



Asia-Europe Meeting

**25!**  
YEARS



## ASIA-EUROPE MEETING

A unique informal platform  
for dialogue and cooperation  
between Asia and Europe



**ASEM: CONNECTING ASIA AND EUROPE SINCE 1996**





# What is ASEM?

An open and informal partnership working for peace, security, human rights and prosperity for all



The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is a **unique, informal platform** for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe on the big challenges of a fast-changing world, such as connectivity, trade and investment, climate change, but also broad security challenges such as counter-terrorism, migration, maritime security and cyber issues.

Bringing together **53 partners** from across Europe and Asia, ASEM is the main multilateral platform linking Europe and Asia with significant global weight: ASEM partners represent 68% of global trade, 60% of global population, 65% of global GDP and 75% of global tourism.

For more than 20 years, ASEM has been **the most comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe**, crossing hands across continents.

ASEM's main purpose is to **provide a platform** to foster political dialogue, strengthen economic cooperation and tackle global challenges together. In many respects, recent developments in the international landscape have increased the value of ASEM as a key building block for an open, cooperative and rules-based international system.

ASEM is conducted as an **informal and flexible process** on the basis of equal partnership, mutual respect and mutual benefit. It aims to **promote the exchange of ideas and best practices** and thus act as a breeding ground for new policy ideas. In short, ASEM is the most **influential comprehensive partnership** between Asia and Europe, boosting connectivity in all its dimensions between the two regions.

A unique  
multilateral,  
inter-regional  
framework to  
increase  
awareness,  
policy exchange  
and tangible  
cooperation  
between the Asian  
and European  
continents.



# How does ASEM work?

**ASEM works through meetings and activities organised at different levels.**



## **Summits**

Attended by **Heads of State and Government of the European and Asian countries**, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the ASEAN Secretary-General. They serve as the **highest level of decision-making** in the ASEM process, and are held every second year, alternating between Asia and Europe.

## **Foreign Ministers Meetings**

Attended by the **High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European and Asian countries** and the ASEAN Secretary-General. They have the responsibility for the **overall coordination** of the ASEM process and are a driving force of the ASEM political dialogue.

## **Ministerial Meetings**

**Economic, Finance, Environment, Culture, Transport, Labour and Employment, Education, Science and Technology, ICT, Small and Medium Enterprises** ministers meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual concern. Additional ministerial conferences are held irregularly on specific issues and areas that are not covered by the main ministerial meetings.

## **Senior Officials' Meetings**

bring together high-level civil servants from the **Foreign Ministries of all ASEM partners** for the overall coordination of the ASEM process. Sectoral SOMs are also held in preparation of the various Ministerial meetings.

## **Regular dialogues**

E.g. Customs General Directors' Meeting; Conference of General Directors of **Immigration**; Informal Seminar on **Human Rights**; Rectors' Conference; Mayors and Governors Meeting. Ad Hoc activities on **sustainable development, nuclear safety, disaster relief, biodiversity, youth, employment**, etc.

## **Activities and initiatives**

Are organised by **ASEM partners** on a wide range of **issues of mutual interest**. A full overview of all ASEM meetings can be found on the **ASEM InfoBoard**.



# ASEM is...



## **Informal**

ASEM provides an open forum for policy makers and officials to discuss political, economic or socio-cultural issues of common interest, complementing the work already being carried out in other bilateral and multilateral fora.

## **Equal partnership**

ASEM offers a platform to enhance understanding and awareness amongst its partners, through dialogue and cooperation on topics of mutual interest on the basis of equal partnership, mutual respect and benefit.

## **Open and evolutionary**

ASEM moves with the times, both in terms of issues addressed and with regard to membership.

## **Multi-dimensional**

ASEM covers a wide spectrum of topics between the two regions and devotes equal attention to political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

## **High-level and people-focused**

ASEM provides a platform for meetings of Heads of State and Government, ministers and senior officials.

However, ASEM also fosters people-to-people contacts between the two regions, such as exchanges between civil society representatives, youth representatives, experts in various domains, etc

**ASEM has no permanent secretariat. Foreign ministers and their senior officials have overall coordinating responsibility for the ASEM process. They are assisted by an informal group of coordinators (two from the Asian side – one each from the ASEAN and non-ASEAN group– and two from the European side – the European External Action Service (EEAS) as the permanent coordinator and the rotating EU Presidency).**



# ASEM covers...

ASEM covers a wide range of topics of common interest to Asia and Europe:



- Globalisation, competitiveness and structural changes in the global economy
- Connectivity: infrastructure and people-to-people links between the two regions
- Two-way trade and investment, business-to-business dialogue and cooperation in priority industrial sectors
- Non-proliferation, counterterrorism and cyber-security



- Sustainable development
- Climate change
- Environmental protection, water, energy and food security



- Intercultural dialogue
- Human rights
- Migration
- Culture and education
- Dialogue among parliaments and civil society



# The ASEM Family

## The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

(ASEF), based in Singapore, is an international, not-for-profit foundation, and acts as the only permanent Institution of ASEM. ASEF is charged with promoting cultural, intellectual and people-to-people contacts between the two regions.

## The Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP)

(ASEP) promotes cooperation between parliaments in Europe and Asia and offers parliamentarians an opportunity to influence the ASEM process.

## The Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF)

(AEBF) aims to enhance business-to-business dialogue and cooperation between the two regions and to provide opportunity for interaction between business and political leaders.



## The Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF)

is the 'grass roots' level of ASEM and serves as an interregional network of civil society and societal movements across Asia and Europe.

## The Asia-Europe Labour Forum (AELF)

consists of trade union centres that engage the ASEM process to make social justice and development central in the agenda of ASEM Ministers and Heads of State.

## The ASEM Cultural Festival

takes place each year in the sidelines of the Summits or the Foreign Ministers meetings to strengthen inter-cultural dialogue among ASEM partners.



# ASEM Milestones

**1994**

Singapore and France propose that an EU-Asia summit meeting be held, to consider how to build a new **partnership between the two regions.**

**1996**

The **first ASEM Summit** is held in Bangkok in March 1996, with 15 EU member states and 10 Asian countries participating, as well as the European Commission. Since then, the ASEM family has continued to grow through successive rounds of enlargement to 53 ASEM Partners today.

**2006**

ASEM celebrates its **10th anniversary** by adopting the **'Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM'**, reasserting ASEM's role as a catalyst in EU-Asia relations

**2016**

ASEM marks its 20th anniversary Summit in Mongolia, looking forward to the **challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

**2018**

On 18-19 October 2018, the EU hosts the 12th ASEM Summit under the title **'Global Partners for Global Challenges'** aiming to chart a common response to pressing global ages.

**2021**

ASEM celebrates its **25th anniversary**, reaffirming its role as the most comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe, **crossing hands across continents**



## Information about ASEM

The ASEM InfoBoard is a one-stop-shop for everything about ASEM, gathering information about ASEM, details on all its events and meetings, as well as key partnership documents.

[www.aseminfoboard.org](http://www.aseminfoboard.org)



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