

## **Lodz East Asia Meeting: the Biggest Conference on East Asia in Central Europe**

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The annual conference Lodz East Asia Meeting has been organized from 2004 by the Department of East Asia Studies (since 2015 Department of Asian Studies) at the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz. Over the course of 14 years, the Lodz East Asia Meeting conference has become an important international forum for cooperation and exploration of new ideas with regard to the East Asian region in Central and Eastern Europe. Starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> Lodz East Asia Meeting back in 2012, for the first time in its history, the conference was conducted solely in English. The representatives of various Polish academic institutions were joined by academics representing, among others, China, Taiwan, Japan, USA, Germany, Czech Republic, Norway and Slovakia. Ever since its first edition in 2002, the conference features renowned keynote speakers, such as: Ksawery Burski, former ambassador of the Republic of Poland in China, Indonesia, and Singapore; former ambassador to Thailand, The Philippines and Burma professor Bogdan Góralczyk, followed by professor Glenn Hook from the University of Sheffield, professor Caroline Rose from the University of Leeds or Emil J. Kirchner, Jean Monnet Professor and Coordinator of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence

at the University of Essex. From the 2014 edition, LEAM has been awarded with honorary patronage of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Every year during Lodz East Asia Meeting refers to current challenges and political issues in East Asia. In 2012 the main topic was focused on aftermath of the global financial crisis. It was also devoted to included multilateralism and integration in the region; Japanese political scene, Chinese overseas investments as well as relation between China, European Union and the United States of America. Moreover, special seminar was dedicated to Polish-Japanese relation as well as political implications after the earthquake of March 2011 in Japan. The seminar was enriched by the presence of more than 20 Japanese postgraduate and doctoral students from the University of Kwansei Gakuin – a strong University of Lodz's academic partner. The 9<sup>th</sup> Lodz East Asia meeting in 2013 was mostly focused on the relations of East Asia and Central Europe. Keynote speech presented by ambassador Bogdan Góralczyk on the Rise of China was a perfect introduction to the conference. Although the China's rise on the global platform is often the main theme of many academic debates, LEAM was divided into specific topic panels about the political, military and cultural interactions and their implications between Central Europe and East Asia with a special focus on the settlement of Free Trade Agreements, security challenges as well as China-US and China-Russia economic, political and trade relations between the two regions. The special attention was also paid to the topic of China's domestic development and its economic ties with ASEAN countries. There was also a special panel highlighting India's rise and role in global politics and economy. In June 2014, the Lodz Asia Meeting took place and it was devoted mainly to the topic of new dynamics of Europe-East Asia Regional Cooperation. Conference was attended by over 70 academics from a wide variety of fields bringing remarks on the issues related with the Silk Road Economic Belt as a framework for China-Central Europe cooperation; Japanese approach towards East Asia; regional issues of East and South Asia as well as U.S. political and economical presence in the Asia. Keynote speech delivered by Marta Jagusztyn on the contradictions of state-NGO relations in China. The other interesting panels were conducted with regard to East-Asian society, culture, international law as well as Korean Peninsula dynamics and Asian sovereign wealth funds activities in Europe. The main theme of the 11<sup>th</sup> LEAM Conference "East Asia dynamics. Between being regional and global" once again brought many renowned scholars from all over the world. The keynote speech by professor Glenn Hook (University of Sheffield) was to discuss local and regional strategies in Japan's foreign policy. It was a perfect introduction to the later discussion on the dynamics of the decision-making process in Japan. Moreover, the additional discussion panels were focused on the internal and international policies in East Asia; theory and practice of paradiplomacy in Poland and China while the latter was organized jointly with

the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The Lodz East Asia Meeting in 2016 was dedicated to the topic of overcoming controversies in East Asia. From 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, 55 scholars from various countries were discussing about the political, economic and social dilemmas in East Asia. Keynote speech was delivered by President of British Association for Japanese Studies, professor Caroline Rose from University of Leeds, where she examined the educational reform conducted by the Abe Shinzo government and highlighted its possible impact on relations with China. As in previous years, the conference was divided into many panels undertaking various dimensions of East Asian controversies: economic – One Belt One Road Initiative, regionalization in East Asia, economy and business in Asian context, successes and failures of Chinese economy; security – dynamics of the U.S. “Pivot to Asia” strategy, geopolitical competition in Asia; social – Chinese culture and identity as well as political problems of law and democracy in East Asia, China’s international relation theory and foreign policy. Power shift in East Asia and the prospect for developing Asian-European Ties was the main theme of 13<sup>th</sup> Lodz East Asia Meeting in June 2017. The examination of power shifts in the political, economic and social landscape in the Asia and its significance for Asian-European exchange was the main subject of interest for over 60 scholars from 12 countries. Jean Monnet Professor and a Coordinator of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at the University of Essex – Emil J. Kirchner delivered a keynote speech on interest convergence and security cooperation between the EU and China. This was followed by a special session on Asia-Europe economic and political linkages, chaired by prof. Kirchner. The panelists were also focused on the analyze of EU–Asia relations, South China Sea Territorial Disputes as well as maritime security in Asia. Special attention was paid to the US–China relations under the Donald’s Trump Administration. The conference was attended by HE Vu Dang Dung, ambassador of Vietnam to Poland.

What should be mentioned at the end is that the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Lodz has built an mechanism for the future cooperation between the scholars, annually delivering in-depth research analysis in the field of East Asia politics. Selected papers are being published in the new book series run by the DEAS – Contemporary Asian Studies Series. Having such strong academic background the University of Lodz has gradually become one of the most important venues for academic exchange in the field of Asian studies.