What Is ASEM?

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal forum for dialogue and cooperation, bringing together 53 partners from across Europe and Asia. Its main purpose is to provide a platform for fostering political dialogue, strengthening economic cooperation and tackling together global challenges.

ASEM is conducted as an informal and flexible process on the basis of equal partnership, mutual respect and benefit. ASEM aims to stimulate and facilitate progress in other fora without duplication. To summarise, ASEM is the most influential comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe, crossing hands across continents.

ASEM Partners:

The initial ASEM partnership in 1996 consisted of just 15 EU member states and 7 ASEAN member states plus China, Japan, Korea and the European Commission.

Today ASEM comprises 51 partner countries: the 28 Member States of the European Union\(^1\) plus Norway and Switzerland on the European side and the 10 ASEAN countries\(^2\) plus

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1. Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Russia on the Asian side. It also includes two institutional partners: the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Representing about 60% of the world’s GDP, of its population and of global trade, ASEM embraces virtually the whole of Asia and Europe.

**How it Works:**
ASEM works through meetings and activities organised at different levels.

The **ASEM Summit** is a meeting between the 51 Heads of State or Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The summits are held every second year, in Asia and Europe alternatively.

**Ministerial Meetings** are organised in-between the ASEM Summits, gathering ministers of foreign affairs, finance, economics, labour and employment, culture, education, transport and environment. Occasionally other ministerial conferences are held on specific issues and areas that are not covered by the main ministerial meetings.

**Senior Officials' Meetings (SOM)** 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.

**Activities and initiatives** are organised by ASEM partners on a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

**ASEM has no secretariat.** Foreign ministers and their senior officials have an overall coordinating role within the ASEM process. They are assisted in this by an informal group of

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2 Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
coordinators: two from the Asian side (currently Myanmar representing the ASEAN and New Zealand the non-ASEAN (NESA) countries) and two from the European side (the European External Action Service (EEAS) as the permanent coordinator and the rotating EU Presidency, currently Slovakia).

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is an international non-profit organisation, based in Singapore, which is set to promote cultural ties and foster people-to-people contacts between both civil society and business leaders from the two regions.

Meetings:
The 11th ASEM Summit at which ASEM celebrates its 20th anniversary is taking place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 15-16 July 2016, under the chairmanship of the President of Mongolia. President of the European Council Donald Tusk and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker will participate, accompanied by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

The last, 10th ASEM Summit took place on 16-17 October 2014 in Milan, Italy.

The 12th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting was hosted by Luxembourg on 5-6 November 2015 and chaired by the European Union’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the ASEM framework looks even further into the future and continues to be a strong platform for promoting interregional cooperation for tackling global issues.

For more information:
http://eeas.europa.eu/asem
http://www.aseminfoboard.org