

SHARE Policy Dialogue - Consultation Report: Higher Education Partnerships to Achieve the SDGs in Southeast Asia

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference ([WHEC2022](#))
[Section for Higher Education](#) | Division for Education 2030

Basic information

Date of consultation	29-31 March 2022
Location of consultation	Hybrid Event: Bangkok, Thailand & Online
Hosting organisation(s) (include webpage if available)	<p>The EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (EU SHARE) Programme (https://www.share-asean.eu/)</p> <p>Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Centre specialising in Higher Education and Development (RIHED)/SEAMEO RIHED (https://rihed.seameo.org/)</p> <p>The Education, Youth, and Sports Division, ASEAN Secretariat (EYSD ASEC) (https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/)</p> <p>UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO Bangkok (https://bangkok.unesco.org/)</p>
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Complete name, title, and affiliation of moderator(s)	<p>Ms. Porntip Kanjananiyot, Special Advisor to SEAMEO RIHED, Former Fulbright Thailand Executive Director</p> <p>Mr. Darren McDermott, EU SHARE Programme Team Leader</p> <p>Mr. Leighton Ernsberger, British Council Director for Education and English, East Asia</p> <p>Ms. Gillian Cowell, Portfolio Lead Gender and Inclusion, British Council</p> <p>Ms. Reka Tozsa, Senior Project Manager, Education Department, Asia-Europe Foundation</p> <p>Prof. Nopraenuwaj Janjira, Vice President for International Relations and Corporate, Communication, Mahidol University, Thailand</p> <p>Dr. Chai Lay Ching, Chair and Senior Lecturer, Young Scientists Network – Academy of Sciences Malaysia and University of Malaya, Malaysia</p> <p>Mr. Wesley Teter, Senior Consultant for Educational Innovation and Skills Development (EISD), UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education</p>

Language of consultation	English
Time spent in consultation (minutes)	Three sessions over three days, three hours each (540 min)
Number of participants	25 in person and 400+ online
Participant profiles (please, briefly describe the composition of the group)	Intergenerational Learners, Youth, Students, Private Sector, Regional and International Organisations specialising in higher education development, Civil Society, Scholars, Researchers, the ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth, and Sport Division (EYSD), SEAMEO RIHED, and the AUN are synergising their efforts for the realisation of a more harmonised higher education and sustainable future in Southeast Asia.
Countries represented by participants	Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vietnam
Stakeholder groups (please mark with an "x" as appropriate)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professors/ Researchers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students/Youth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Higher education managers/authorities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private sector
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGOs/civil society <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International organisations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy makers/government <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please, specify):

Which theme did you choose for this consultation?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on higher education | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 7: Financing higher education |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theme 2: Higher education and the SDGs | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 8: Data and knowledge production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 3: Inclusion in higher education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theme 9: International cooperation to enhance synergies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 4: Quality and relevance of programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 10: The futures of higher education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 5: Academic mobility in higher education | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please, specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 6: Higher education governance | |

Synthesis of contributions

Kindly provide a summary, synthesising and reflecting the ideas provided by all participants. There is no need to identify participants. Consultation reports should not exceed 1,200 **words**, including the responses to the three questions outlined below (consider a balance of approximately 400 words per response). If necessary, add attachments. Remember that question 1 is general, but questions 2 and 3 should refer to the specific theme you have chosen (see list in **Annex 1**).

Question 1: What should be the present and **future role** of higher education partnerships to favour wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies?

There is growing recognition in the region that Southeast Asia is not on track to reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This recognition has also renewed interest in the roles of higher education as a

public good and increased emphasis on higher education partnerships as an imperative for the wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies. There is need for more synergy among partners and stakeholders to drive greater human and social impacts while respecting diversity within the region, to look beyond socio-economic development outcomes and lessen the gaps while staying future relevant.

How this new role for higher education partnerships can be realised for the region of Southeast Asia will rely not only on strengthened commitment, but also on the articulation of shared goals as well as a common purpose among partners. There is also a need to ensure the SDGs are embedded in agreements, policies and guidelines and clearly spelled out for mutual benefit when embarking on new sustainability-driven projects in higher education. More impactful, more innovative, and more collaborative partnership models are needed to contribute to regional challenges and ensure a more sustainable future.

This also entails a need to be more open and interdisciplinary in focus through partnerships, to expand beyond bilateral agreements among higher education institutions and organisations and create new multidisciplinary teams and networks that can engage all stakeholders and encourage a diversity of voices, from the community, youth, policy makers, industry, civil society, international organisations, and the institutions and learners themselves to achieve the SDGs. The engagement of relevant and inclusive partnerships also has a clear potential to contribute to the development of wider networks where knowledge, resources and authentic learning can be leveraged and maximised for regional benefit.

In this view, the future role of higher education partnerships must go further, they must be more inclusive and equitable. A clear understanding of who the partnerships are for and who the beneficiaries are is also needed. To truly favour the wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies, higher education and knowledge of sustainable development must be for all. Higher education partnerships need to be poised to address this and contribute to more agile, resilient, and globally aware learners who have greater access to knowledge and a passion for peace, people, and our planet.

Question 2: What are the main **gaps and challenges** in relation to higher education partnerships to achieve the SDGs?

Several key challenges are presented in the context of Southeast Asia for higher education partnerships and international cooperation towards achieving the SDGs. While there is reason to question the prospects for continuity and commitment within partnerships, the dimension of inclusivity and the different meanings it can hold for the region, its diverse cultures, and higher education systems takes on special importance. Inclusivity can refer not only to the participation of the region itself and the active engagement of all countries, but also ensuring their representation and active involvement in projects throughout planning and implementation stages. Partnerships in higher education can help to ensure that today and tomorrow's challenges are met by an inclusive regional response. Secondly, we need to go deeper in terms of inclusivity to ensure that projects initiated consider gender diversity as well as the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. Third, we need to think of inclusivity in terms of the benefits accrued through partnership and broaden the scope of beneficiaries to ensure the engagement of communities and their stakeholders.

Another key challenge for the region in achieving the SDGs will be the articulation of shared partnership goals and a common vision through which to reorient work and move forward together with stakeholders. This will require promoting a universal understanding surrounding the SDGs, an understanding that the goals, while

global and interconnected, can be addressed at individual levels and reflect local contexts. A further challenge for the region's higher education sector is a gap in data availability. This not only affects the possibilities for generating understanding and evidence-based policy but also impacts research and possible actions to take. Data collection alone, however, will not support sustainable outcomes. Deeper understanding and analysis will be needed if our aspiration is to prepare learners with mindsets for lifelong learning for the future of work, and capable of solving global challenges.

There is, however, a final challenge to put policy into practice. Concerted political will is necessary in this process, alongside partnerships, to bring about and achieve a broad alignment of understanding and trust to work towards a unified vision and ensure more effort is made to engage the region inclusively and equitably in recognition of mutual benefit. More work will also be needed to raise awareness and achieve greater consensus among partners, higher education institutions, governments and learners before shared understandings can align with common goals and visions. Currently, in Southeast Asia, there is a lack of integrated structures at the regional level to facilitate this process and ensure that the work of partners, governments, institutions, and stakeholders can reach common goals together.

Question 3: What needs to **change** or be **created** to face these challenges **within** and/or outside higher education institutions?

To address these challenges and move forward, the development of integrated structures at the regional level are needed to facilitate international cooperation, challenge fixed mindsets, and engender a sense of belonging on a regional scale among all stakeholders. This is being met through a dynamic and ongoing process that is inclusive, innovative, and equitable, encouraging partnership not only within the region of Southeast Asia but also with other regions to share learning and perspectives. This process underway in Southeast Asia is to develop a common space in higher education, a space with a common regional vision, common goals, and common understanding to lead to a more sustainable future and more resilient region. Partnerships in higher education are needed in this process alongside the region's governments and stakeholders to ensure that the region's own collective intelligence is developed and can contribute to a shared future for the region and globally towards the SDGs.

This will also require more work in higher education and for the achievement of the SDGs to ensure inclusivity and equitable access for all learners and stakeholders. There is a need to improve awareness of SDGs and SDG education throughout the higher education sector, which will involve breaking down barriers between disciplines and creating more opportunities for co-designing and co-creating multidisciplinary projects and programmes for learners to gain skills and competencies they desire, streamlining processes for mobility and exchange, and expanding and massifying learning opportunities for a wider and more diverse audience. Higher education will need to be more relevant, innovative, and creative to provide a foundation for future learners with a variety of flexible learning options. Although resources will be required to develop and empower higher education institutions and stakeholders throughout this process, and while there are numerous challenges for Southeast Asia, we should learn from disruption. We should also disrupt ourselves to chart a new course towards a more sustainable future together as one region and one world.

Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were particularly emphasised during this consultation?

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|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 1: No poverty | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 2: Zero hunger | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 13: Climate action |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 3: Good health and well-being | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 14: Life below water |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 4: Quality education | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 10: Reduced inequality | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 15: Life on land |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 5: Gender equality | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 16: Peace and justice strong institutions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goals |

You may provide additional feedback...

Are there any other issues that should be considered in relation to higher education challenges and options in your community, your region, the world?

Is there any other comment you wish to share with UNESCO or the organisers of the WHEC2022?

List of participants

[Please, include the moderator (s)]

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