

Opetusministeriö

Ministry of Education

Finland, Asia and International Co-operation

**The Asia Action Programme prepared by the Finnish
Ministry of Education, adopted on March 20, 2006**

Summary



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Summary

战略框架。该项目的出发点
步提高芬兰的国际地位,树立
全球化的国际竞争中的形象,更

1 Background

芬兰是一个积极和可靠的合
是一个熟悉了解亚洲并且具
洲国家进行国际高水平的对
有益处的研究、教育和文化

Internationalisation is one of the strategic key areas within the sphere of activities of the Ministry of Education. Development of expertise on Asia and co-operation with Asian countries are priorities of internationalisation.

The general objective of the Ministry of Education's Asia Action Programme is to create a strategic frame of reference that will steer co-operation with Asian countries. The basis of the programme is to improve Finland's status and visibility in the global competition as an internationally attractive and trustworthy partner and a country with expertise on Asia that has good preconditions for high quality co-operation in the fields of research, education and training and culture in Asia that will be beneficial to all parties. Securing high quality and ethical standards is also a basic principle for co-operation with Asia.

The selection of focal areas in internationalisation is strongly affected by the globalisation development that defines and changes the world of internationalisation and sets new challenges for education and training,

research, culture and mobility. The significance of growth centres in Asia is increasing, while investments in research and education and training are increasing in line with economic growth.

Many rapidly developing Asian countries offer great potential and it is important for Finnish higher education institutions, research institutions, the cultural field and other parties to aim to take advantage of this potential in their international co-operation as well. Development challenges need to be taken into account not only in terms of competitiveness, but also in terms of culture and society. Global opportunities and threats touch upon developed countries as well as developing countries. Correctly targeted co-operation in the fields of education and training, research and culture supports the decrease of inequality within and between countries.

In order to take on international challenges, the Ministry of Education and the stakeholders within its administrative sector need to take action that is

strategically well targeted and based on high-quality expertise and up-to-date information. This requires work to be done within the spheres of education and training, research and culture to increase knowledge about Asia in Finland and to increase relations with partner countries.

Regionally, operations are specifically targeted at countries in East and South Asia, where the attraction of China, Japan, South Korea and India is internationally strong. For Finland, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia are also important partner countries. It is still important to follow developments in other Asian countries to find new opportunities for co-operation.

More co-operation among Finnish participants is needed in order to increase effectiveness and visibility. We also have to tap into Nordic co-operation and be active in EU co-operation programmes and we have to promote the increase and correct allocation of resources for research, education and training as well as culture within the EU. Procedures based

on good co-operation are a specifically important competitive factor for a small country as well as a basic precondition for a successful internationalisation strategy.

Extensive co-operation within different sectors also takes place within the framework of the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) established in 1996. So far, there have been two ASEM Culture Ministers' meetings and one meeting of Ministers of Science and Technology. The ASEM process can also accelerate development of the European-Asian higher education market.

Co-operation with Asian countries must be promoted on a reciprocal basis. It is therefore important that information about Finland, Finnish expertise, education and research systems and culture is efficiently disseminated in important partner countries in Asia and that forms of dissemination of information are developed as part of co-operation.

Co-operation between public and private operators must be further promoted as part of project

financing. Finnish, foreign and international funds and foundations with common operational aims and whose co-operation can provide mutual added value must be included amongst these operators.

Unofficial personal contacts at a local level as well as language skills are key factors when operating in Asia. Asian researchers, students, artists and other such skilled experts are important resources for Finland. Co-operation with Asia needs to be supported by good preconditions for participating in and benefiting from the co-operation markets opening up in Asian countries by also improving opportunities and forms of presence.

Priority areas based on the principal starting points of the programme form a framework for the Ministry of Education's operational aims when developing expertise on Asia and co-operation with Asia.

2 Priority areas of the programme

2.1 Research and researcher training

The competitiveness of researchers, research organisations and research financing is of increasing significance in international research co-operation. Co-operation between Finnish and Asian universities and research institutions has progressed in some areas over recent years, but, on the whole, such co-operation is still scarce and fragmented. Asian studies are also fragmented in Finland and there are just a few people with postgraduate education in the field.

In terms of research and researcher education, we must emphasise co-operation with the best higher education institutions and research institutions in Asian countries. Finnish research information and expertise on Asia will be increased with the help of research and researcher education.

On Asia's extensive research and education markets efficient co-operation and networking will be promoted due to competitive reasons.

Within the steering and funding of universities themes and disciplines based on the strengths and profiles of the universities themselves and also on the interests of Asian partner universities will be emphasised.

The active participation of researchers and research teams in the future 7th Framework Programme of the EU (2007–2010) will be supported taking advantage of opportunities to strengthen co-operation with Asia. The EU's Marie Curie programme emphasising development of researcher careers and mobility will also be used in co-operation with Asia.

The number of Asian postgraduate students should be increased and their possibilities to participate in Finnish graduate schools and education and training for them must be improved in all fields.

The Academy of Finland will further develop co-operation with both Finnish and Asian funding organisations according to its aims set for international co-operation to the effect that Finnish researchers will have possibilities for high-quality co-operation and networking.

The Academy of Finland, together with universities and other interest groups, will prepare a broad research and action plan supporting internationalisation with Asian countries. The plan will be implemented during 2007.

Increasing knowledge about Asia in Finland needs continuous significant inputs just as multi-disciplinary research and researcher education in

Asian studies will also need to be strengthened in the future. The Centre for East Asian Studies set up at the University of Turku will be further developed.

2.2 Higher education

Central factors influencing change in the operating environment of higher education institutions include an increase in demand for cross-border higher education, restrictions on increases in public education and training expenditure, the proliferation of distance and virtual studies and the commercialisation of education and training. The greatest education policy challenges relate to the quality and equity of education and training, recognition of degrees, accessibility and division of funding and costs as well as creation and maintenance of education and training capacity and administration.

The main form of cross-border higher education in the world still involves students moving across the borders. The Finnish Government has set ambitious quantitative targets for universities and polytechnics according to which the number of foreign exchange and degree students should double during this decade

compared with current levels. The aim is to create a sufficiently large multicultural higher education community in Finland that could for its part act as the spearhead of internationalisation in different areas of Finland.

Within the steering of higher education institutions emphasis will be put on actions and resources which support co-operation with Asia in such a way that the quantitative targets set for both foreign degree students and mobility can be attained. Preconditions for co-operation with Asia must be developed extensively by increasing partnerships, operations in partner countries and by improving the procedures of higher education institutions in their own student recruitment, selections, marketing and support services.

The steering of higher education institutions must support the increase in bilateral, carefully selected higher education institution partnerships of high quality. The partnerships must entail varied forms of co-operation and enable enhanced education, training and research co-operation.

The partner universities of the Finnish National University Network for East and Southeast Asian Studies will continue their Master School of Asian

Studies degree co-operation. The polytechnics will continue to develop co-operation with Asia with support from the Finnish Polytechnic Network for East and Southeast Asia and will increase their supply of education and training possibilities.

2.3 Culture

One objective of the Finnish Ministry of Education is to promote Finnish culture and its interaction with other cultures as well as cultural exports. The national cultural capital also includes a network of international contacts and interaction. Development of cultural exchange is important for increasing interaction and knowledge of one another's culture and to create a basis for development of co-operation in other fields as well.

Cultural co-operation between Asian and EU countries is to take place not only within the framework of ASEM but also in other international fora, especially within UNESCO. The area of religious cultural traditions (the interfaith dimension) can also be seen as part of cultural interaction. The concrete form of trying to achieve this aim is co-operation both on the level of political and civic activities.

Co-operation within art and culture between Finland and Asian countries must be developed extensively in the fields of traditional protection of both material and immaterial cultural heritage, bilateral cultural exchange and new products and services of cultural industry.

Development of co-productions as well as integration of science, art, technology and economics is of major significance when entering Asian markets. When developing projects the emphasis will be shifted towards multilateral Nordic and EU project planning and implementation.

Securing the funding for cultural production and exports presupposes an operational copyright system and a low level of piracy in the partner countries. These systems can be influenced both through multilateral international and specific co-operation. Finland is known as being one of the possible model countries in the development of an intellectual property rights system.

Cultural exports and imports and activities of a support network for cultural exports with Asian countries will be developed in co-operation between the Ministries of Education, Trade and Industry, Foreign Affairs and Finance, the Finnish Funding Agency for

Technology and Innovation TEKES, FINPRO (Finnish companies' association promoting internationalisation) and the Finnish Tourist Board MEK.

The Finnish Ministry of Education will promote knowledge about Asian cultures amongst relevant cultural actors in Finland by organising education and training about Asian cultures together with universities, research institutions, friendship societies and experts in the field.

2.4 Mobility and international interaction

Mobility is of major significance in international co-operation. Its effectiveness is undisputable when pursuing deeper and wider co-operation and more varied interaction. The Centre for International Mobility, CIMO, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, is an expert and service organisation that promotes international interaction, student and people-to-people exchange and co-operation in the fields of education, working life, culture and youth.

The Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEF, which is

based in Singapore, also plays a significant role in supporting people-to-people contacts within co-operation with Asia.

A special higher education institutions' programme will be created to support student and staff exchanges to and from Asia. The programme will be developed and administered by CIMO. The programme aims to develop exchange supporting network-type co-operation between Finnish and Asian higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions themselves must also develop and maintain functional student and staff exchange systems. Joint projects must emphasise long-term network-type co-operation instead of just individual students coming to Finland.

A people-to-people exchange programme with Asia within the field of culture will also be launched together with CIMO. The programme should cover all forms of art and areas of cultural activities and the emphasis should be on China, India and Indonesia in particular.

The opportunities provided by ASEF to support people-to-people exchange should be reviewed based on earlier experiences to make the best possible use of them.

2.5 Languages

Knowledge of languages and cultures is one of the most central prerequisites for international co-operation. The position of Asian languages in Finland has been developed based on proposals made by the Committee for non-European languages and cultures since the 1980's. The situation is most established concerning the teaching of Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Finnish is taught at three universities in Japan, at two in China and at one university in Korea.

The development needs for teaching languages and cultures will be reviewed and necessary action will be taken on this basis.

In terms of teaching Asian languages, it is important to broaden the supply of degree studies as well as the teaching at language centres of higher education institutions and the adult education at different kinds of educational institutions. It is important to create continuity for studying Asian languages from the primary level via the secondary and up to the tertiary level.

The increase in teaching Finnish in Asia is a good starting point for further co-operation. Students graduating with a degree in Finnish must be

offered opportunities for further studies at Finnish universities.

2.6 Presence in Asia

During the discussions among experts and professionals in different fields concerning the development of co-operation with Asia the need for support centres and actions in co-operation countries has been raised. This would serve to promote an active presence. Finnish diplomatic missions in Asia have traditionally been important contacts and they can provide help in various ways for co-operation within education, research and culture. However, in addition to diplomatic missions, more specialised support centres are needed to support operations.

A study will be carried out on how to develop the existing university support centres in Fudan, New Delhi and Beijing in order to meet the co-operation needs of Finnish universities, the Academy of Finland and CIMO in particular. Opportunities for co-operation with other parties will also be studied.

The Finnish Ministry of Education will continue to support the Finnish Institute in Japan and promote

the gradual shift of the focus of the institute network towards Asia over the coming years.

The gradual increase in presence aimed at promoting cultural exports in Asia will be achieved by the year 2012 to widen and strengthen networking within the cultural sector.

2.7 Contractual basis for co-operation

Bilateral co-operation is changing. This is influenced by Finland's EU membership, development of mobility as a separate system as well as changes in the financing and steering systems. International co-operation will be developed emphasising target-setting and strengthening strategic steering.

At the moment, within the Ministry of Education's administrative sector, there are bilateral cultural agreements legitimising formal state-level co-operation between Finland and China, India, Japan and South Korea. A memorandum of understanding is also in place both with Singapore and Mongolia. Finland and many other countries nowadays emphasise direct contacts to develop co-operation,

but in many Asian countries bilateral cultural agreements and programmes may still be important.

Developing co-operation based on direct contacts between different parties will be the primary target and bilateral state-level agreements will only be signed if there are specific reasons.

Programmes, memoranda of understanding or other such arrangements will only be initiated when they benefit both parties or, in exceptional cases, just one party. They must be developed to be flexible and based on actual needs and entering into such arrangements must also be evaluated from the point of view of the Ministry's general development aims.

Programmes and other such arrangements will be made leaner and more modern in substance so that they can be used as tools to promote and enable co-operation all the way from the political level to local partners so that only one valid document is needed.

The Asia Action Programme also contains recommendations concerning the financial effects incurred by the proposals made in the different priority areas of the programme.



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