

Greetings
From the Minister of Education and Culture
Mr Andreas Demetriou
ASEM Conference 2010

Mediterranean Hotel. Limassol
6th of December 2010

Dear guests and participants,

It is a real honour and pleasure for me to welcome you all in Cyprus and share with you this important moment, upon which experts on Quality Assurance and Recognition in Higher Education, of both European and Asian countries, will be reviewing the challenges and prospects of these significant aspects. Cyprus has always been a meeting place of European and Asian civilizations and cultures and I consider it as the ideal place for such a meeting. Through this conference the Ministry of Education and Culture aspires the establishment of a sound relationship between Asian and European experts, regarding Higher Education issues.

It is also an interesting moment for Cyprus and the Ministry of Education and Culture to organize this event and host you all here, since the Cypriot agenda for Higher Education, and especially Quality Assurance and Recognition, has recently been a major focus of attention. We have as our priority the establishment of a new Agency, which will be responsible for Quality Assurance and Recognition in Higher Education. Recent developments in Cyprus, such as the establishment of four private and two

new public Universities, have lead to the necessity of the existence of such an Agency. The Agency's tasks aim at the enhancement of the internal and external quality assurance procedures in the HE institutions, and in accordance to the European standards and guidelines.

The main challenge to be faced throughout the Conference is to bring Asian and European Higher Education closer. It is important to be able to have valuable partners participating in the effort of modernizing higher education. Different backgrounds, history, socioeconomic developments and political evolutions in the two regions have lead to different experiences. Having in mind that the main objective of both Asia and Europe, is to create a Higher Education of high Quality and standards, it would be of extreme importance to exchange this kind of experiences and good practices. This will facilitate all stakeholders and experts who are here today to overcome possible obstacles in achieving Quality Assurance, by replicating successful and avoiding unsuccessful practices.

The ASEM Conference on "Quality Assurance and Recognition in Higher Education: Challenges and Prospects" will firstly attempt to distribute successful practices and policies related to Quality Assurance in both regions. Promoting cooperation between agencies in ASEM countries and encouraging combined actions amongst Asian and European Higher Education Institutions will also be a priority for the Conference. Furthermore, all participants will intend at enhancing visibility and attractiveness of higher education systems and institutions in Asia and Europe. You should be aiming at proposing tools and a synthesis of best practices that can assist both regions in assessing the quality and

relevance of higher education provided across borders and to protect students and other stakeholders in higher education from low-quality higher education provision.

The increased cross-border mobility of students, academic staff, professionals, programmes and providers, generates challenges for existing national quality assurance and accreditation frameworks and bodies as well as for the systems for recognizing foreign qualifications. The Conference should also focus on cross-border higher education to be included in national accreditation policies. Some national systems and bodies for the recognition of qualifications may have limited knowledge and experience in dealing with cross-border higher education. This is a significant opportunity for them to gain experience and valuable knowledge. Moreover, the labor market and employability in Europe and Asia depend on trustworthy, high-quality qualifications. It is essential that users of professional services, including employers, have full confidence in the skills of qualified professionals. The increasing possibility of obtaining low-quality qualifications could harm the professions themselves, and might, in the long run, undermine confidence in professional qualifications. This matter also gains extra attention as we aim at achieving mobility between the two regions on business level.

Dear guests and participants, I am sure that this ASEM Conference will soberly contribute to the issue of Quality Assurance and Recognition in ASEM countries and will add to the work to be done globally. The capacity and the experience of the invited speakers, Senior Officials and Experts and other participants can ensure the success of this event. The

Conference could be the springboard for a deeper cooperation between Asia and Europe on Quality Assurance and Recognition matters. It is important to accomplish a common basis on which both regions will lean and expand their policies and practices around Quality Assurance.

Before closing, I would like to thank the Department of Tertiary and Higher Education of the Ministry of education and Culture for undertaking the responsibility to organize this important international event and for giving Cyprus and Europe the opportunity to discuss these issues with our precious partners in Asia.

Once more, I welcome you all in Cyprus and I hope you will have a pleasant and productive stay here.