

PRESS RELEASE

Demographic Changes in Asia and Europe: Challenges for the Youth

A side-event on the occasion of the 26th ASEF Board of Governors Meeting
11 May 2011, Vilnius (Lithuania)

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Ageing: a challenge not only for the youth



ASEF Executive Director Ambassador Dominique Girard (left) introducing the panel (from 2nd left to right): Dr Giedrius Viliūnas, Prof Leo Tan, Mr Jussi Lehmusvaara, Ms Krizna Gomez and Ms Guoda Lomanaite

Representatives from the youth, education and policy-making sector gathered in Vilnius for the dialogue on "Demographic Changes in Asia and Europe: Challenges for the Youth". The dialogue was organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the ASEF University Alumni Network (ASEFUAN) and Mykolas Romeris University.

Moderated by Dr Giedrius Viliūnas, Vice-Rector for Education of the Mykolas Romeris University, the dialogue sought to create better understanding of the challenges that the youth in Asia and Europe are facing, as well as suggestions for

initiatives and programmes that could be undertaken towards addressing these challenges.

Mr Jussi Lehmusvaara of the Finnish Ministry of Finance set the background on the current situation of ageing in Asia and Europe. He cited the main challenge of a rapidly ageing population with declining productive capacity of the elderly, slowing down an economy that needs to raise public financing (such as healthcare and pension). He highlighted the need to make society as a whole, including the government, accountable for addressing this challenge.

Ms Krizna Gomez of the Ateneo Human Rights Center (The Philippines) and President of the ASEF University Alumni Network (ASEFUAN) discussed the common perceptions of the ageing crisis, including the rise in health and pension costs, and the concept of intergenerational solidarity. She underscored the need to rethink the concept of ageing in Asia, as this determined policy for both the youth and the elderly.

Ms Guoda Lomanaite of the Lithuanian Youth Council provided the perspective from the Lithuanian youth. While much is expected from youths, there are not enough opportunities and support mechanisms to enable them to fulfill these expectations. As a result, youths do not feel recognised and empowered.

Professor Leo Tan, Chairman of the Pacific Science Association Committee on Science Communication and Education (Singapore), noted that the effective integration of youths and the elderly required the understanding and bonding of both generations. He also highlighted that in partnership with national and international agencies, youths can be empowered to take action in addressing issues affecting their future. He cited specific examples of how the youth and the community in Singapore are engaged in these issues, namely the National Youth Achievement Award and the Council for the Third Age.

The public dialogue was organised in conjunction with the 26th ASEF Board of Governors Meeting, being held in Vilnius (12-13 May).

The two-day meeting gathers members of the ASEF Board of Governors or their representatives to review ASEF strategy and policies, aligning them with the principles and priorities of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

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About the organisers:



The **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM*). ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since implemented over 500 projects, engaging over 15,000 direct participants as well as reaching out to a much wider audience in Asia and Europe. www.asef.org

* ASEM now brings together 46 member states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam) plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. www.aseinfoboard.org



The **ASEF University Alumni Network (ASEFUAN)** is an international non-profit organization consisting of more than 500 Asian and European young leaders from the 46 ASEM countries who have graduated from the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) University programme since 1998. ASEFUAN aims to strengthen cross-cultural ties, promote excellence, and foster Asia-Europe relations at international and grassroots level within its membership and with its partner institutions. It organises activities to maintain and reinforce the relationships forged among participants of the ASEF University programme and undertakes projects to promote a continuing intercultural dialogue between Asia and Europe, particularly among the younger generation. www.asefuan.org



Mykolas Romeris University, named after Professor Mykolas Pijus Paskalis Romeris, a founder of the Lithuanian Constitutional Law, is a dynamic, modern University with a well-established place in the sphere of global higher education. The mission of the University is to educate youth, to amass and nourish intellectual potential, to train leaders capable of creating and implementing innovations, which influence the overall scientific, cultural and technological progress changing society. It is possible to achieve this, understanding that only a competitive environment gives birth to quality and that universities are equal participants of the market. The University fosters autonomy. This allows to independently tailor the content of studies and areas of research, while applying the latest management principles to improve and change one's activities, taking into account contemporary European higher education development tendencies and the needs of the labour market. Experts from the European University Association (EUA) conducted a comprehensive audit of Mykolas Romeris University's activities. They concluded that the University undoubtedly has the potential to become one of the most notable social science universities in Europe. www.mruni.eu/en/