain from further comments.

¹² In fact, a SME ministerial was held in Beijing in October 2007, issuing a Beijing Declaration. Par. 14 states that SME ministerials will be held biennially, but there is no trace of a second SME ministerial until 2014.

period between summits, resulting in re-iteration of ASEM summit positions, reminders about follow-ups and a tendency to update purely formally specific action agenda's. Thus, in a way, the FMMs themselves are very much about ensuring good follow-up of the summit of the year before. Only in the broad area of foreign policy and security – the domain par excellence of the FMMs – does it appear that FMMs assume a somewhat greater discretion in positioning ASEM as a group. However, precisely in this area, "follow-ups" – if any – are next to impossible to verify on the basis of public documents.

For these reasons, we shall not include lengthy tables generating relatively little value-added. The authors limit themselves to short annotations of each one of the four FMMs since the Helsinki ASEM summit in 2006.

3.2.1 The 2007 Hamburg 8th ASEM FFM

The Chair statement from Hamburg is short. Apart from 4 paragraphs of a purely organisational nature, it comprises 34 paragraphs, 11 of which are about foreign policy in the wider sense¹³. The remainder overlaps with the Helsinki summit for practically all topics incorporated in the Hamburg statement. Many paragraphs re-iterate what Helsinki said or decided to undertake. The follow-up activities specifically mentioned are practically all in Table A3 (on Helsinki follow-ups) and, in fact, Table A3 spells out even more activities. An exception is the update on counter-terrorism with a 2008 conference in Madrid. The FMM statement is clearly not encyclopaedic on ASEM: "The meeting took note of the numerous ongoing ASEM initiatives and cooperation reflecting the broad and dynamic Asia Europe partnership.." (para.37). The FMM also "took note of the findings of the ASEM visibility study financed by the European Commission", an initiative not mentioned in the Helsinki statement.

One interesting item has to be seen in the light of the Helsinki call "...on the Economic ministers to convene at an early date.." (in par. 21). In par. 19 of Hamburg, "...the meeting warmly welcomed the offer by Indonesia to host the next ASEM Economic ministers meeting..". This is followed by a striking observation: "...underlined the potential of ASEM-economic dialogue and cooperation to be a showcase for concrete ASEM achievements." Needless to add that this meeting in Indonesia was never held, nor any other one of ASEM Economic ministers until today.

3.2.2 The 2009 Ha Noi ASEM 9th FMM

With only 31 paragraphs, the Hanoi Chair statement is even shorter than Hamburg. Of the 27 substantial paragraphs, only 6 are devoted to foreign policy issues¹⁴. Being one year into the financial crisis, there is a great emphasis on the G20 as well as the IMF and the World Bank (including the pledge of the G20 to make available \$ 250 billion of trade finance). Another conspicuous emphasis is laid on cross-border contagion and migration of diseases and pandemic influenza. However, the Beijing summit already paid attention to this issue (including a follow-up hosted by Vietnam, and two initiatives by resp. China and Japan), in other words,

¹³ On Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Korean peninsula, Middle East, weapons of mass destruction, multilateralism/UN system, the Asian Regional Forum (on security), democracy in Thailand, the EU constitutional treaty and Myanmar.

¹⁴ Multilateralism /UN reform, non-proliferation & weapons of mass destruction, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iran and North Korea.

other than the emphasis itself, the follow-up is no different than in Beijing. Finally, par. 30 of Hanoi encouraged the implementation of ASEM's 'issue-based leadership' (see section 4.3.1 for further analysis).

The repeated call for "...resumption at the soonest of the ASEM Economic ministers meeting" is once again found (in par.5). This followed by "Ministers express a strong desire for holding of the EMM in Asia before the end of 2009 and welcomed India's readiness to consider the possibility of hosting the meeting". But this desire was not fulfilled.

3.2.3 The 2011 Gödöllő ASEM 10th FMM

The FMM in Hungary and its long statement of 99 paragraphs has to be understood against the background of the Brussels ASEM summit the year before, which issued a Chair statement of 86 paragraphs (compare Beijing with only 47). Unlike in Hamburg and in Ha Noi, the Gödöllő statement has a more encyclopaedic character and a large number of policy issues are discussed. However, this does not necessarily imply that the inclination of the FMM of primarily being a guardian of ASEM in between summits is incorrect. This is very much also the case in Hungary. We have identified 7 items where a follow-up goes beyond Brussels or where a new theme is brought up. First is the question of disasters, a theme already discussed in Brussels (in par. 53) but given great urgency after the destructive Japanese tsunami. A strong call for more ASEM activities e.g. on risk reduction, early warning mechanisms, etc. as well as capacity building by cooperation between specialized centres is made. In the Vientiane Summit, this was reiterated in para's 38 and 39, in turn followed by several ASEM activities in 2013 and 2014 (see Table A6). Second, and a corollary of the first item, is the emphasis on nuclear safety, an issue not touched in Brussels (except via non-proliferation); it prompts an announced Nuclear Safety ASEM seminar in 2012 (held in Singapore in June 2012). Third, under 'climate change', a much broader statement (than par. 35 in Brussels) is made in Gödöllő about interconnectedness of issues: "Food, water, energy and climate security are interconnected and inseparable", but no concrete action is specified. In the Vientiane Summit, however, par. 23 launches a sustainable development dialogue (with a sequel of three activities later, see Table A6) and par. 37 calls for activities about sustainable water management (with a sequel of five activities, one of which is about 'partnerships'). Fourth, on food security a Chiang Mai High Level ASEM conference (May 2011) is applauded, which was not even mentioned in the Brussels statement. Fifth, with Brussels (in par. 13) expressing the "expectation thatlead to a resumption of the meetings of the Economy and Trade ministers of ASEM", the FMM first welcomes a report from an informal SOMTI and then "encouraged ASEM members to reconvene the ASEM Economic ministers meeting at an early date". For that purpose a formal SOMTI should be organized early in 2012 (which, as far as we know, did not take place). Sixth, on river basins Brussels speaks about "strong potential for cooperation" whereas Gödöllő specifies a Danube/Mekong initiative. Finally, following up from par. 84 of the Brussels statement, a non-paper of ASEM working methods was adopted by the FMM.

The open friction about the ASEM Economic Ministers meetings in several summits and FMMs seems paradoxical. It is not in the spirit of ASEM, indeed it seems to be the only instance of such a split repeatedly appearing in prominent ASEM Statements, without much avail. It is also paradoxical because at the same time there are regular and appreciated meetings of a more

technical nature in e.g. customs affairs, on standards and investment. The authors have attempted to arrive at a possible explanation of this 'stalemate'. Based on interviews, we suggest that there is a link with ongoing trade negotiations between the EU and many East Asian countries as well as India (and an investment treaty with China). There is a 'tactical' and a 'structural' version of this link. In the tactical version, the Union might hesitate to expose economic ministers (in fact, of trade and industry) to pressures of several or many Asian partners which might affect these (bilateral) negotiations. These negotiations are also linked with strategies of East Asian & Pacific regionalism, be it in RCEP (led by ASEAN) or TPP. One might of course assume different views on such a position, even more so now that the EU has begun its TTIP negotiations with the US, which are likely to affect, somehow, the TPP negotiations in which the US plays an important role. It is not inconceivable that ASEM might eventually play a useful role in these strategic trade questions, but this would require a different attitude especially on the part of the EU. In the structural version, the point is that the EU in ASEM – although formally of course speaking with a single voice – in fact has two different appearances : that of political diplomacy (EEAS, with Member States contributing in diplomacy as well), characterised by soft power and a natural inclination to align comfortably with East Asian traditions of searching what binds ASEM members, yet without binding each other in any constraining way, as against the 'hard' powers of market access rules and disciplines pursued and concluded in trade and investment negotiations (the Commission, with DG Trade in the lead, but closely involving EU Member States and the new EP powers in trade). These two "EUs" can enjoy a 'peaceful co-existence' but there is a profound reluctance to mix them up. This is especially so, because ASEM is not even an organisation, is allergic to even commit itself to the slightest form of institutionalisation (such as a purely functional Secretariat) and, it is suspected, would lead to such a low common denominator in trade cooperation (probably also with opt-outs, and certainly no treaties) that the perceived costs are higher than the imaginable benefits in terms of lower market access barriers. This explanation is consistent with the continuation of highly technical cooperation in e.g. customs practices, whilst holding off ASEM-based trade talks at EMM level. The present authors offer this interesting reflection as food-for-thought. We do not wish to imply that this image or 'position' is necessarily justified.

3.2.4 The 2013 Delhi ASEM 11th FMM

In Delhi, in November 2013, the FMM Chair statement returned to its usual length of 32 paragraphs, from 99 in FMM-10. The Delhi statement contains many very short paragraphs that pre-empt much of a guardian role for ASEM. The statement has four annexes, two on ASEP support programmes for ASEM ministerials in 2013 and 2014, one on ASEM initiatives for 2 years and one new list on 'tangible cooperation'. The latter list shows which ASEM countries are interested in one or more areas (ranging from disaster management to poverty reduction or food safety). This list is different from that of 'issue-based leadership'. It is unclear why this list was published, there is no reference in the Chair statement. Although there are slightly more European ASEM countries than Asian (in a wider sense) ones, only in some of these groups European countries make up half ; usually, less than or much less than half. Membership is often puzzling. One example can illustrate this: Germany has been a frontrunner and active stimulator of "education" in ASEM for many years and hosts the ASEM

EDU secretariat in Bonn. Nevertheless, in the cluster ‘education and human resources development’, Germany is absent. There is another cluster called ‘Higher Education’. It is not only unclear why there are two such clusters, but also why Germany is absent once again. One other example: a cluster “trade and investment” would seem to be interesting for all ASEM countries, but surely not only for Lao, Poland, India and Myanmar!

We have identified five differences from the Chair statement of Vientiane which are interesting to mention. First, although par. 18 of Delhi already deals with disasters and risk reduction, the destruction of typhoon Haiyan (Philippines, Vietnam) leads to a call to all ASEM countries to pledge support (par. 3). Second, and somewhat surprising, despite the absence – in Vientiane – of a call for the Economic ASEM ministers to meet, par. 6 of the FMM states: “Ministers encouraged early resumption of the ASEM Economic Ministers meeting”. Third, counter-terrorism attracted less attention in ASEM in recent years, with no new initiative mentioned in Vientiane (par. 32,33). However, there was a cyberspace conference in Korea in Oct 2013, not announced in the Vientiane but mentioned in the FMM statement. Fourth, the FMM endorsed the setting up of a working group on Press and public awareness strategy, to report to SOM in April 2014. Fifth, another working group is to define a strategy and roadmap for ASEM’s 20th anniversary celebrations in 2016.

3.3 ASEM Declarations: what possible role?

ASEM has developed a tradition of issuing Declarations of various sorts and kinds. It is not immediately obvious what the role and significance of these Declarations is. However, it is useful to distinguish Declarations agreed by ASEM governments (and the EU) from those having been issued by other ASEM gatherings. Thus, in Declarations of the ASEM Summit, the FMM or other ministerials, ASEM may wish to pay more attention to a specific policy topic than would be possible in a general Chair Statement, with numerous other subjects. Indeed, ASEM governments may be of the view that no justice can be done to a pressing issue by merely having one or two paragraphs in a much wider ASEM Statement from the Chair. In this sense, Declarations would appear like ‘policy guidelines’ on which ASEM leaders or ministers agree. A complementary interpretation is that summiteers and foreign ministers hope to attract more attention for a selected theme by means of issuing a Declaration. The attention in the press would naturally focus on a Declaration, as against a Chair Statement with far too many issues for any newspaper or TV report to muster. Moreover, a Declaration can be easily distributed to non-ASEM governments and/or international organisations and/or other addressees. However, it is far less clear how to read and appreciate Declarations of other gatherings in the ASEM framework. Table 5 lists all (18) ASEM Declarations since the Helsinki summit that authors have been able to trace. It might not be complete.

Table 5

Declarations adopted at ASEM events since the Helsinki Summit (2006)

Declarations	ASEM events
---------------------	--------------------

ASEM Summits and Ministerials	
Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM	ASEM 6 (Helsinki, 2006)
Helsinki Declaration on Climate Change	ASEM 6 (Helsinki, 2006)
Declaration of the 3rd ASEM Environment Ministers' Meeting	3 rd EnvMM (Copenhagen, 2007)
Beijing Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation among ASEM Members on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	1 st SMEs Ministerial Meeting (Beijing, 2007)
Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development	ASEM 7 (Beijing, 2008)
Brussels Declaration on More Effective Global Economic Governance	ASEM 8 (Brussels, 2010)
Leiden Declaration of ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment "Full Employment and Decent Work for All: Getting Out of the Crisis with A Stronger Social Basis for Our Citizens"	3 rd ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment (Leiden, 2010)
Declaration of the 2nd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting On Green, Secure and Efficient Asia-Europe Connection (Chengdu Declaration)	2nd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting On Green, Secure and Efficient Asia-Europe Connection (Chengdu, 2011)
Vientiane Declaration on Strengthening Partnership for Peace and Development	ASEM 9 (Vientiane, 2012)
Hanoi Declaration on Employment and Social Protection – A Key to Sustainable and Inclusive Growth	4 th ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference (Ha Noi, 2012)
Other Declarations	
Declaration of the Fourth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP IV)	4 th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (Helsinki, 2006)
Fifth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (Declaration)	5 th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Meeting (Beijing, 2008)
Yokohama Declaration: A Strengthened ASEM Customs Cooperation in the New Era	7th ASEM DG-Commissioners Meeting (Yokohama, 2007)
Final Declaration of the 6th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting	6 th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (Brussels, 2010)
Declaration of the 1st ASEM Governors and Mayors Meeting	1st ASEM Governors and Mayors Meeting (Jakarta, 2010)
The Hua Hin Declaration	9 th ASEM Customs Director-General/Commissioners' Meeting (Hua Hin, 2011)
Final Declaration – 9 th Asia-Europe People's Forum	9 th Asia-Europe People's Forum (Vientiane, 2012)
Declaration of the Seventh Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting	7 th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (Vientiane, 2012)

Table 5 comprises four Declarations from ASEM Summits and five from ASEM ministerials. Of the remaining nine, four are from ASEPs (ASEM's Parliamentary meetings) and two are from the Customs DGs. Focusing only on the summits and ministerials ¹⁵, Declarations typically go deeper but, otherwise, do not differ much from Chair Statements in style or commitments. The Helsinki Declaration on Climate Change clearly attempts to state what binds Asia and Europe in climate policies, and not what divides them, and 'the wide range of ASEM initiatives in pursuing sustainable development' is underlined. At the time this move was understandable and modestly constructive. The Helsinki Declaration on ASEM's future is much more concrete and is followed by an Annex on ASEM working methods which is discussed and assessed in detail in chapter 4. The (lengthy) Beijing Declaration on sustainable development is all about assuring a shared vision of ASEM, as an elaboration of the Helsinki Declaration. Yet another version, a little more practical, is found in the Declaration of the environmental ministers when meeting in Copenhagen (April 2007). A shared vision seems also to be the aim of the Leiden Declaration of the employment ministers, although it ends with the Leiden framework of action, including social dialogues and technical projects under 'issue-based leadership'¹⁶. Interestingly, the Ha Noi declaration of the same ministers is all about social dialogue and relies strongly on the preceding Social Partners' Forum. The Brussels Declaration on more effective global governance largely supports the EU view on how to tackle the financial crisis, combined with joint support for a greater voting power of some Asian countries in the IMF and the World Bank. It is less obvious what the added value is of the Vientiane Declaration of strengthening the partnership for peace and development which reads like a summary of all that ASEM has been doing or discussing. The Beijing Declaration of SME ministers is excessively general and the machinery set up in par. 15 to prepare new meetings and a second ministerial may well have come to nothing. Finally, the Chengdu Declaration of Transport ministers in 2011 lays the ground for further work on Asia-Europe surface transport connections, even with an action plan. Declarations are also like summit statements in that they organize 'follow-ups' or are themselves 'follow-ups'. The Leiden Declaration of Employment ministers even speak about a 'mandate' from the preceding summit.

¹⁵ There is no space to analyse the other declarations.

¹⁶ As we note elsewhere in the report, 'issue-based leadership' seems not to have caught on in ASEM. In the Leiden framework, four themes are specified, with 'leaders' per theme: social protection [Vietnam/Finland], Youth employment [China/Spain], Health & Safety at work [Singapore/Indonesia/France], Skills policies [Philippines/EU country]. 22 months later in the Ha Noi Declaration, five subjects are mentioned, the new one being the Social Dialogue [Belgium/ Indonesia]. But the former four now often have different 'leaders': social protection [India/Netherlands], Youth employment [China/Poland], Health & safety at work [Malaysia/Korea/France], Skill development [Philippines/Finland].

Chapter 4. On ASEM working methods

We shall first provide a short survey of the ASEM working methods. In order to examine whether ASEM leaders' instructions on ASEM working methods given at the Helsinki Summit were implemented by partners, the chapter will follow a sequence of steps. First, it is assessed what working methods have been faithfully applied and which ones have not. This followed by subsections on which working methods have been applied partially and which ones cannot be verified from public sources.

Note the said instructions encompassed four policy aspects¹⁷, namely areas of cooperation (incl. issue-based leadership), organisation, coordination (incl. administration & events coordination) and visibility. The present chapter shows that, while ASEM administration and visibility proved difficult tasks to accomplish as desired by leaders, partners have been undertaking appropriate measures in order to improve ASEM working methods in the areas of cooperation, organisation and events coordination. The mechanism of 'issue-based leadership' was somehow not duly implemented by partners.

Because ASEM's sheer size and its informal nature strongly suggest that ASEM day-to-day administration would be challenging, there have been three coordination initiatives endorsed by ASEM partners since the Helsinki Summit, pursuing enhanced ASEM day-to-day information and administrative support. The three coordination initiatives are: ASEM Virtual Secretariat (AVS), Technical Support to the Coordination of ASEM Process (TASC) and the ASEM Chairman's Support Group (ACSG). The authors are of the view that, as a strictly deliverables-based project accountable to all ASEM partners, TASC can be said to have promoted enhanced ASEM coordination. But the project was not able to exploit its full potential mainly due to ASEM partners' mistrust. This point will be explained below.

With regard to raising ASEM visibility, at the outset, it is crucial to realise that ASEM is very much a process by governments, for governments and of governments, including their policy-making officials. It is not for citizens and not with citizens, except sometimes in the margin. On this account alone, it is bound to be very difficult for ASEM to reach billions of ordinary people from Asia and Europe. This perception is best testified by the two press-monitoring exercises conducted in 2010 and 2011, respectively. Media outlets have little to report on ASEM in the absence of summits and FMMs while, in the meantime, specialised ASEM activities – but again, only for government officials or ministers, sometimes technical experts and analysts – are scattered all over in ASEM countries throughout the year. Of course, almost right from the start, ASEM was and is called upon to serve as a conduit to connect citizens and the civil society with the ASEM process. Established in 1997, ASEM has been promoting “better mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural and people-to-

¹⁷ Since ASEM is an open and evolutionary process, its working methods help to translate ASEM leaders' political decisions into tangible policy, either as political directions or administrative measures. As one of the interviewees said, the working methods fill the gaps between leaders' political wishes and their implementation in the field. Working methods may be adopted at ASEM summits or at ASEM Foreign Ministers Meetings (FMM), as the former provides leadership and the latter is responsible for the overall coordination of ASEM activities. It is reasonably expected that working methods should be duly implemented after they are adopted by ASEM leaders, in part, this should be clear from what is attached to summit/FMM chair's statements as annexes.

people exchanges”, which is in line with its founding principle. To fulfil its mission, ASEF has implemented over 600 projects and directly engaged over 17,000 participants in conferences, lecture tours, workshops, and web-based networks to date. Together with a permanent staff base, a detailed and an updated website, newsletters, journals and various events, ASEF has achieved good visibility within the ASEM civil society, which is compatible with its agreed mission.¹⁸

However, in recent years ASEF has advocated to move to the “upstream” of the ASEM process, i.e. to become an “ASEM Secretariat” while on its website it already profiles itself as ASEM’s “only permanently established institution”¹⁹. Although factually correct (except for the secretariat for the Educational ministers in Bonn), this claim nevertheless seems to contradict Point III.8 of the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000 (AECF 2000) which states that “as an informal process, ASEM need not be institutionalised”. Let it be forgotten, AECF 2000 is one of the founding working methods documents on which the ASEM process is based. It remains valid ever since it was adopted at the Seoul Summit in 2000. The chapter will later elaborate on ASEF and the question of “institutions”.

4.1 A short survey of ASEM working methods

Since ASEM was established in 1996, based on available sources,²⁰ the following nine working methods were adopted, including three “non-papers”:

1. Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000 (ASEM 3, Seoul, 2000);
2. ASEM Working Methods (FMM 4, Madrid, 2002);
3. Recommendations for ASEM Working Methods (FMM 6, Kildare, 2004);
4. Recommendations for ASEM Working Methods (ASEM 5, Hanoi, 2004);
5. Summary of Discussions on the Future of ASEM (FMM 7, Kyoto, 2005);
6. ASEM Working Methods and Institutional Mechanisms (ASEM 6, Helsinki, 2006);
7. Non-paper on Follow-up to ASEM7 (ASEM 7, Beijing, 2008);
8. Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a “Partnership” (FMM 9, Hanoi, 2009);
9. Non-paper on ASEM Working Methods (FMM 10, Gödöllő, 2011).

It should be emphasised that the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF) 2000, the first ASEM working methods adopted at ASEM 3 in Seoul (2000), remains valid nowadays and continues to serve as the foundation upon which the Asia-Europe dialogue is based.²¹

Table A7 provides an overview of the issues addressed by the four working methods documents adopted since the Helsinki Summit in 2006. While the three “non-papers” are dedicated to the issue of ASEM areas of cooperation and coordination respectively, the ASEM Working Methods and Institutional Mechanisms adopted at the Helsinki Summit address the

¹⁸ Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a “Partnership” (Hanoi FMM, 2009).

¹⁹ Available at <http://www.asef.org/index.php/about/history> (last accessed 23 March 2014).

²⁰ To undertake the study report, the authors consulted ASEM Infoboard, the now dysfunctional ASEM Intranet, relevant ASEM literature, http://eeas.europa.eu/asem/index_en.htm, and personal documents.

²¹ This principle was underlined at the ASEM 6 Summit and confirmed again at the ASEM Symposium on “Towards Peace and Prosperity in Asia and Europe: The Need of a Dynamic ASEM” (Yangzhou City, China, 25-26 April 2013).

issues of ASEM areas of cooperation, organisation, coordination and visibility. Based on these issues, our report will proceed to examine whether ASEM leaders' instructions, laid down in the Helsinki Summit, have been implemented by ASEM partners.

It is perhaps necessary to point out that it is not 'illegal' or does not easily cause frictions when the ASEM working methods are not applied. One interviewee conceded that having "no discipline" is ASEM's weakness, but then immediately argued that ASEM should not be burdened with cumbersome rules because, after all, being informal is where ASEM's uniqueness lies.

4.2 Implementing the ASEM working methods

4.2.1 Addressing clustered issues and initiatives, and providing political guidance.

The beginning of ASEM's second decade ushered in new priorities for the Asia-Europe dialogue. The Helsinki Summit gave the direction that "ASEM should seek to address cross-dimensional linkages between political, economic and social/cultural issues..." The working methods approved by the Helsinki Summit further provided that such clusters of issues should "support the overall priorities in the core areas of substantive cooperation", which are determined at ASEM Summits and reflected in ASEM two-year programmes. Based on the prevailing international circumstances, summits and FMMs shall update the key priority clusters.²² Accordingly, in order to check whether these working methods have been implemented, the authors examined, first of all, whether at each summit and FMM the priorities for substantive cooperation are updated based on the changes in the international arena; secondly, whether such priorities, translated into concrete initiatives²³ where partners could hold detailed discussions, are reflected in the ASEM two-year work programme announced at each of the four summits since 2006; thirdly, whether the planned events actually took place, based on the annual ASEM Calendar of Events.²⁴ Updates on Asia-Europe areas of cooperation will be verified against those set down by the AECF 2000, since it remains the foundation upon which the ASEM process is based. Table A8 offers a breakdown of priorities for substantive Asia-Europe cooperation in all three pillars - political dialogue,

²² I.1. Addressing clustered issues and initiatives, and providing political guidance, Annex to "Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM": ASEM Working Methods and Institutional Mechanisms (ASEM6, Helsinki, 2006).

²³ ASEM initiatives are organised by partners in order to contribute to the overall objectives and perspectives of the ASEM process. An initiative must meet the prerequisites detailed by Point V.25 of the AECF 2000.

²⁴ An ASEM two-year programme is *ex ante* while an ASEM Calendar of Events is *ex post*. Annexed to chair's statement issued at each ASEM summit, work programmes broadcast an overview of ASEM initiatives that some ASEM partners intend to host in the next two years following each summit; while as a fact-checking, an ASEM Calendar of Events is usually compiled every year comprising what ASEM has done in actual practice, in order to pursue its mission and objectives. An ASEM two-year work programme and calendar of events do not necessarily mirror each other for various reasons, for example natural disaster. Hence, a Calendar of Events must be updated regularly in order to reflect timely changes that have occurred. Besides, human error may contribute to such inconsistency. Since there is no "reporting centre" where ASEM information could be centralised, some initiatives may simply be left unreported. As one of the project deliverables, the TASC project team (Jan. 2010 – Mar. 2012) compiled ASEM Calendar of Events from 1997 to 2012. To undertake this task, the TASC team collected scattered information from various sources, internet, websites, partners' e-mails, etc.. Inaccuracies are possible. Because the TASC project completed its mandate at the end of March 2012, the ASEM Calendar of Events 2012 is incomplete as the last update took place on 18 March 2012. The Calendar of Events in 2013 is simply not available, although there is an ASEM programme attached to the 2013 Delhi FMM which may be helpful.

economic and financial cooperation and dialogue of cultures and civilisations - as spelled out in AECF 2000.

It is clear that the four summits and four FMMs, which have taken place since the Helsinki Summit, have followed the instructions given at ASEM 6 and updated each time the clusters of political, economic and cultural topics according to the changes in the international arena.

For example, in view of the fluctuation of commodity prices worldwide, especially of oil and food, Vietnam's initiative for organising the first ASEM Forum on Food Security was welcomed by the leaders at the Beijing Summit.²⁵ Meantime, in order to strengthen international cooperation on climate change, leaders welcomed Brunei's initiative to host a workshop on understanding the impact of climate change on the biodiversity of tropical rainforests in 2009.²⁶ At the Brussels Summit, in view of the persistent piracy attacks especially off the coast of Somalia, leaders called upon ASEM partners to increase "the sharing of intelligence" in order to track down and interdict the financial means which fund piracy operations.²⁷ For the same purpose, leaders decided that "ASEM should continue to disseminate best practice in support of the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through annual ASEM Conferences."²⁸ In the run up to the Brussels Summit, a Seminar on Piracy at Sea (May 2010, Brussels) was equally organised to identify where further progress could be made between Asia and Europe in the fight against contemporary pirates and against violence at sea. In view of the devastation caused by the typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and in Vietnam, at FMM 11 in Delhi leaders "agreed to mainstream disaster risk reduction and management in the ASEM agenda". To this end, they welcomed the ASEM Conference on Technology and Innovation for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Climate Change Adaptation which will be held in the Philippines in September 2014 and the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Japan in 2015.²⁹

Though ASEM leaders have been fulfilling the tasks laid down at the Helsinki Summit with regard to providing guidance to identify key areas for Asia-Europe cooperation, one may ask what added value does ASEM provide at summits and FMMs when it voices its support to issues such as UN reform, WTO, Afghanistan, the Middle East peace process, etc. which appear to be beyond ASEM's mandate? One interviewee replied that such exercise reflects exactly the nature of ASEM which is an evolving political dialogue process. Texts of chair's statements vindicate how much Asia and Europe are willing to cooperate and to commit themselves to certain issues, such as the reform of international financial institutions and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, etc.. Therefore, negotiating the text of a chair's statement is an opinion-making process, which also flashes signals and provides directions for future discussions, for example on whether and how the EU can be invited to the East Asia Summit. This answer seems to be in line with AECF 2000 which identifies that enhancing informal

²⁵ Chair's Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting, Beijing, 24-25 October 2008, para 19.

²⁶ Chair's Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting, Beijing, 24-25 October 2008, para 29.

²⁷ Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia-Europe Meeting, Brussels, 4-5 October 2010, para 45.

²⁸ Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia-Europe Meeting, Brussels, 4-5 October 2010, para 50.

²⁹ Chair's Statement of the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM 11), Delhi-NCR, India, November 11-12, 2013, "ASEM: Bridge to Partnership for Growth and Development", para 18.

political dialogue on regional and international issues of common interest is one of the key priorities of ASEM political dialogue.³⁰

4.2.2 Roles of the ASEM Coordinators, the hosts of next summits and of FMMs.

ASEM leaders in Helsinki called upon partners to strengthen the role of Coordinators³¹ by establishing a regular meeting schedule, and by standardising the holding of meetings ahead of Ministerials to complement the role of SOM. In order to achieve better continuity in ASEM coordination, and to facilitate and complement the leading role of the Coordinators, ASEM leaders also emphasised the central role of the hosts of the next summit and of the next FMM.

To implement the request of strengthening the role of Coordinators, the aforementioned three coordination initiatives were since endorsed by ASEM partners. For example, the AVS was tasked to provide technical assistance to the Coordinators and to support their roles in coordination. Also, the TASC project had a mandate to achieve “improved internal transparency and coordination amongst ASEM officials”³², which amounted to supporting the work of the Coordinators. Similarly, the ACSG was set up to support overall coordination, including supporting the hosts of the forthcoming ASEM summits and FMMs.³³ Therefore, we conclude that ASEM leaders’ wish to strengthen the role of Coordinators has been duly pursued and implemented.

As to implementing ASEM leaders’ wish expressed in Helsinki to “recognising the central role of the hosts of the next summit and FMM”, at ASEM 8 the Senior Officials’ recommendation that “the host of an upcoming ASEM summit should henceforth be part of the coordination mechanism “from summit to summit” paved the way for establishing the ACSG, which aimed to achieve enhanced efficiency, coherence, continuity and visibility of the ASEM process. At its inaugural meeting, team members of the Support Group were identified, among whom, there were hosts of the summit as well as hosts of the FMM. Therefore, the hosts of summit and FMM, the “frontline stakeholders in the smooth running of the cooperation within ASEM” were integrated into the ASEM coordination mechanism in order to achieve summit-to-summit continuity. Note also the TASC project was launched with the aim of, among other things, realise a summit-to-summit continuity. Therefore, we conclude that leaders’ wish expressed at the Helsinki Summit to enhance the central role of the hosts of the next summit and FMM was implemented.

³⁰ AECF 2000, point IV.13.

³¹ According to point V.22 of the AECF 2000, appointed by their respective regions, ASEM Coordinators should facilitate the coordination of the ASEM process. The existing coordination mechanism comprises, on the European side, the European External Action Service (EEAS, formerly the European Commission) and the EU Presidency; on the Asian side, the Coordinators alternate every two years and the two coordinators are from ASEAN and Northeast and South Asian countries, respectively. See II.2 Role of the ASEM Coordinators and the hosts of next Summits and FMM, Annex to “Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM”: ASEM Working Methods and Institutional Mechanisms, Annex to “Helsinki Declaration on the Future.

³² Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a “Partnership” (FMM 9, Hanoi, 2009).

³³ Non-paper on ASEM Working Methods (FMM 10, Gödöllő, 2011).

4.3 What working methods have been ignored?

4.3.1 Issue-based leadership

The Helsinki Summit adopted the ‘issue-based leadership’ mechanism (IBL) in order to sustain a summit-to-summit momentum. It was envisaged that, with the IBL, ASEM initiatives would be implemented with a clear direction. The Helsinki Summit did provide new directions for cooperation areas, i.e. issues of cross-dimensional linkages between the three cooperation pillars, with a mid- to long- term vision on focused areas of priority. It was thought that IBL would provide ASEM partners with the instrument to assume leadership in sectors and issues in which they have a particular interest and/or expertise. The AVS, the e-mail networks among ASEM officials and preparatory meetings in the margins of SOM, were envisaged to facilitate IBL coordination.

The Beijing Summit further identified that the IBL should be instrumental in enabling ASEM’s small and developing partners to participate in the ASEM process more fully and effectively. With the IBL, small and developing countries could share experience and expertise in particular sectors, together with bigger countries to shepherd them towards tangible outcomes. ASEM’s attractiveness as a platform of dialogue with equal partnership would therefore be enhanced as a tangible result. As one of the basic principles agreed by partners, and for the purpose of consistency and balance of participation, it was prescribed that issue/sectorial leaders should be a group of partners, both Asian and European. At the Beijing Summit, a List of IBLs was adopted (Table A9), although it looked incomplete.³⁴

The Beijing Summit recognised the progress made by the IBL.³⁵ Yet, it seems that the coordination function, which should have been undertaken by the AVS, was wanting because the European Commission in its Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a “Partnership” (FMM 9, Hanoi, May 2009) suggested to establish the TASC project in order to support, among other things, the IBL with a view to enhanced transparency and coordination. However, the project team was unable to fulfil the task, because it was unclear what had

³⁴ It is observed that there were 1) a lack of partners. There was only one partner for some issues. For example, Korea for inter-cultural dialogue, Vietnam for HIV/AIDS, Germany for labour/employment, Thailand for food security, the Philippines for international migration, Spain for finance, and Denmark for life-long learning; 2) a lack of counterparts from another continent. For example, with regard to the issue of culture/tourism, China, Vietnam and Thailand had no European counterparts. For the issue of interfaith and counter-terrorism, Singapore and the Philippines were left without counterparts in Europe; and 3) lack of clarity about what countries the groups consisted of and who were the leaders. Although the List of IBL groups announced at the Beijing Summit should be regarded as an official list, it was discovered by chance that there were other issues and leaders which were not on the Beijing list. It is unclear how and why they surfaced, casting doubt on the accuracy of both lists. For example, in the Concept Paper of the 3rd Labour and Employment Ministers Conference (December 2010, the Netherlands), new issues and leaderships were Corporate Social Responsibility (the issue-based leadership of Germany), Decent work including social security (the issue-based leadership of France), Occupational Safety and Health (the issue-based leadership of Singapore and Indonesia), Skills and vocational training (the issue-based leadership of the Philippines).

³⁵ “Leaders applauded progress made in the institutional building of ASEM, including the Issue-based Leadership initiative...”

actually been done under the auspices of the IBL as documented information was simply not available.³⁶

However, at FMM11 in Delhi (2013), a Collated List of Interested ASEM Members for Tangible Cooperation was published as an annex to the Chair's Statement which appears similar to the IBL list adopted at the Beijing Summit. Both lists consist of issues and interested partners, although in the Delhi-adopted list they are called "areas of tangible cooperation" and "names of interested ASEM Members", respectively. Certainly, the issues appeared in the Delhi list are updated, given already accomplished cooperation in the ASEM process. Compare to the IBL List, the new issues presented in the Collated List are disaster management, water management, renewable energy, higher education, vocational training & skills development, waste management, promote trade and investment/involve private sectors and poverty reduction. There are issues which remain in both lists although may be with different names: SMEs development, energy efficiency, food safety, education and human resources development. Issues such as inter-cultural dialogue, culture/tourism, pandemic control, transportation, climate change, interfaith and counter-terrorism, finance and lifelong learning are not found in the Delhi Collated List. As to participating partners in the areas of cooperation, the Collated List shows that each cooperation area attracts more interested partners than the IBL did. This may be expected since after the Beijing Summit in 2008, the ASEM partnership experienced two rounds of enlargement and its size has grown from 45 to 51.

The present authors have to conclude that, as no information is available which could help the present authors to understand how the Collated List came into being, and since the list and the IBL list look strikingly similar, the Collated List is a disguised IBL list with updates. Though this case may look as an unfavourable example of "reinvent the wheel", one would hope that tangible cooperation would result from this new initiative adopted at FMM 11. But after so many years, it is reasonable to conclude that the IBL mechanism was not implemented by ASEM partners after it was announced at the Helsinki Summit.

4.3.2 The ASEM Virtual Secretariat

The objective of the ASEM Virtual Secretariat (AVS) was to enhance ASEM's institutional memory. It was intended that AVS would provide ASEM with more coordination and information-sharing, and offer technical assistance to the Coordinators, including the management of ASEM's agenda and working programme. AVS was envisaged to operate as a closed intranet system, with combined functions of mailing, document and notification posting, and archive, etc.³⁷

After its role was elaborated in the Helsinki Summit, AVS was nonetheless not further mentioned in any chair's statement of summits or FMMs. However, the "Non-paper" adopted at FMM 9 (Hanoi, 2009) made the diagnosis that "the Virtual Secretariat has made its

³⁶ As part of the project deliverables, the TASC team was to compose a list of ASEM initiatives organised under the auspices of the IBL. Since no such record could be found, the team made up a list of possible IBL events and submitted it to the partners for comment and confirmation. However, there was no feedback from partners at all. Since then, no further news of the IBL was heard.

³⁷ According to the Summary of Discussions on the Future of ASEM, a working methods document adopted at FMM 7 (Kyoto, 2005), the AVS was to be set up before the Helsinki Summit.

contribution but is no longer appropriate given the move to issue-based leadership, and ideas of partnership, which will require a more substantial support.”

Although the AVS fell into oblivion since the Helsinki Summit, it engendered two coordination mechanisms that both were set up, one after another, to carry out the same mandate as what the AVS had been entrusted with. At FMM 9 in 2009, the foreign ministers welcomed the European Commission’s proposal to establish an ad hoc one-year “ASEM 8 Coordination Office”. At the FMM 10 in 2011, the “Non-paper on ASEM Working Methods” was adopted and as a follow-up the ASEM Chairman Support Group was born.

A. Technical support to the coordination of ASEM process

To implement the initiative of “ASEM 8 Coordination Office” that the Hanoi “Non-paper” proposed, the European Commission launched the project: Technical Support to the Coordination of ASEM Process (TASC), and engaged two external experts to carry out the project deliverables.³⁸ With a strict obligation of complete transparency for all ASEM members and of equal service to them all³⁹, the global objective of the project was to contribute to enhanced coordination, coherence and continuity of the ASEM process and to encourage all ASEM partners, especially the Asian developing countries of ASEM, to participate more fully and effectively in ASEM events.

Among all the undertakings that the TASC team delivered⁴⁰, the set-up of the ASEM Intranet⁴¹ was one of the key achievements of the project which received good feedback from partners.⁴² Remember that, based on the working methods adopted at FMM 7 and at ASEM 6, AVS was intended to operate as “a closed intranet system”. But the intranet was only launched five years later, in July 2010 by the TASC team. During the second phase of the project, the TASC team improved the features of the Intranet and continued to expand its content. It is however regrettable that the ASEM Intranet has become dysfunctional after the TASC project completed its mandate in March 2012.

³⁸ The TASC project was initially meant to be an ad-hoc one year pilot project to provide coordination support to the Brussels ASEM 8 Summit, in 2010. It was extended for another year for a second phase, after its work in phase one received good evaluation by Senior Officials.

³⁹ Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a “Partnership”, prepared by the European Commission, and distributed to ASEM partners in May 2009.

⁴⁰ The specific objectives of the TASC project were a) support the coordination of ASEM activities, particularly in the run up to the ASEM 8 Summit, assuring full involvement of developing ASEM member countries; b) support the transparency and visibility of the ASEM process; c) monitor the implementation of agreed ASEM events and draw recommendations for increased continuity; d) compile guidelines and provide advice on ASEM rules, customs and practices; e) establish tools supporting the coordination and transparency of ASEM and draw methodology for their maintenance. See Specific Terms of Reference, Request No.:2009/220996, Technical Support to the Coordination of ASEM Process, EuropeAid/127054/C/SER/multi.

⁴¹ The ASEM Intranet maintained a record of important ASEM documents, including files of ASEM initiatives that took place since ASEM’s establishment in 1996. To guarantee transparency, all ASEM partners have the same username and password so that all partners are certain that everyone has access to exactly the same documents and information. The TASC team updated the ASEM Intranet timely and relevant documents were uploaded continuously.

⁴² According to a survey conducted by the TASC team in November 2011, the ASEM Intranet was regarded either very useful or useful among 84% of the survey respondents. The survey was disseminated among Contact Points from all ASEM partners. 25 replies were received.

As a strictly deliverables-based project, the TASC team finalised several key project outputs important for achieving enhanced ASEM coordination. For example, apart from the ASEM Intranet, the team compiled updated ASEM contact lists (Contact Points and Senior Officials), an inventory of concept papers of ASEM initiatives, the ASEM calendar of events from 1996 to 2012, a progress monitoring report of ASEM initiatives (Oct. 2008 to Dec. 2010), etc.. The TASC project completed its mandate in March 2012.

B. ASEM Chairman's Support Group

At FMM 10 in 2011, ASEM foreign ministers adopted the Non-Paper on ASEM Working Methods, thanks to which the ASEM Chairman's Support Group (ACSG) was established.

ACSG was designed as technical support for ASEM coordination and particularly for the upcoming hosts of summits and FMMS. ACSG's project scope is the same as the TASC's, such as maintaining the ASEM Intranet, updating the ASEM Calendar of Events, conducting press monitoring for ASEM events, circulating good information among ASEM officials, etc. ACSG also follows the objective of the TASC project, namely "to assist ASEM partners in enhancing efficiency, coherence, continuity and visibility of the ASEM process".⁴³

The difference between the two mechanisms is that, instead of engaging external experts, the ACSG team members are assigned and financed by ASEM partners on a voluntary basis, and the composition of the team should be approved by SOM. Based on the Non-paper adopted at FMM 10, ACSG team members, which are 4-6 at any one time with a regional balance, are expected to work from existing, residential, administrative resources by using information technologies to fulfil their tasks. At the first meeting of ACSG (January 2012, Vientiane), the composition of the ACSG was identified. Members of the ACSG team were: the host of the ASEM summit and ASEAN Coordinator, the host of FMM, the Coordinator of NESAs (North East and South Asia), European Coordinators (EU Presidency and EEAS), the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEP. At the same time, ACSG was further tasked with attracting and encouraging high level participation in the ASEM 9 Summit and the three Summit side events, i.e. the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP), the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) and the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF).

The Road Map (2012) issued at ACSG's inaugural meeting lays down tasks, the responsible bodies and the timelines for completing the tasks. According to the Division of Work, issued at the same time, most of the tasks were shared by two to three bodies, except updating the Intranet, which the EEAS would take care of alone. Certain tasks, such as ASEM logos and templates, a visibility toolkit, implementing the ASEM work plan, assisting Chairs of ASEM summits and FMMS, would be undertaken by ACSG as a whole.

The present authors are not aware of any further documented information about ACSG since that date. It is also not known to us whether deliverables, such as the ASEM calendar of events, List of ASEM officials (Contact Points and Senior Officials), press-monitoring, etc. have been performed, and; how the ACSG has been providing overall coordination support to the Coordinators and the FMM which is part of its mandate. In the course of one interview for the

⁴³ TASC was responsible, additionally, to ensure that ASEM Asian Developing partners could "participate more fully and effectively in ASEM events."

purpose of writing the present report, the interviewee even alleged that ACSG had turned into a mess. Since the performance of ACSG has not been made known to outsiders, at the present stage it is not possible to evaluate whether ACSG, the latest ASEM coordination mechanism, is fulfilling the tasks and objectives set by the FMM 10.

To conclude, AVS was not successfully implemented by the partners after the Helsinki Summit. Evaluating how the ACSG has contributed to enhanced coordination of the ASEM process would become possible only after more information would be available.

4.4 What working methods have been applied partially?

4.4.1 Overall coordination

In terms of overall coordination, ASEM leaders' direction given at the Helsinki Summit was two-fold in relation to sectorial ministerials as well as sectorial SOMs. For sectorial ministerials, ASEM leaders urged partners to recognise the importance of the ASEM process to them and to strive for an increase of its effectiveness and efficiency. As to sectorial SOMs, in view of the initial success of SOMTI and Finance Deputies, the Helsinki Summit recommended partners to establish a SOM coordination mechanism in new cooperative initiatives, such as culture, environment, energy, health, science and technology, ICT, and labour and employment.

Since a good coordination mechanism at ASEM SOM level will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of ministerial meetings, examining whether the working methods for overall coordination have been implemented should thus start with a review of the development of the sectorial SOMs.

A. Sectorial SOMs

As far as the ASEM two-year Work Programme is concerned, from the Helsinki Summit to the Vientiane Summit, (a) sectorial SOM meetings have been consistently planned in the sectors of TFAP, education, finance, and migratory flows; (b) the Culture SOM was established at the Brussels Summit, while (c) for the sectors of ICT, labour and employment and SOMTI, SOM meetings have been foreseen only from time to time. Table A10 presents the relevant sectorial SOMs foreseen by the ASEM two-year Work Programmes since the Helsinki Summit.

To verify whether the above-mentioned sectorial SOMs actually did take place, ASEM's Calendar of Events of the same period must be checked against the work programmes. Since Calendars of 2012 and 2013 were not accurate as they were last updated on 18 March 2012, they cannot be used for analysis.⁴⁴ Therefore, only Calendars from 2006 to 2011 will be used to verify which sectorial SOMs took place (Table A11). For ASEM events taken place in 2012 and 2013, the authors consulted the ASEM Infoboard for information. As was already explained, discrepancies probably exist among the sources since a centralised reporting system for the purpose of ASEM coordination is missing at present. Besides, an initiative might be organised at SOM level but might not be named "SOM". In the absence of reliable documents, it is not be

⁴⁴ Looking at ASEM Initiatives 2013-2014, attached to the Chair's Statement issued at FMM 11 (Delhi), it is observed that events in certain months in both years were conspicuously absent, e.g. there was not a single event organised in January and February in both 2013 and 2014 which is highly unlikely. Therefore, the said list of events would be seen as indicative.

possible to investigate whether the initiative concerned was a SOM in disguise and this caveat has to be taken into account.

It is observed that the SOMs mechanism for TFAP, Customs and migratory flows has been very well established and meetings consistently took place every year since 2006. SOMs for culture, education, finance were organised four times from 2006 to 2013; while labour and employment, and SOMTI were organised three times in eight years between 2006 and 2013, that is, fairly regularly.

When comparing Table A10 with Table A11, i.e. examining the sectorial SOMs planned against those actually having taken place since 2006, it appears that SOMs for TFAP, culture, migratory flows took place as planned; whilst SOMs for education and finance missed out once and three times, respectively. But it is also possible that some sectorial SOMs did take place but were not reported. On the other hand, the customs SOM took place every year from 2006 to 2013 without being explicitly foreseen by the 2-year Work Programmes. As to other sectorial SOMs, discrepancies do exist between planning and implementation, such as for ICT and SOMTI. But as the information provided by Calendar of Events and the ASEM Infoboard may not be completely reliable due to overall ASEM coordination deficiencies, and since sometimes force majeure did happen⁴⁵, we conclude that the SOM mechanism has been well established in the sectors of TFAP, culture, labour and employment, and migratory flows following what ASEM leaders recommended at the Helsinki Summit, but not in the sectors of environment, energy, health, science and technology, ICT.

B. Sectorial ministerial meetings

To evaluate whether ASEM sectorial ministerial meetings have been given more emphasis and benefitted from greater effectiveness and efficiency as ASEM leaders intended at the Helsinki Summit, we first verify, whether mechanisms for sectorial ministerials have been established. Second, we check whether sectorial ministerials are supported by corresponding SOMs in the identified priority areas of cooperation, because a SOM meeting is usually organised to coordinate the ministerial meeting in order to increase the latter's effectiveness and efficiency with a view to obtain tangible results.

Table A12 reveals that, since the Helsinki Summit, ministerial meetings in the fields of culture, education, finance, labour and employment as well as transport took place regularly. Reflecting on the sectorial SOMs, it seems that active cooperation in the areas of TFAP, customs, migratory flows remained at working-level. They are not upgraded to the ministerial level. This is perhaps due to the nature of the subjects. Conversely, in sectors without SOMs' being organised, such as energy, environment, ICT and SMEs, meetings nevertheless took place at ministerial level.

It's worth mentioning that ASEM cooperation on customs is organised annually and systematically at two levels, i.e. director-general level as well as working group level. There is also an annual ASEM Customs-Trade Day which is organised since 2010, alternating between Asia and Europe. It would appear that the mechanism of customs cooperation is well

⁴⁵ For example, in March 2011 the ASEM SOM planned in Tokyo, Japan, was cancelled due to the earthquake and the tsunami which hit the Pacific coast of Japan.

established and self-sufficient, especially in view of the lack of momentum in ASEM economic cooperation because since 2005 no ASEM economic ministers' meeting has taken place.

Nonetheless, with regard to overall coordination of ASEM sectorial cooperation, the working methods adopted in Helsinki were implemented but only partially.

4.4.2 Visibility, public awareness, and links with stakeholders

A. Visibility and public awareness

The working methods adopted at the Helsinki Summit requested partners to develop, as a priority, a public communication strategy to disseminate the results of ASEM summits, other meetings and initiatives. Meantime, foreign ministries of ASEM partners were invited to create an ASEM page on their website, including links to ASEM, the ASEM Infoboard, and other relevant sites for easy access to ASEM-related information.

Undeniably, awareness of the general public in partner countries about ASEM is fairly limited. ASEM is very much about governments, for and by governments (including, here, EEAS and the European Commission) and their policy preparing officials. It seems that worldwide press coverage of ASEM activities during a no-summit year is minimal and limited mostly to the national level in case specialised events take place. This conclusion is based on the ASEM press monitoring exercise conducted by the TASC project on two occasions, i.e. the Brussels Summit and the Gödöllő FMM.⁴⁶

The finding of the second press monitoring exercise is that "almost all news articles are linked to specific ASEM events, the smaller ASEM events, such as the Green Growth Forum, are mostly reported by the media outlets of the host country. Bigger events, such as the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, are more widely reported but the focus is often on the participation of national representatives and national interests."⁴⁷ Regrettably, no analysis was undertaken pursuant to the first press monitoring exercise. Indeed, no remedies were sought in order to address the problem of inadequate ASEM visibility after the two ASEM press monitoring exercises.

As to leaders' request of creating an ASEM page on the websites of partners' foreign ministries with a link to relevant ASEM sites, since the Helsinki Summit only a handful of partners, such as the EEAS, Japan, Singapore, actually implemented this instruction. Therefore, it came as no surprise that the subject of an "ASEM webpage" was raised again at FMM 11. According to the List of Topics for Discussion on ASEM's Press/Public Awareness Management Strategy, it was suggested that partners could link the ASEM Infoboard and ASEM Dialogue Facility (ADF) websites to their official Foreign Ministry's website and vice versa. This suggestion looks a weaker one than before: instead of having an ASEM webpage, now creating two links on the website seems sufficient.

⁴⁶ The first press monitoring period was from 1 July to 31 October 2010; the second was from 1 May to 18 March 2012. By using the European Commission internal monitoring system "EMM", news on ASEM activities reported on 2000 different news websites around the world was registered.

⁴⁷ The finding was provided by the team of another EC-funded project "ASEM: visibility preparation, support, and delivery for 2011", which analysed the press monitoring result.

Having said the above, the ASEM webpage posted on the EEAS website provides updated and comprehensive information in relation to the latest news and the facts of the ASEM dialogue. It also lists related links on substantive dialogue themes covered by EU's external relations towards Asia at large.⁴⁸

In conclusion, the ASEM leaders' instruction given in Helsinki to develop a public communication strategy has been only partly followed up, seven years later. And the instruction of creating an ASEM webpage was only followed by a handful of partners. On the other hand, the ASEM Infoboard is a sustainable tool which helps to communicate ASEM, its mission and activities to the public at large. Moreover, the EEAS has taken initiatives to finance specific projects in order to enhance ASEM visibility.⁴⁹

i) ASEM Infoboard

In order to enhance understanding of ASEM and the activities organised in the ASEM framework, at FMM 6 ASEM partners agreed to develop an ASEM Infoboard which should have the functions of archive, recipient and dissemination. The targeted readers are the public at large. ASEM Infoboard was set up, and has been managed by ASEF as a pilot project, and is financed by voluntary contributions. In the absence of a "reporting centre" where ASEM information could be centralised, the ASEM Infoboard serves as a useful tool in order to gather, and disseminate, ASEM information. It is suggested in a couple of occasions, including at FMM 11, that, since ASEM Infoboard serves the public at large while the Intranet was for ASEM internal communication, functions of both tools complement each other and therefore they should be combined.

ii) Asia-Europe Foundation

Leaders at the Helsinki Summit gave the direction that the partners are encouraged to consider the recommendations resulting from seminars co-organised by ASEF; while ASEF should persist in exploring new ways to attract public attention to ASEM initiatives and ensure media attention.

ASEF has been promoting public awareness of ASEM in civil society ever since it was established in 1997. With ASEM leaders' blessing, ASEF was mandated to "promote better mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, in line with the vision for Asia-Europe cooperation as laid down by the ASEM leaders at their meeting in Bangkok from 1-2 March 1996 as well as at their

⁴⁸ See http://eeas.europa.eu/asem/index_en.htm for more detail.

⁴⁹ As far as the authors are aware, after the Helsinki Summit the European Commission financed the following projects in order to raise ASEM visibility. 1) in 2008/2009, "ASEM Communication/Media Relations" was launched. The ASEM Visibility Toolkit, which was the outcome of the project, provided campaign style guides, press packs, ASEM Fact Sheet formats, etc. in order to help consolidate ASEM's brand image and systems. 2) the TASC team was requested to assist in raising the ASEM visibility by, among other things, providing advice to ASEM partners on ASEM visibility customs and practices. 3) from 2010 to 2013, "ASEM: Visibility Preparation, Support and Delivery" (3 phases) was launched. The project team established a database of around 6000 contacts in academia, policy-making, think tanks and civil society, etc. in ASEM countries, and wrote and disseminated advisories/articles of ASEM activities to the targeted media and the 6000 contacts in order to raise public awareness of the ASEM process. 4) from December 2012 until December 2015, "ASEM Dialogue Facility Support" was launched. As part of the project portfolio, the team is to "carry forward, coordinate, encourage, sustain and support" ASEM visibility.

subsequent meetings.”⁵⁰ To fulfil its mission, apart from organising relevant projects, ASEF conducts public relations activities to profile ASEM, and publicise ASEM activities.⁵¹ Thus far, either on its own initiative or on behalf of ASEM, ASEF has implemented more than 600 projects, including a few flagship projects, such as Asia-Europe Museum Network (ASEMUS), ASEF University, Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights, Asia-Europe Editors’ Roundtable, ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium, etc. The ASEM Infoboard is managed as a pilot project by ASEF.

Although ASEF’s contribution to ASEM visibility at civil society level has been consistently recognised at summits and FMMS, it is always requested to do more in order to promoting ASEM visibility. Perhaps this is unavoidable given the nature of ASEM and the enormous size of ‘the ASEM population’. It would probably not be reasonable to expect ASEF alone to raise ASEM visibility, given the fundamentals and dilemmas as mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

Meantime, as a conduit to connect ASEM governments with civil society, and presumably to avoid possible confrontations face-to-face amongst ASEM partners, ASEF can act as a neutral, well-networked organiser. ASEF is sometimes entrusted by partners to initiate activities and events which may entail a certain degree of controversy. For example, in collaboration with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, ASEF has been organising the Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights since 1998. As an annual event, the seminar series has addressed issues such as access to justice, human rights in criminal justice systems, human rights and ICT, etc. By the same token, in recent years ASEF has been co-organising events with partners in order to discuss improving ASEM’s working methods, including the issue of institutionalisation which is controversial, too, but of course less emotional. For example, in April 2010, in the run up to the ASEM 8 Summit, ASEF co-organised with the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung and the Europe-Asia Policy Forum the ASEM Outlook Workshop, which was to address ASEM’s functionality and efficiency.⁵² In April 2013, together with China, Laos, India, Poland, ASEF co-organised an ASEM Symposium on “Towards Peace and Prosperity in Asia and Europe: The Need of a Dynamic ASEM” (Yangzhou City, China, 25-26 April 2013), where ASEM’s challenges and constraints were discussed. A list of recommendations was issued at the end of the Symposium, hoping to provide fresh impetus for ASEM’s further progress.

Just like the Yangzhou Symposium, many ASEM initiatives that partners co-organise with ASEF tend to summarise a list of recommendations at the end. The fate of these recommendations is everybody’s guess because there is no follow-up mechanism. Organisers of ASEM initiatives, i.e. partners and ASEF, usually do not specify for whom exactly the recommendations are meant. For example, one of the recommendations issued by the 12th Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Seminar on Human Rights (June 2012, Seoul) urged ASEM governments to “ensure that the rights of users and public institutions are positively affirmed in both domestic

⁵⁰ Dublin Agreed Principles of the Asia-Europe Foundation, para 1, 19 December 1996, Amended on 6 October 2004, Hanoi.

⁵¹ Dublin Agreed Principles of the Asia-Europe Foundation, para 2, 19 December 1996, Amended on 6 October 2004, Hanoi.

⁵² The next instalment of the Outlook Workshop will be held in the 3rd quarter of 2014, before the ASEM 10 Summit.

legislation and international agreements on intellectual property.” Such a general piece of advice would probably be difficult for governments to heed and give it serious consideration. Who would read it, and who is to implement it? At least in the case of the Yangzhou Initiative, it “will be reported to the next Senior Officials’ Meeting”. It therefore remains to be seen how the Senior Officials will consider the recommendations, summarised after a discussion of one and a half day involving about 100 participants. Moreover, for discussions of tangible but controversial issues, such as the ASEM working methods, ASEM partners most likely already have their own and varied mind-sets so that the chances of considering seriously what is recommended in an event co-organised by ASEF may be slim.⁵³

At the present stage, we conclude that it is not clear how partners could consider the recommendations resulting from events co-organised by ASEF because of the lack of follow-up mechanisms and the existing internal constraints. While ASEF has had success in promoting public awareness and support for the ASEM process, more potential might perhaps be realised.

4.5 What working methods cannot be verified?

4.5.1 Role of the ASEM Coordinators

ASEM leaders in Helsinki called upon partners to strengthen the role of Coordinators by establishing a regular meeting schedule, and by standardising the holding of meetings ahead of Ministerials to complement the role of SOM.

As far as the authors understand, the Coordinators’ meeting schedule is completely an internal matter among ASEM officials which is not communicated to the public. Therefore it is not possible to evaluate whether, since the Helsinki Summit, the role of Coordinators has been strengthened with a schedule of regular meetings taking place ahead of ministerials.

4.5.2 Regular contacts between ASEM embassies.

In order to reinforce coordination, the Helsinki Summit recommended to maintain regular contacts between embassies in order to promote information-sharing, and thereby, to facilitate the tasks and duties of the Coordinators.

Although it is not possible to evaluate how this instruction has been executed because documented information is not available, it seems the mechanism caused some irritation and was not received very well. One interviewee mentioned that ASEM should not “go local”. Another interviewee, who is from an ASEM partner country but based in Brussels, does not seem aware of coordinating with colleagues from other ASEM embassies on ASEM by using Brussels as a platform.

⁵³ For example, in the course of interviewing for the present study report, one interviewee strongly advocated to “look APEC” in order to improve ASEM coordination. Another interviewee simply dismissed the idea of comparing ASEM with APEC, and cautioned it would be a mistake if it were done because the two institutions are of a different nature. APEC is orthodox and non-political, its agenda is confined to trade and economic issues and it is cautious about inter-regional integration; while ASEM is the opposite in all these respects. Therefore, one of the recommendations issued at the end of the ASEM Outlook Workshop (April 2010, Brussels), advising that ASEM should study the OSCE and APEC experiences for technical preparation to ensure smooth progress when Chairs rotate, might well have a mixed reception among ASEM partners.

There is no further information available on this matter which would allow to check its implementation.

4.5.3 The roles of the Asia-Europe Business Forum, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting and the civil society.

ASEM leaders at the Helsinki Summit reiterated the important role that the Asia-Europe Business Forum, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) and the civil society can play in order to extend ASEM's outreach.

A. Asia-Europe Business Forum⁵⁴

Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) was envisaged by AECF 2000 as one of the key priorities for Asia-Europe cooperation.⁵⁵ As a tradition, AEBF is organised back-to-back with ASEM summits, and a chairman's statement is issued at the end of each AEBF in order to summarise the discussions and recommendations which will be handed to ASEM leaders at the summit.

Under the auspices of AEBF⁵⁶, there are a few working groups but overall information about AEBF is very scarce. For example, even for key documents such as AEBF chairman's statements, only two are available since the Helsinki Summit, one was issued in Helsinki, another in Brussels. Websites of both meetings have also remained intact; while documented information of AEBF in Beijing and in Vientiane is nowhere to be found.

It is therefore not possible to verify how AEBF is fulfilling its mandate and what impact it has made in terms of promoting business cooperation between the two regions, without extensive interviewing in two continents. Note that the Brussels AEBF contemplated setting up a secretariat in order to carry out continuous cooperation among businesses during the interval of two summits. It is not known to the authors whether this initiative has been followed up.

B. Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting

Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) is a forum which engages parliaments from ASEM partners for a better mutual understanding, public awareness and support. The parliament of the ASEM summit host is usually responsible for organising ASEP. Since ASEP 4 in Helsinki, subsequent ASEPs have taken place prior to an ASEM summit. In order to improve effectiveness, the Helsinki ASEP adopted a set of Rules of Procedure providing objectives, membership, participation, conduct of business, etc. At the end of each ASEP, a declaration will be issued and transmitted to member parliaments and to the ASEM summit. Discussions at

⁵⁴ AEBF is usually organised by the chamber of commerce or business confederation of the host of the summit. Dedicated to a particular theme, AEBF is attended by prominent business leaders from ASEM countries and, usually they are given the opportunity of having a direct dialogue with leaders to advocate or to solicit directly policies favourable for business development. Such was the case at AEBF 12 (Brussels, October 2010), when business and political leaders met at a breakfast meeting.

⁵⁵ AEBF was expected to play the "central role" to enhance business-to-business dialogue and cooperation between the two regions, as well as to facilitate a two-way dialogue between government and the business/private sector, paying particular attention to the SMEs' development. See Point IV.16, AECF 2000.

⁵⁶ There are a number of working groups under the auspices of AEBF, such as Trade Working Group (incl. customs regulations; technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment; intellectual property rights), Investment Working Group, Financial Services Working Group, Information and Communication Technology Working Group, and Infrastructure Working Group. See Chairman's statement, 10th Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF10), Helsinki, 11 September 2006.

ASEP revolve around political dialogue, economic cooperation and dialogue of cultures and civilisations in Asia and Europe, which are the same three pillars of cooperation as under the ASEM process. Websites of ASEP in Brussels and in Vientiane provide comprehensive information of the meeting per se. Other than this, no further information is available as to how ASEP has supported greater public awareness of the ASEM process and particularly of the ASEM Summit. But if the question is whether ASEM is involving parliaments, the answer is yes.

C. Asia-Europe People's Forum

As a way to connect to civil society or citizens at large in order to promote public awareness of the ASEM process, the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF)⁵⁷ is organised as an "alternative ASEM". It takes place, therefore, almost at the same time as the ASEM summit.

The overall purpose of the AEPF is, among other things, to safeguard that social issues and people's concerns are reflected in the overall ASEM process. At the end of each Forum, a declaration will be issued to convey to ASEM leaders AEPF's recommendations about prevailing social issues and concerns affecting ordinary citizen's life in Asia and Europe. According to its website, AEPF advocates alternative regionalism, democratisation and human rights, ecological justice, food sovereignty, peace and security and water justice. There are misgivings in some circles about the rather biased or one-sided interpretation of what are 'peoples' concerns', driven by the pre-occupations of the NGOs organising the AEPF traditionally.⁵⁸ It is perhaps not so much what is on their agenda - which might well get too little attention of ASEM leaders - as well the many issues and views which never make it to the AEPF agenda, where the bias might be found. It would be exceedingly hard to argue that the AEPF is representative, even in a loose sense of covering the broad socio-political spectrum, of the ASEM peoples as well as the preferences and outlook of their citizens. It is admittedly difficult to 'represent' citizens in a meaningful way in such gatherings but it is sensible to reflect on a set-up of the AEPF which is not driven solely or predominantly by a few NGOs located solely on one side of the broad political spectrum.

In December 2005, AEPF adopted the People's Charter which sets down the way it works and how it practices. Apart from the time of the bi-annual Forum, it is not clear how AEPF conducts campaigns and advocacy. But at least, at each Summit, thanks to AEPF, ASEM leaders are made aware of concerns coming from the civil society in the ASEM constituencies, or so the AEPF at least claims.

4.6 An analysis of the three ASEM coordination initiatives.

As was mentioned earlier, ASEM's day-to-day administration, including a possible ASEM Secretariat, is one of the most discussed topics in terms of the overall ASEM working methods in the ASEM history. Recall that in 2003 a special SOM was convened in Rome in order to deliberate the possibilities of establishing an ASEM Secretariat. On top of the discussions held

⁵⁷ Among the three so-called "parallel events to ASEM Summit", AEPF is the only event which has its dedicated website. See <http://www.aepf.info/> (last accessed 3 February 2014).

⁵⁸ The International Organising Committee (IOC) of AEPF includes three organisations on the European side - led by the Transnational Institute (TNI) in Amsterdam - and three organisations on the Asian side - led by the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) in the Philippines. Available at <http://asem8.be/event/asia-europe-peoples-forum.html> (last accessed 3 February 2014).

at the SOM level, various other events have been organised in order to find ways to address the problem of ASEM coordination deficiencies.

Since for some ASEM partners the informal nature of the ASEM process would not favour establishing an ASEM secretariat, in order to nonetheless remedy coordination deficiencies, three initiatives were endorsed collectively by ASEM partners one after another, i.e. AVS, TASC, and ACSG. However, they still leave a lot to be desired. For example, since the ACSG was launched in 2011 until today, the ASEM Calendar of Events in 2012 and 2013 is not available in order to answer a simple question of how many ASEM initiatives were organised during the period. The following will provide a reality check of the three coordination initiatives, success or constraints.

Launched at the Helsinki Summit, AVS quickly fell into oblivion after the Summit. Little is known as to how it worked, if it did, and what tangible contribution it made towards an enhanced ASEM coordination. What was revealed by the Non-paper adopted at the Hanoi FMM was that, due to the coming into being of IBL, a sustained, thorough and reliable administrative support would be desirable; therefore the TASC project replaced the AVS in order to ensure more substantial support to the day to day management of ASEM information and administration.

The TASC project was launched in January 2010 as an ad hoc one-year project, and its project mandate was extended for another year after SOM's endorsement. Although the TASC project produced a few concrete outputs improving ASEM coordination, its potential was not fully realised. The biggest hurdle that the team had to overcome was that partners misinterpreted the project as a Commission-owned project and, as a result, the team was believed only to provide coordination services to the European Commission. This misunderstanding was regrettable, despite the Commission's repeated reminders disseminated at SOMs and FMMs that the project had "a strict obligation of complete transparency for all ASEM members and of equal service to them all".⁵⁹ A member of the Belgian ASEM 8 Task Force even re-iterated this misperception in the article: ASEM Working Methods: An Identity Issue, alleging that the TASC project "constituted a unilateral initiative, the staff had no responsibility vis-à-vis the other ASEM members. It was thus not answerable for the quality of its services to the whole of the membership". The article concluded that "the coordinating office was not 'owned' by the ASEM community".⁶⁰ Sadly, this is completely baseless. After the positive appraisal given at the Brussels SOM (July, 2011)⁶¹ as a seal of approval, it was reasonably expected that any doubts about TASC's effectiveness and accountability would have been defeated. However, it did not.

ACSG assumed TASC's project mandate after the latter completed its mission in March 2012. The present authors have very limited information about ACSG with respect to what it has delivered to ASEM coordination except a couple of documents made available at ACSG's

⁵⁹ Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a "Partnership" (FMM 9, Hanoi, 2009). It was repeated in the Information Note on Technical Assistance to ASEM Coordination (TASC), distributed at SOM in Madrid, in January 2010.

⁶⁰ Bersick S. and Velde P. (ed.), *The Asia-Europe Meeting: Contributing to a New Global Governance Architecture, the Eighth ASEM Summit in Brussels (2010)* (Amsterdam University Press, 2011) p.62.

⁶¹ At the Brussels SOM in July 2010, "the Senior Officials gave its direction that the ASEM 8 Coordinating Office would continue operating provided voluntary financing is made available."

inaugural meeting in Vientiane in January 2012. As was mentioned above, although the Vientiane meeting adopted a road map for ACSG's work in 2012, the road map per se remained somewhat fuzzy about who was responsible for what. Besides, the ACSG composition does not seem to follow the Non-paper adopted at FMM 10, which prescribes that the staff number needed would be minimum four and maximum six.⁶² There is one member too many based on the ACSG composition endorsed at the Vientiane meeting.⁶³ But, in the meantime, every ACSG member seemed eligible since at the Hungary SOM in April 2011, Senior Officials concluded that "in addition to the hosts of Summit and Foreign Ministers Meeting, other ASEM members such as the Coordinators, other interested members (including ASEAN Secretariat) and the Asia-Europe Foundation could contribute to the work of the technical support".⁶⁴ This being the case, the number is perhaps less important as long as the work is done. So one may query: does this compromise reflect ASEM leaders' intention to have "the kind of light, cost-effective technical support..."?⁶⁵ Secondly, the present authors are not aware of any deliverables produced by the ACSG team. The ASEM Intranet has been dysfunctional since TASC completed its mission, basic and necessary coordination tools such as ASEM calendar of events, lists of ASEM officials (contact points and SOM leaders), etc. were not found. Since no documented information is available, we tentatively conclude that ACSG does not seem to have effectively contributed to ASEM coordination.

In summary, it would be reasonable to conclude that only the strictly deliverables-based TASC project produced concrete deliverables and provided tangible support to ASEM coordination, despite mistrust from ASEM partners.

ASEF

In accordance with the Dublin Agreed Principles of Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEF has been "implementing projects assigned by ASEM leaders or ministers and the relevant members of the European Commission".⁶⁶ Moreover, in order to implement the Recommendations for Organizational and Management Strategy and Long Term Financial Sustainability of ASEF⁶⁷, ASEF has co-organised with partners various projects encompassing intellectual exchange, people-to-people exchange, cultural exchange and media exchange. In the run-up to the ASEM summits, ASEF is usually very active as part of the overall campaign machine joining the summit host to bring up public awareness of the ASEM process. For example, it has become a tradition that before each summit, ASEF will organise the Asia-Europe Editors' Roundtable to heighten the importance of the ASEM process among up to 30 editors and senior journalists representing leading media agencies in Asia and Europe. For similar reasons, ASEF holds the Asia-Europe Journalists' Seminars prior to FMMS.

⁶² Non-paper on ASEM Working Methods, at point 3.4 (FMM 10, Gödöllő, 2011).

⁶³ The team composition identified in Vientiane in 2012 consisted of: the host of ASEM Summit and ASEAN Coordinators, the host of FMM, the Coordinator of NESA, European Coordinators (EU Presidency and EEAS), the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEF.

⁶⁴ Non-paper on ASEM Working Methods, at point 2 (FMM 10, Gödöllő, 2011).

⁶⁵ Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia-Europe Meeting, at para84 (Brussels, 4-5 October, 2010).

⁶⁶ Dublin Agreed Principles of the Asia-Europe Foundation, para 2, 19 December 1996, Amended on 6 October 2004, Hanoi.

⁶⁷ A study report adopted by SOM in Hanoi prior to the ASEM 5 Summit.

As a well-established platform to connect civil society with the ASEM process, since it was founded in 1997 ASEF has carried out more than 600 projects and directly engaged more than 17,000 participants to its various projects.

On the other hand, it is observed that in recent years ASEF has been keen to move to the “upstream” of the ASEM process which might not be consistent with what some partners have intended. On its website, ASEF has profiled itself as “the only permanently established institution of ASEM”⁶⁸; while the AECF2000 stipulated, as one of the key principles, that “as an informal process, ASEM need not be institutionalised.”⁶⁹ ASEF’s profiling may thus cause some degree of public confusion about the ASEM mechanism. One interviewee, who used to work at ASEF, considered that ASEF’s “all-by-me approach” may not always be well received by ASEM partners. Some also suggested that ASEF can and should retain its role as a visibility enhancer which is compatible with its agreed mission.

Overall, the controversy over ASEM institutionalisation has never gone away in ASEM’s development. Having recognised the coordination deficiencies, ASEM partners’ preferences about setting up an ASEM secretariat have invariably remained quite disparate. Some advocate upgrading ASEF to be the ASEM secretariat; some argue, on the premise of the AECF 2000, to maintain the status quo of ASEM coordination, i.e. without a secretariat; some suggest to establish two secretariats, one in Asia and one in Europe to promote ASEM in tandem. One interviewee pointed out that by promoting ASEM, ASEF has become well known in Asia, but not in Europe. Therefore, ASEF may become ASEM’s secretariat in Asia; in the meantime, an European ASEM secretariat, perhaps in Brussels, should be established, too. It will re-enforce Europe’s identity in the ASEM process, and may serve as a good counterpart to ASEF in Asia.

The present authors understand the general sentiment in the ASEM community that, when discussing ASEM working methods, too much time has been consumed or perhaps wasted, on the question of an ASEM secretariat. This may well be correct because even a decision to set up an ASEM secretariat need not automatically, or ‘magically’, solve all practical issues, whilst risking to become entangled in typical intergovernmental haggling before it could even start working. The latter fear consists of endless debates on its location, the number of staff members and from what countries, its remit and budget, and who would pay for it. Just giving one example of how cautious ASEM countries are, the ASEM Infoboard (managed by ASEF), which is no more than an information portal at very low costs, is paid for by voluntary contributions of ASEM countries willing to do so. But there is more: focussing too much on one single ‘solution’ – an ASEM secretariat – might lead one to ignore that there may be other ways to address the problem of (more) effective coordination and ASEM ‘memory’. One such alternative is to organise a well-prepared and timely ‘hand-over’ to other officials inside national administrations of the ASEM dossier and tacit ASEM knowledge, thereby ensuring continuity and stability by passing on the ASEM ‘memory’ and spirit. Another alternative, complementary to a good hand-over, is that ‘host countries’ prepare themselves well and verify up-to-date networking and recent initiatives of all kinds. To some extent, this has been accomplished in between summits by the (old) host-to- (new) host cooperation. One might

⁶⁸ Available at <http://www.asef.org/index.php/about/history> (last accessed 22 March 2014).

⁶⁹ Point III.8, AECF 2000.

also recall the extensive ex post publications by the Finnish government, and to a lesser extent, the Belgian government, of resp. the Helsinki and Brussels summits which remain a rich source of experiences.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and policy recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The stocktaking and analysis of ASEM since the Helsinki ASEM summit yields the following 15 conclusions :

- (i) In accordance with its broad mission, ASEM works on an incredibly wide range of policy issues and does this at various levels, from the summit and foreign ministers meetings, to many other ministerials, High Level Groups, conferences, seminars and workshops.
- (ii) Generally, this broad mission is pursued whilst remaining faithful to ASEM's character of informality, networking and flexibility.
- (iii) Not only does ASEM work consistently on issues in all three 'pillars' (political, economic, and cultural / education/ peoples-to-peoples), the combination of its flexibility and the commitment to operate in all three pillars enables ASEM to address 'topical priority issues... following but also shaping the international policy agenda'. Such topical issues, seen as urgent or dominant at that moment in time, may range from tension in international politics (for instance, Korean peninsula), or a sudden financial crisis (in 2008 and 2010) or seemingly technical questions of disaster management (following the great tsunami in Japan or typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines) to the preparation of global climate negotiations. This flexibility and informality equally allows, with some success, regular discussions on sensitive questions such as human rights in an annual informal seminar setting.
- (iv) All three pillars witness a great deal of ASEM activity. This is true for summit chair statements, but also throughout the period in between summits. There is no clear bias between pillars, all three have their peculiarities. The first pillar being political implies that statements from summits and FMMs contain plenty of agreed, though usually carefully formulated, political views, but few visible 'follow-ups'. The third pillar, including education in a broad sense, tends to rely less on policy statements, but more on numerous specialised activities at many levels and in many forms (e.g. on education and training, etc.). Apart from ministerial meetings which take place each time on schedule and the TEIN programme consistently supported by the EU, the cultural pillar is able to bridge mutual understanding on controversial subjects, such as the interfaith dialogue, by using ASEM as a platform. Notably, ASEM concentrates, in the 3rd pillar, on an extremely rich menu of Asia-Europe encounters in the socio-cultural and peoples-to-peoples domain.
- (v) It is the second (economic) pillar which has grown in activities over time. The type of encounters and exchanges in the 2nd pillar are much more suited (than the 1st pillar) for 'regular' follow-ups in the form of activities of mutual learning, exchange of best-practices, forms of direct cooperation, etc. Indeed, gradually this has been extended from the initially frantic activities in the domain of trade (including customs) and investment – where activity is still lively and regular – to many other areas of economic or related policies. The number of well-established ministerials ('ASEM regulars') in 2013/14 had grown to seven, five of which belong to the 2nd pillar (finance, economic, transport, labour & employment, environment). Out of the 21 other 'regular' encounters, no less than 11 are also in the 2nd pillar. No less than

100 of the 170 follow-ups are in the 2nd pillar, followed by 54 for the 3rd pillar and 16 for the 1st pillar (less suitable for follow-ups, as noted). The same pattern appears in ASEM activities not mentioned in summit statements: out of 36 such ASEM activities, 22 are in the 2nd pillar, 14 in pillar 3 and 3 in pillar 1.

(vi) It would seem that the many 'ASEM regulars' strengthen the durability and permanent (common) interest in ASEM. The 'regulars' reduce the unpredictability of an ASEM-summit-led tradition of encounters and initiatives. They express, at least implicitly if not explicitly, the ASEM common interest by their permanence – in itself reflecting a need felt in governments and administrations on both sides. They help in exploring better policies or best-practices whilst contributing to a better mutual understanding of one another's policies and positioning. The regularity should also help build trust between ministers and officials from Asia (writ large) and Europe. The many 'regulars' (28 in total, ministerials and other) reflect a degree of maturity in Asia-Europe relations and demonstrate the (expected) value-added over a fairly wide spectrum of policy activities.

(vii) Amongst the many areas for 'follow-up' from summits, very few fail to be executed. Apart from a handful of such instances identified over a period of seven years (and to be compared to 170 actual follow-ups), there is only one genuine and indeed conspicuous failure: the repeated calls for the ASEM Economic ministers to meet, found both in summit statements (three out of four) and FMMs. In one case a SOMTI was held but the ministers never actually met later. There are indications that many Asian countries would like the EMM to meet (and twice, an Asian country even offered to host it, as formally announced in statements, but to no avail) whereas the EU apparently hesitates to do this at ministerial (and European Commissioners) level. At DG or technical levels, many activities on trade, customs and investment do continue as before. Based on interviews and discussions, we offer a 'tactical' and a 'structural' explanation about the EU's reticence to engage in EMMs, in the light of the abundant trade (and investment) negotiations with Asian countries. The structural one is rooted in the stark differences between ASEM's typical diplomacy (conducted by the EEAS, based on 'soft' power and seeking what binds ASEM countries) and EU trade and investment policy (conducted by the Commission, based on 'hard' disciplines and legal commitments). Apparently, the preference is to enjoy a peaceful co-existence of these approaches, but not to mix them up. The tactical one would merely consist in an ad-hoc assessment, time and again, of whether any value-added could be expected from ASEM for ongoing trade negotiations.

(viii) The FMM is clearly fulfilling the role of 'guardian of ASEM' in between summits and, in particular, the guardian of what preceding summits have stated via the Chair. On the whole FMMs remain very close to the Chair statements of the preceding summit.

(ix) ASEM has also gradually developed a tradition of formulating 'Declarations'. The Declarations by ASEM governments in summits or otherwise seem to serve as (more) elaborate 'policy guidelines' than Chair statements can possibly do, but otherwise they are very similar in style, and even in 'mandating', with summits.

(x) ASEM is very much a process by governments and administrations, for governments and of governments. It is not or only indirectly for citizens and not with citizens, except

sometimes in the margin (and in many ASEM activities targeted to all kinds of citizens and in the cultural sphere). This fundamental characteristic is a formidable hurdle to overcome in any communication strategy : given this characteristic of ASEM, there is simply very little visibility and recognition for citizens, and the direct relevance to them is at best remote, if not absent, as no decisions are taken and 'follow-ups' are once again for governments. Hence, ASEM work will simply not be on the 'radar' of individual citizens, and there is not any incentive for citizens to pay much attention. A communication strategy might therefore take this fact as a starting point and attempt to effectively reach those few who might be willing to pay some attention if ASEM is brought to their attention promptly.

(xi) With respect to the ASEM working methods since the Helsinki summit, the four summits and the four FMMs have followed the instructions given at ASEM 6 and updated each time the clusters of political, economic and cultural topics according to the changes in the international arena. The function of the ASEM working methods is to facilitate, without institutionalisation and without the intention to generate operational measures or manifest value-added. The nature of ASEM lies precisely in the evolving political dialogue process itself between Asia (writ large) and Europe. Thus, negotiating the text of a Chair's statement is an opinion-making process.

(xii) ASEM leaders' wish to strengthen the role of Coordinators has been duly pursued and implemented. This also holds for the suggestion to enhance the role of the hosts of summits before and after a summit and up to the next one.

(xiii) Unfortunately, some aspects of the ASEM working methods have been ignored. We show that issue-based leadership was never taken seriously. Another example consists in the quasi-permanent search for more effective and durable technical support of the splintered and extremely decentralised ASEM process. Several initiatives have been taken such as the ASEM Virtual Secretariat, discussions about a modest technical ASEM secretariat (typically favoured by some Asian countries, though not all, and resisted by Europe) which went nowhere, as well as several ad-hoc and temporary technical support projects such as TASC and the ASEM Chair support group. There is evidence pointing to some degree of effectiveness of TASC and not (yet) for the recent support group. The virtual secretariat failed. Enhanced coordination, as this problem is called, remains a weak spot in ASEM. How weak it is, is actually contested. Some ASEM participants point out that, on the one hand, a technical secretariat would not make that much difference, all of a sudden, and, on the other hand, timely and well-prepared 'hand-overs' of ASEM dossiers and tacit ASEM knowledge inside national administrations will maintain ASEM 'memory' and spirit, ensuring continuity and stability.

(xiv) Some ASEM working methods were applied partially. Overall coordination is expected from sectorial SOMs and sectorial ministerials. For about half the SOMs this worked quite well. The ministerials have been rather active, as noted when discussing the 'ASEM regulars'. Indeed, more ministerials now exist than in Helsinki and all meet regularly (except the EMM as noted). The question of ASEM visibility, awareness and links with stakeholders is intrinsically difficult to handle, given that ASEM is typically for governments and by governments. Several attempts have been made to develop a 'better' communication strategy and some elements

have been helpful for a larger public, such as the ASEM Infoboard, the EEAS ASEM website and ASEF's peoples-to-peoples activities and assistance for some ministerials.

(xv) We identified ASEM working methods for which we are unable to verify whether they were applied properly or not. These include the role of ASEM Coordinators, the 'regular' contacts between embassies of ASEM countries and the roles of the three ASEM gatherings closely connected to the ASEM summits (AEBF, ASEP, and AEPF). There is some doubt about the representativeness of the AEPF which seems more a gathering of (self-selected) NGOs. It appears less easy than expected to understand the role of the AEBF, as little publicity is given and no permanent information, let alone, positions and background papers can be traced.

5.2 Policy recommendations

We offer a few policy recommendations below. However, once the previous empirical analysis is seen in context and considered against the steady characteristics of ASEM for a period as long as 18 years, one has to first accept that the options to recommend changes are extremely constrained. Many previous attempts to improve efficiency and lower the intensity of efforts of 'coordination' have been attempted since Seoul (2000): some have stranded or failed, whilst other ones now seem to work (e.g. host to host summit cooperation). It should also be noted that it is not easy to identify other international gatherings of many countries, represented consistently by the highest political leaders, that ASEM can be compared with. Even the comparison with OSCE (on security and transparency, as well as good practices in elections) and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) prompts mixed reactions from the wide ASEM membership and opinion shapers, let alone, the mere idea of inspecting how the OECD works and what one might learn from it. The usual phrase is that ASEM is therefore 'unique'. Indeed, it is unique, but should this be regarded as a virtue or is its uniqueness in the way of its longer-run credibility and attractiveness?

Our recommendations are the following:

I. For today's ASEM, no need of reform

The core function of ASEM works. For all the practical problems at the level of officials which ASEM 'coordination' has apparently failed to resolve even after many attempts, it is nonetheless critical never to confuse this with the overall mission of ASEM: maintain, develop and widen the scope of Asia- Europe (in a wider sense) interaction and exchange between political leaders, as well as ministers in their wake, supplemented by many other substantive encounters of a more specialised nature. As long as the nature of ASEM lies in the evolving dialogue process itself between Asia (writ large) and Europe, there is no need to reform ASEM.

II. Beware: not having ASEM would have political and diplomatic costs

The ASEM mission has been lived up to, also since the Helsinki ASEM Summit of 2006. Whatever criterion one employs to substantiate this conclusion, the inference is positive. ASEM Summits remain a useful forum for some 50 political leaders from Asia (writ large) and Europe (a little wider than the EU-28) to discuss relatively freely and keep channels open for exchange on many issues in three broad pillars, including sensitive issues of 'high politics'. Not having ASEM would have made such approaches more cumbersome or in any case more

fragmented, possibly creating lingering suspicions or perpetuating a lack of mutual understanding. Preventing these problems, obstacles or inhibitions is precisely the paramount motive why, in 1995/6, ASEM was initiated. Furthermore, ASEM has become more mature and its agenda more predictable with a large number of 'regular' ASEM meetings, at ministerial and other levels, thereby usefully complementing ASEM summitry. This overriding inference about the prevailing mission of ASEM and its intensified and multi-layered implementation – from summits to whatever other encounters on a regular basis – should always be kept in mind whenever ASEM is critically discussed. Dismissing ASEM because it does not produce 'results' and 'hence' would be a waste of time, disregards the intangible but crucial benefits of ASEM. Not having ASEM anymore would be costly.

III. Nearing 20 years of ASEM justifies a joint study on alternative ASEM designs.

Critical discussion about ASEM is in principle a sound form of engagement and ought to be encouraged in all ASEM quarters and countries. If the object is the ASEM of today, having proven itself over 18 years, the objectives of proposing changes leading to improvement are by definition rather constrained. If the objectives of an assessment express preferences of making ASEM more 'effective' in problem solving, rather than mere exchanges of policy views, they would lead to a different ASEM than the ASEM of today. So far, there is little doubt that political leaders in this huge, loose and diversified grouping do not have any desire to go beyond the ASEM of today. This should not be read as excluding that a major effort, e.g. by independent think-tanks of Asia (writ large) and Europe working together, of creating a convincing rationale for redesigning ASEM would not be worth its while. It almost certainly is. Both the deepened mutual trust and the more mature Asia-Europe relationship provide a very different background than in the mid-1990s. Also in terms of economic development and geopolitics, the context of Asia-Europe relations has drastically changed. The 20th anniversary of ASEM in 2016 seems to the authors to be an excellent occasion to organise a profound reflection on alternative designs of ASEM, stimulated first by independent thinkers.

IV. Getting more value out of ASEM: exercise better ownership

The fundamental problem of ASEM might be its 'ownership'. ASEM is a large 'collective' and hence it risks to suffer from typical 'collective action' problems. All governments 'are' ASEM, yet, nobody seems to 'own' ASEM, with the remit or responsibilities that come with it. In a way, it is admirable that ASEM works, despite its possibly fragile incentive structure. Therefore, one vital route to cement and ascertain ASEM's viability, is to reflect seriously about how to increase the 'ownership' of ASEM. There are essentially two forms of ownership which could be addressed to some extent. The 'higher level' ownership problem is expressed in the little reported question of attendance of non-summit activities, usually solved by 'peer pressure'. This points to the fragility of having a loose engagement, without any prospect of tangible 'outcomes'. In other cases, there is a phenomenon sometimes called 'ASEM tourism' where successive meetings are held without much quality. It is exceedingly difficult to assess these invisible costs of a lack of ownership. However, it would leave a considerable untapped potential of ASEM. One could initiate better structures to obtain greater value-added. The various sectorial SOMs might be transformed into, or delegate tasks to, 'working parties' or designated ASEM committees. Chairs could rotate (always in Asia-Europe pairs, of course)

every two or three years, work programmes may be published and pursued, all with explicit encouragement about (ASEM!) publications and other results and their dissemination via the ASEM Infoboard, the EEAS website and otherwise. Such working parties may commission studies and reports and even reach consensus about e.g. best-practices in certain policy-areas which, again, ought to be disseminated in an active way. The central guiding principle is that such ASEM activities generate (better prepared) benefits and indeed also for a wider public. That is namely what 'ownership' implies: managing the precious common 'asset' of ASEM activities in ways which yield more and more tangible results. Getting more out of ASEM on a continuous basis, without in any way constraining ASEM governments, is what it is all about. The 'lower level' ownership problem consists of the myriad of coordination and information weaknesses having plagued ASEM at the level of officials almost from the outset until today. One cannot seriously argue that such matters, nitty-gritty as they are but nonetheless indispensable, imply a degree of commitment that goes beyond 'ASEM' as a loose grouping. Or that they constrain government in any serious way. Or that they are costly. The core problem here is not difficult to resolve. It is all about ownership once again. Ownership will have to come from the top layers of the hierarchy in a simple but plain fashion: an instruction from the Summit and a practical follow-up with public reporting.

V. ASEM can play a useful role of information mediator for mega-FTAs

ASEM can play a cautious, constructive role in strategic discussions on world trade and investment. Precisely because it is neither necessary nor feasible to agree on operational conclusions, to be laid down in legal commitments, Asia-Europe exchanges have a potential for gathering broad support for selective WTO initiatives, be they multilateral or plurilateral. This could be built up from conferences and technical dialogues, and eventually reach the EMM. As there is no need to define a 'mandate' for such WTO activities, there are no tactical constraints for ASEM member countries or the EU as a group: it could be pure win-win. In addition, ASEM is uniquely well-placed for bridging information gaps between ongoing mega-FTA negotiations (RCEP, TPP and TTIP), given that ASEM membership overlaps partially with TPP, RCEP, TTIP and APEC. Following from such information exchanges, it is conceivable to engage eventually in confidence building measures between these three partially overlapping trade groupings in the making, on a voluntary basis. These could include principles of regulatory cooperation, as already discussed in OECD and APEC circles, as well as broad guidelines on standards at world level. This idea of the three mega-FTAs 'reaching out' to third countries could be underlined, without constraining negotiators in detail.

Annexes

Table A1

ASEM Summits: other topics, classified to pillars

no	Political (pillar 1)	Economic (pillar 2)	Cultural/peoples (pill. 3)
1	Asia/Europe closer		
2		ageing	
3		biodiversity	
4	disarmament		
5		Environment (various)	
6		Finance ministers	
7		Global fin. crisis	
8		Green economy	
9		ICT, eCommunications	
10		International economic situation	
11		Infrastructure & dev. t	
12	Iraq		
13	Israel/Palestine		
14		Least developed countries	
15		migration	
16	Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons		
17	North Africa		
18		Nuclear safety	
19	(partnership) for peace & stability		
20	People to people, here, for politicians such as governors/mayors, parliamentarians		Peoples to peoples interaction, Asia-Europe people Forum
21	Piracy at sea		
22		Regional development	
23	Regional integration for peace	Regional integration for economic development	
24		Ministers for SMEs	
25		Social safety net	
26	Timor		
27		tourism	
28		Transport (ministers)	
29		Water resource man.t	

Notes : several topics have been grouped together such as 'environment', 'finance ministers' and 'regional integration'; this table is complementary to Table 1, main text.

Table A2**ASEM FMMs: other topics, classified to pillars**

no	Political (pillar 1)	Economic (pillar 2)	Cultural/peoples (pillar 3)
1			ASEF
2			Cultures /civilisations
3		Cyber security	
4		Danube & Mekong basins cooperation	
5		Disaster relief & management	
6		Other (than in Table 1) economic cooperation	
7		Sustainable development conference	
8		Education & training	
9		Ministers for SMEs	
10		Energy security	
11		Finance ministers meeting	
12		Commodity price fluctuations, worldwide	
13		Food security	
14		Water management and supply security	
15		Global econ. / fin/. Crisis and the G8	
16		Health security	
17		Human resource development, ASEF rectors' conference, ASEF higher education	
18	Human rights dialogue		
19		IMF and WB reform, G20	
20			Interfaith dialogue
21		International & regional development	
22	Iraq		
23	Israeli /Palestine conflict, Middle East		
24		Labour & employment	
25	Libya		
26		migration	
27		Multilateral trade and universal ASEM WTO membership	

28	multilateralism	multilateralism	
29	UN reform		
30	Myanmar		
31	Non-proliferation & disarmament		
32	Non-traditional security challenges		
33	Nuclear safety		
34	Piracy at sea		
35		Regional development	
36		Regional integration	
37		Science & technology	
38		Social safety nets	
39	Syria		
40	Korean peninsula		
41	Western Balkans		
42		Transport ministers (etc.)	

43 Doha Development Round

Note : Several topics have been grouped together, such as : global economic crisis, IMF & WB reform, Israeli / Palestine conflict and water management.

Table A3**Helsinki Summit, direct follow-ups**

No	par	Decision (quote)	Calendar Events
1.	5	Transition to democracy in Myanmar, following assurances given in ASEM 5 Hanoi	
2.	12	'value of informal Human Rights seminars' of ASEM	CAM 2007
3.	14	'appreciating ...ongoing ...ASEM cooperation on counter-terrorism'...; 'endorsed recommendations of ASEM conferences on counter –terrorism'	JAP 2007
4.	15	Welcomes positive outcomes of first ASEM Prosecutors –Gen, meeting..; continue their cooperation	
5.	21	'called on Economic Ministers' meeting to convene at an early date.. to review Hanoi Declaration on CEP'	Only 10 th SOMTI, POR Dec 07; 11 th SOMTI in SLOVE
6.	21	'consider further action under TFAP and IPAP'	Seminar on car regulations FRA **; RT investment agencies, CHI Oct 08
7.	21	'progress made in the customs area'	9 th (06) and 10 th (07)meeting customs procedures ; 7 th customs Commissioners (07); customs matters 08
8.	21	AEBF and ASEM TI activities	Idem ; AEBF during summit ; 2 conferences on economic integration (both 2008); 1 st ministerial on SMEs ; Fair for SMEs
9.	22	'strengthen ASEM financial cooperation'	Deputies meetings 07 and 08 in KOR; ministers KOR 08
10.	23	'sustain substantive ASEM dialogue on Labour /employment'	Prep. (07) Meeting of Labour ministers ; 5 th and 6 th meeting of migration DGs (6 th KOR); SOM Labour SWI; 1 st ASEM Social Partners forum BEL 08 ; Labour ministers INDO 08
11.	24	'stressed the value of continued dialogue and exchange of best practices' in education and training	Prep. SOM Education, GER ; 1 st ASEM ministerial on education GER
12.	25	'enhance cooperation in the fields of innovation, science and technology between all ASEM partners'; importance of research connectivity in TEIN-2	ASEM ICT ministerial ; 2 nd ICT SOM BEL

13.	56	'need to carry on the ASEM dialogue on environmental issues'; next environmental ministers meeting in DEN, ASEM Oceans initiative and ASEM Environmental Forum all in text	Prep. (07) Meeting envir. Ministers, INDO; environm. Ministerial DEN ; ASEM Oceans In. , POR** [no Forum]
14.	28	'expressed their determination to respond to climate change through international cooperation' ; issued ASEM6 Declaration on Climate Change	ASEM (08) seminar on adaptation to climate change JAP
15.	30	Various on energy security	ASEM Forum on energy security, Hanoi 08
16.	32	'commitment to further promotion of interactions between the peoples of Asia and Europe' ; 'Cultural ministers to meet regularly from now on'	1 st conference on restoration of cultural heritage SPA ; 3 rd ASEM Cultural ministers MAL 08 ;
17.	33	'underline the importance of interfaith dialogue '	3 rd Dialogue CHI 07 ; 4 th Dialogue NET 08 ; 2 nd ASEM Youth Interfaith dialogue INDO 08
18	34	ASEF, securing its funding ; praising flagship activities linking ASEF to ASEM, people-to-people	Idem NET; 2 nd confer. Young political leaders DEN 07 ; ASEP5 Asia –Europe parliamentary partnership CHI 08 ; 7 th Asia-Europe Peoples Forum CHI 08
19	36	On ASEM future : Helsinki Declaration on Future of ASEM + important annexes ;	ASEM visibility & commun. Workshop BEL 07 ; open-ended workshop on ASEM7 doc.s INDO 08

Table A4

Follow-up activities of the Beijing ASEM summit

No.	par	Decision of summit	Activity in calendar
1.	8	Philippines offer 7 th Counter terrorism conference	PHIL June 2009 ; 8 th Brussels June 10
2.	19	1 st ASEM Forum on food security	VIE, July 10
3.	20	On CEP, "...deepen economic partnership... urged Econ Ministers to convene.. earliest.."	[no EconMM ; no SOMTI] ;
4.	20	TFAP & IPAP, AEBF and revitalize ASEM investment focal points	7 distinct meetings on customs issues (TFAP); AEBF in Brussels Oct 08 ; [no action in IPAP]
5.	22	'enhanced cooperation on...ICT and international standards..'	ASEM ICT workshop Laos Dec 08 ; ICT empowerment on INDO, Oct 09 ; workshop Information Society, MAL Dec 09 ; ASEM Forum ICT research, INDO July 10
6.	23	"..action plans adopted in SMEs Ministerial.."	ASEM Forum Green growth & SMEs, KOR May 10
CHI 7.	25	Welcomed Lithuania organizing the 1 st Transport ministerial	Prep Transport , Friends Group CHI March 09 ; 1 st ministerial Transport LIT Oct 09
8.	25	Welcomes Romania organizing the 1 st ministerial on Migration	7 th ASEM DG of immigration, FRA Nov 08 ; 8 th INDI Dec 09
9.	28, 32	Commitment to resolve issues of climate change ; Beijing Declaration on Sustainable development	ASEM Sustainable development conference, Manila April 09 ; 2 nd ASEM sustainable development conference, INDO May 10 ; 7 th Asia-Europe environmental Forum GER Sep 10 ; Asia-Europe addressing climate change, VIE Sep 10
10.	29	Welcome Brunei organising workshop on climate change & biodiversity in tropical rainforests	ASEM workshop climate change & biodiversity in tropical forests, BRU Jan 10
11.	30.	Energy, environment & development – energy efficiency ; need to develop ...projects among ASEM partners to promote low-carbon economy	1 st ASEM ministerial on energy security BEL June 09 ; ASEM Eco-City network CHI Sep 10
12.	31	'share common interest in strengthening the social dimension of globalisation'	High Level ASEM CSR conference, well-being of

			ASEM workforce, GER March 09; workshop 'social protection floor', FRA Sep 10 ; ASEM Employment High Level Forum BEL March 10
13.	35	ASEM Culture Ministerial should be held regularly ; also ASEM Tourism Forum matters here	ASEM conference Diversity of cultural expressions VIE Dec 08 ; 1 st ASEM Cultural & Arts Festival CHI Sep 09 ; 3 Prep. Meetings for ministerial ; 4 th ASEM Culture ministerial POL 10
14.	36	Keeping the good momentum in ASEM Interfaith Dialogue	Interfaith Cultural Youth camp THAI Feb 09; 5 th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue KOR Sep 09 ; 6 th Interfaith Dialogue SPA April 10
15.	38	2 nd Educational ministerial in Vietnam ; launch of TEIN3	1 st ASEM rectors conference GER Oct 08 ; SOMedu Prep meeting; 2 nd ASEM Educational ministerial VIE May 09
16.	39	Commitment to cooperate in... human rights	9 th informal Human Rights seminar FRA Feb 09 ; 10 th informal Human Rights seminar PHIL July 10
17.	40	Cooperate on global health security ; ASEM initiative on pandemic influenza ; ASEM workshop on emerging diseases linked to climate change	ASEM workshop on emerging diseases linked to climate change VIE Nov 09
18.	44	'institutional building of ASEM...'; issue-based leadership	ASEM seminar on Asia Europe cooperation JAP March 10 ; ASEM conference on Asia Europe relations BEL July 10 ; 6 th ASEP (Parliamentary Partnership) BEL Sep 10 ; AEPF (Peoples Forum) BEL Oct 10
19.	45	SOM tasked with 'greater visibility of ASEM ; special SOM meeting	ASEM workshop Enhancing ASEM visibility VIE April 10

Note : ASEM summit decisions, the follow-up of which cannot be verified, include (inter alia) (i) ASEM vows to contribute to the Afghan compact (para 11), (ii) support for Lao WTO membership (para 17), (iii) continued assistance to countries in need of disaster relief (par 5).

Table A5

Follow-up activities after the Brussels ASEM summit

No	par	Decision (quote)	activity
1.	13	SOM to convene an informal meeting identifying environmentally friendly, resource-efficient and clean technologies (scope & range)	SOMTI BEL Febr 11 ; ASEM SMEs Eco-innovation Centre, KOR Febr 11 ; ASEM seminar on fuels for cars, PHIL Nov 11
2.	14	ASEM customs DGs welcome activities, further stepping up this kind of cooperation ; TFAP/IPAP + AEBF + IPR dialogue	5 th ASEM WG on customs matters, NET Apr 11 ; 9 th ASEM Customs DGs, THAI Oct 11 ; ASEM invest. & finance conference (IPAP), INDI Dec 10 ; [no IPR dialogue]
3.	16	Establishing a Transport & infrastructure action plan for ‘missing links’ and removing bottlenecks, by ASEM Transport ministerial	2 nd ASEM Transport ministerial, CHI Oct 11 ; [Eurasian land bridge conference, PAK, postponed again]
4.	19	ASEM cooperation on food security policies	ASEM High Level conference on food security policies, THAI, May 2011
5.	24	Migrant labour & shared benefits of legal migration	9 th DG conference on migratory flows, BEL ; 10 th DG conference on migratory flows, MONG
6.	27	Further sharing of experiences on ‘social protection floor’	ASEM social safety net Forum, VIE Apr 11
7.	31	Ministers of labour (in Leiden gathering) to further develop common strategies and to implement them (incl. dialogue among social partners)	3 rd ASEM Labour/employment ministerial, NET Dec 10 ; ASEM workshop on occupational safety & health, INDO Oct 11; ASEM High Level Forum on Employment and social policy, VIE Nov 11 ; 4 th ASEM Labour/employment ministers, VIE Oct 12
8.	35	Climate change ; exchange best practices on energy efficiency and renewable energy	[see item 1, para 13]; ASEM Green Growth

		between developed and developing ASEM partners	Forum, VIE Oct 11 ; ASEM symposium on sustainable forest management, CHI June 11
9.	37	China will establish an ASEM water resources R & D centre in Hunan	ASEM water resources R & D centre, CHI Aug 11
10.	40	'Leaders committed to intensify ASEM cooperation' in many aspects of resource efficiency and carbon markets, etc.	4 th environmental ministerial MONG May 12
11.	42	'tasked SOM with the establishment of partnership programmes on sustainable development with clear objectives' , also 'more results oriented'	
12.	45	'increasing the sharing of intelligence among ASEM partners....to tracking down and interdict the financial means which fund piracy operations'	
13.	50	'ASEM should continue to disseminate best practices in support of the UN ... counter terrorism strategy through annual ASEM conferences'	9 th ASEM counter terrorism conference, INDO Dec 11
14.	53	'intensified cooperation within ASEM ... on risk assessment, risk reduction strategies... (etc.) ' on natural disasters, disaster relief and post-disaster recovery	ASEM/ASEF meeting on space-based information for disaster preparedness and recovery in S.E. Asia, SIN Sep 11
15.	55	'wish to extend their [= ASEM] cooperation in fora such as the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly 3 rd ctee'	11 th ASEM seminar human rights, CHI Nov 11 ; 12 th Human rights seminar, KOR June 12
16.	56	'tasked SOM to pursue .. [] ..to strengthen mutual cooperation in ... human rights in line with AICHR's purpose'	AICHR visit to Europe, May 11
17.	57	'ongoing ASEM initiatives constitute significant contributions to the enrichment of Asian and European cultures and faiths and to the deepening of Asia-Europe relations'	7 th ASEM Interfaith dialogue, PHIL Oct 11
18.	67	ASEM partners to work together for early entry into force of 3 rd Protocol amending the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South East Asia ; EU acceding to the TAC	(see item 13, Table A6)
19.	76	SOM tasked to take the parallel dialogues (Parliamentary, peoples, business) into account and make suggestions for appropriate action	9 th ASEM peoples forum, LAO Oct 12 ; 13 th AEBF, LAO Nov 12 ; 7 th ASEP LAO Oct 12

20.	77	Strong leaders' support for the establishment of the ASEM Education Secretariat in Bonn coordinating ASEM educational activities ; announced ministerial	2 nd ASEM rectors conference, KOR Oct 10 ; ASEM conference on quality assurance in education, CYP Dec 10 ; 1 st ASEM vocational education symp., CHI Jan 11 ; ASEM EduSOM, DEN Jan 11 ; 3 rd educational ministerial, DEN May 11 ; ASEM seminar on regional quality assurance, GER Jul 11; 2 nd ASEM Business/University Forum, GER Nov 11;; 2 nd ASEM vocational education symp. GER Feb 12 ; ASEM Forum on life-long learning, DEN May 12 ; 3 rd ASEM rectors conference, NET Sep 12 ; 4 th ASEM quality assurance in higher education, FRA Oct 12
21.	79	Welcomes 4 th phase of the Trans-Eurasian Information Network (on connectivity of researchers/education) and the establishment of "a" Cooperation Centre by Korea, with participating ASEM partners paying their share	Trans-Eurasian Cooperation Centre, KOR Dec 11 ; 3 rd phase ASEM-Duo fellowships, KOR Dec 11
22.	80	'encouraged intensification of work' on culture in ASEM, following the 4 th ASEM Culture ministerial	ASEM seminar on conservation of timber & lime buildings, MAL March 11; 5 th ASEM Culture ministerial, INDO Sep 11
23.	83	After noting the increased visibility of ASEM, leaders called upon all ASEM countries to increase efforts to and promote public awareness (use ASEM logo, also for Summits etc.)	
24.	84	On ASEM working methods ; host of upcoming ASEM summit be part of the coordination mechanism 'from summit to summit' ; tasked SOM with finding light, cost-effective technical support enhancing ASEM	

		work	
25.	84	Tasked SOM to submit recommendations to next FMM on improving existing cooperation mechanisms	

Note : Based on ASEM Calendar of events and on ASEM Activities matrix, follow-up of ASEM 8 (annex to FMM June 2011)

Table A6

Follow-up activities after the Vientiane ASEM Summit, 2012 – 2014

no	par	Decision (quote)	Follow-up (Calendar, etc.)
1.	6, 7, 9	“ stronger and more dynamic partnership in addressing the current global crisis”, “need for Asia and Europe to further strengthen their economic and financial cooperation, including capacity building”, (e.g.) “” financial supervision, regional financial arrangements and roles of multilateral surveillance as key remedies”	ASEF’s Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF, as support to ASEM Finance ministers), BEL (Jan 13) ; AEEF, CHI Oct 13
2.	12	“ strengthen ASEM collaboration and coordination on WTO-related issues”	Accession of Russia and Lao to WTO
3.	14	Re-affirmation of trade and investment cooperation in ASEM ; IPAP & TFAP ; AEBF ; welcome the trade facilitation action plan, made by ASEM Customs DGs	10 th Customs DG meeting, AUSTRIA Oct 13
4.	16	ASEM connectivity and transport issues ; continued support for public-private partnerships in infrastructure	
5	21	On the green economy in ASEM ; welcomes establishment of Green Climate Fund secretariat in Korea	Workshop to foster Green Business of SMEs, INDO 2014
6	23	“ launch a new ASEM initiative of Sustainable Development Dialogue, ... sequence of seminars (approval by SOM)”	Seminar on Biodiversity Conservation in tropical eco-systems, BRU May 13; ASEM seminar on capacity building on air pollution prevention and control, CHI Oct13; workshop on managing forests in a sustainable manner, SLOVE 2014
7	31	On nuclear safety ; Lithuania to host ASEM seminar in 2013	2 nd seminar of nuclear safety, LIT Nov 13
8	34	ASEM on piracy at sea ; excellent (naval) cooperation of the ASEM partners ; strengthening cooperation	
9	35	ASEM on food security ; areas of future food security ASEM cooperation identified in Food Security conference (THAI) of 2011	ASEM food safety week, CHI Oct 14
10	37	“ reinforce collective efforts to promote sustainable usage and management of water resources”	ASEM seminar on water and river basin management, VIE Mar 13; seminar on urbanisation and sustainable management of water

			resources, CHI Apr 14 ; 3 rd ASEM sustainable development seminar on water management, ROM 14 ; ASEM seminar on waste-water management, SIN 2014 ; Sustainable water management through ASEM partnerships, (proposed INDI & DEN)
11	38, 39	“ strengthen collective preparedness and response to disasters and to reduce losses..” ; hold the 1 st ASEM High Level meeting on disaster management and relief ; intensified cooperation between ASEM national and regional disaster /relief centres	ASEM High Level meeting on disaster prevention and relief, VIE Nov 13 ; ASEM conference on technology & innovation for disaster risk reduction, PHI Sep 14 ; Innovations in technology for disaster rescue, INDI 2014
12	41, 43	Human rights ; interfaith dialogue	13 th Informal human rights seminar DEN Oct 13 ; 14 th human rights seminar VIE 2014; 8 th interfaith dialogue, RUS Jul 14
13	46	ASEAN & EU in ASEM ; EU accession to Treaty of Amity in South East Asia	Accession in CAM Jul 12
14	52	People-to-people ;	8 th ASEP and 9 th AEPF in Brussels, Oct 14
15	53, 54	Human resources / education/research networks ; 4 th phase of TEIN; many activities supported by ASEF and ASEM EDU secretariat in Bonn	4 th ASEM Education ministers meeting, MAL May 13 ; 4 th ASEM rectors conference, SIN Jul 13
16	55	Following the 4 th Labour /Employment ministers meeting of 2012 emphasizing e.g. social protection	Seminar on youth employment promotion, CHI Nov 13; ASEM seminar on Social Dialogue, BEL Mar 14
17	57	ASEM on culture ; recommended an Asia Europe Creative City network	6 th ASEM Culture ministers meeting, NET Oct 14; two ASEF experts meetings on “ Heritage cities ” and on “ creative economy ” (preparing subjects for Culture ministers in 2014) MYA Jun 13 & VIE Dec 13
18	59	On migration, legal and illegal ;	12 th conference of DGs of

			immigration and management of migratory flows, JAP Oct 13
19	63, 64	Welcomes ASEM Chairman Support Group ; continue to explore working methods, call for still better ASEM visibility in ASEM countries	ASEM Dialogue Facility to commission survey report on follow-ups and implementation of ASEM working methods for SOM April 2014

Note : based on the Chair statement in Vientiane and annexes 2, 3 and 4 of FMM Chair statement in Dehli, Nov. 2013

Table A7

ASEM working methods adopted since the ASEM 6 Summit (Helsinki, 2006)

Working methods	Areas of Cooperation	Organisation	Coordination	Visibility
ASEM Working Methods and Institutional Mechanisms (ASEM 6, Helsinki, 2006)	<p>1) Clustered issues and initiatives with cross-dimensional linkages btw 3 pillars; summits and FMMs shall provide political guidance to update on the orientations of the clusters.</p> <p>2) Inaugurate the “Issue-based leadership” mechanism.</p>	Increase effectiveness and efficiency of ministerial meetings; establish additional sectorial SOM.	<p>1) Regular meetings for coordinators ahead of ministerials or to make it Ministerial-level Coordinators’ meetings;</p> <p>2) Central role of the hosts of next summit and FMM, and to complement the leading role of the Coordinators;</p> <p>3) Set up ASEM Virtual Secretariat (AVS), for technical assistance to Coordinators;</p> <p>4) Regular contacts btw ASEM embassies.</p>	<p>1) Develop a public comm. strategy to disseminate ASEM meeting results;</p> <p>2) An ASEM page on all Partners’ MFA websites, incl. links to ASEM, Infoboard, etc.;</p> <p>3) Important roles of AEBF, ASEP for outreach & closer involvement of parliaments, academia and civil society for visibility;</p> <p>4) ASEM for more public awareness of ASEM initiatives and media attention.</p>
Non-paper on Follow-up to ASEM 7 (ASEM 7, Beijing, 2008)	A matrix of ASEM areas of cooperation (incl. the future of ASEM), leaders’ instructions and actions planned.			
Non-paper on Moving ASEM from a Dialogue to a “Partnership” (FMM 9, Hanoi, 2009)			Set-up of an ad hoc one-year ASEM 8 Coordination Office, to 1) provide info and admin support; 2) report to the Coordinators;	

			<p>3) support ASEM visibility, incl. events;</p> <p>4) transmit to ASEF good info of official pillar of ASEM.</p>	
<p>Non-paper on ASEM Working Methods (FMM 10, Gödöllő, 2011)</p>			<p>Set-up of ASEM Chairman Support Group (ACSG), to help ASEM coordination move forward by providing technical support, such as keeping up-to-date calendar of events, contact list, ASEM Intranet, etc.. The Asia-Europe Foundation may be a location for hosting the Intranet server.</p>	

Table A8

Priorities for substantive Asia-Europe cooperation identified by AECF 2000

Pillars of dialogue	Priorities
Political dialogue ⁷⁰	regional and international issues of common interest (incl. ASEAN-EU Dialogue, the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences); commitment to the series of UN declarations and programmes, UN reform, disarmament; welfare of women and children; human resources development; community health care improvement; food security and supply; environmental issues for sustainable development; migratory flows; transnational crime (incl. international terrorism and piracy); racism and xenophobia.
Economic and financial cooperation	EMM & SOMTI; WTO; TFAP & IPAP; AEBF; high technology sectors of common interest (incl. e-commerce); transport; energy; environmental engineering;
	global financial issues (incl. the international financial architecture); cooperation (incl. technical assistance, exchange of expertise, monitoring of trends); macro-economic policy consultation; financial supervision and regulation; anti money-laundering; customs cooperation;
	science & technology; networking and exchanges among researchers and policy-makers in priority fields of common interest;
	sustainable development concerning important socio-economic issues.
Dialogue of cultures and civilisations	education (incl. student, academic and information exchanges, inter-university cooperation, electronic networking between schools, exploring mutual recognition of degrees and licences, ASEM Education Hubs, the Asia-Europe University); protection and promotion of cultural heritage; networking in the social sciences, arts, humanities and sports; broad-based dialogue and networking among all sectors of society (incl. parliamentary representatives); dissemination of information about ASEM.

As noted in chapter 2, the AECF allocation of themes or topics to the three pillars (also reflected in the ASEM Vademecum of 2001) is at the very least questionable, if not odd. For present purposes of studying the working methods as agreed by ASEM leaders, we shall nonetheless adopt this allocation and analyse developments since Helsinki.

⁷⁰ On the basis of paragraphs 5,6,7 of the Bangkok Chair's Statement, as is prescribed by Point III.9, AECF 2000.

Table A9**List of Issue-based Leadership**⁷¹

Issues	Interested Partners
Development of SMEs	China, Korea, Germany
Inter-cultural Dialogue	Korea
Culture/Tourism	China, Vietnam, Thailand
Education/Human Resources	Germany, Vietnam
Pandemic Control	China, UK, Japan (Avian Influenza)
	Vietnam (HIV/AIDs)
Transportation	China, Lithuania
Labour/Employment	Germany
Climate Change	Japan, Poland, Denmark
Interfaith and Counter-Terrorism	Indonesia, the Philippines, Spain
Energy Security/Energy Efficiency	Singapore, the Philippines
Food Security	Thailand
International Migration	the Philippines
Finance	Spain
Life Long Learning	Denmark

Table A10**ASEM sectorial SOMs in the ASEM Work Programmes (WP), 2006-2014**

Sectoral SOMs	WP 2006 – 2008	WP 2008 – 2010	WP 2010 – 2012	WP 2012 – 2014
TFAP	√	√	√	√
Culture			√	√
Education		√	√	√
Finance	√	√	√	√
ICT			√	
Labour and Employment		√		
Migratory flows	√	√	√	√
SOMTI		√		

⁷¹ Annex III, Chair's Statement of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting Beijing, 24-25 October 2008.

Table A11**ASEM sectorial SOMs held since the Helsinki Summit, 2006-2013**

Sectorial SOMs	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
TFAP	√	√	√	√	√	√	?	?
Culture				√	√	√	√	?
Customs	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Education			√	√		√	?	√
Environment		√						
Finance	√	√	√				√	?
ICT	√	√					?	?
Labour and Employment	√	√	√				?	?
Migratory flows	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
SOMTI		√	√			√	?	?
Transport			√	√				

Table A12**ASEM sectorial ministerial meetings held since the Helsinki Summit, 2006 – 2013**

Sectoral Ministerials	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
CultMM			√		√		√	
EduMM			√	√		√		√
Energy				√				
EnviMM		√					√	
FinMM	√		√		√		√	?
ICT	√						?	?
Labour and Employment	√		√		√		√	?
SMEs		√					?	?
Transport				√		√		

Provisional Outline

Analysis Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM): process and future (EuropeAid/132672/C/SER/MULTI)

Stocktaking and analysis of ASEM: outcomes and impact, conclusions and policy advice

Jacques Pelkmans and Weinian Hu, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)

I. Objective

The overall objective of the research is to provide input for the improvement of the ASEM process and to support achieving greater and more tangible impact of cooperation among ASEM partners. The research will address the challenges and constraints identified by the Symposium on “Towards Peace and Prosperity in Asia and Europe: the Need for a Dynamic ASEM” (April 2013, Yangzhou, China) as follows:

1. Imbalance of cooperation among the three pillars;
2. Lack of concrete actions and follow up;
3. Working methods;
4. Weak ASEM linkages with other fora and the low public awareness and visibility of ASEM.

The specific objective of the research is to prepare an analysis of the ASEM process, implementation and impact since 2007 to date. The research will provide a stocktaking of the ASEM summits after the Helsinki ASEM6 Summit and analyse the implementation, outcomes and impact.

II. Structure

The core input of the research will be an empirical analysis, a stock-taking of the discussion topics and decisions taken under each of the three pillars, and to assess whether there has been subsequent action to implement such “decisions”.

The results of the empirical analysis and the insights obtained from selected interviews with key ASEM stakeholders, e.g. officials from Asian countries, EU officials and academics, as well as discussions of a few key themes emerging from the ASEM literature will form as the basis for policy recommendations and advice on how to improve the ASEM process and cooperation.

III. Stocktaking

A matrix will be prepared in order to assess whether decisions taken at the summit, foreign ministers’ meetings and sectorial ministers’ meetings are implemented by follow-up ASEM initiatives, as regular ministerials or other initiatives, or as a one-off event. Relevant ASEM documents, such as Summit chair’s statements, ministerial meeting declarations, etc. will be collected from ASEM infoboard, ASEM intranet, and the EEAS ASEM website. We have meanwhile concluded that these data do not fully overlap, and we shall try to remedy the discrepancies.

To assess outcome and impact of the implemented decisions, the research will differentiate and determine, for example, what a “topic” implies and what officials are requested to undertake if a “decision” is taken. Thus, it matters if a “decision” in ASEM is requested to include (a) an instruction (e.g. from the summit), (b) a date, location and a “plan”, (c) a clear announcement (without detail), and (d) an intention. As a result, a “follow-up” may be very different, when one has “regular” successive ASEM ministerial, from ad hoc ministerial or special events. One may have different views on what the term “impact” really means. We shall use “impact” as a useful follow-up in the ASEM process.

IV. the 2006 Helsinki Summit recommendations

The 2006 Helsinki Summit recommendations have given directions to focused areas for action and reinforced institutional mechanisms including ASEM working methods and institutional mechanisms. The research will assess how the recommendations have been translated into corresponding themes under the three pillars of ASEM cooperation, and whether the working methods have been respected by the ASEM officials.

V. Interviews

To complement the findings of the above-mentioned empirical analysis, selected interviews of key ASEM stakeholders will be carried out. Interviewees shall include seasoned Asian ASEM officials, accomplished scholars on ASEM cooperation in Asia and Europe as well as relevant EU officials working on ASEM.

VI. Key questions to reflect on

After our initial ASEM literature-reading since the kick-off meeting of the research project, the following key themes are identified which the research intends to address.

1. Agenda

ASEM has no specific agenda, but in the meantime it conducts a process of dialogue on all pertinent issues at both global and regional levels. With the change of time, nowadays there are many other regional and multilateral fora of cooperation, and ASEM may need to revisit the co-operation areas, trying to identify a more focused agenda in order to stay unique as a region-to-region dialogue forum.

2. Economic co-operation

There has been no economic ministers' meeting since the High Level Meeting within the Framework of the ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting in Rotterdam, in 2005.

It is observed that despite various multilateral and bilateral mechanisms for trade and investment relations existing nowadays, the ASEM framework remains unique for its characteristics of being non-contentious where, for example, partners may continue discussing economic issues which encounter deadlock or friction in other forums. Note also that under the ASEM framework small and developing Partners are able to discuss economic issues of their interest with the world's economic powers based on equal partnership.

Overall, Economic co-operation, the second pillar of the ASEM process, is unfavourably treated for lack of momentum, while ASEM partners have expressed a strong wish to relaunch and to revitalise the co-operation.

3. Small and developing countries' participation in the ASEM process

The ASEM process remains especially attractive to small and developing countries which are able to engage bigger countries in discussions based on equal partnership.

Participation of small and developing countries in the ASEM process is, however, not adequate. Budget constraints aside, there is also a question of lack of involvement in taking part in ASEM initiatives as a sponsor. The Helsinki Summit introduced the concept of "issue-based

leadership”, a dynamic approach by which small and developing countries could share experience and expertise in particular sectors with bigger countries to shepherd towards tangible outcomes, without being restricted by the lack of financial means.

There has been a couple of attempt to revive the issue-based leadership mechanism in order to benefit small and developing countries under the ASEM process, but to no avail. The research will try to find ways and means to improve on this.

4. Reflect on other regional forums’ co-operation models, such as APEC

ASEM bears certain resemblances to APEC. Among other things, there are more than 10 countries which are members of both organisations. However, it seems APEC emanates more dynamics and generates more resonance than ASEM. With a secretariat as a clearing house and administering funds for projects implementing leaders’ decisions, APEC delivers concrete results and tangible benefits. ASEM may be able to draw lessons from APEC’s modus operandi for an enhanced co-operation mechanism.

VII. Policy recommendations

After answering the above issues, finally, the research will provide recommendations and policy advice on how to improve the ASEM process and co-operation to make it a results-oriented mechanism bringing tangible benefits to the governments and peoples in Asia and Europe.