The fourth edition of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) took place in Copenhagen (22–24 September). This old news you may think but for many Western readers there is a big chance it is not. Whereas the major Asian newspapers covered the ASEM extensively, there was hardly any coverage in the Western press. One can come to the conclusion that Asia views the process with more interest than Europe.

The Asia-Europe Meeting and the ASEM Research Platform

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There are two major reasons why academia in Asia and Europe should be encouraged to develop closer political cooperation. First, the need for a creative and well-informed policy on both the European and Asian sides has in many cases outstripped the ability of national governments to deliver it. The Asia-Europe rapprochement has caught officials and policy makers across a wide range of fields unprepared. They are more often than not forced to rely on aphorisms and stereotypes as tools for ordering the complex world in which they find themselves. As policy making at the ASEM level grows, there is a need to be visible Asian and European Studies. And if the students trained and educated in Asia-Europe relations assembled in the past ten years. The Eurasian research culture may directly engage the efforts of a couple of thousand scholars across the ASEM community. The spin off from their endeavours can be enormous. It derives its influence, on the one hand through the formulation and analysis of the issues that move Asian and European governments and the media, and, on the other hand, through the students trained and educated in this culture who move outside academia to other positions in society. Developing and sustaining such a Eurasian research culture presents a small financial investment in comparison to the fruits that will certainly be derived from it. With the growing unilateralist attitude of the US in practically all matters, it seems more necessary than ever that Europe and Asia rediscover their own rich cultural and intellectual traditions.

The ultimate success of ASEM will depend on the active participation of the citizens of both continents. Researchers can contribute to this goal by taking a Eurasian stance as a starting point for their research endeavours. We hope that by the time of the next ASEM in 2004 the ASEM Research Platform will prove to be a valuable (re)source for the strengthening of the process as a whole.

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