



UNIVERSITY
OF MALAYA



Asia-Europe Institute

EU-ASEAN Relations: Perspectives from Malaysia



Sponsored by:



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Malaysia



EU—ASEAN Relations: Perspectives from Malaysia

**By the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

Kuala Lumpur, 2017

Copyright © by the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya

First published 2017

This publication was sponsored by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Malaysia

Table of Contents

Introduction: A Historic Overview

by Patrick Ziegenhain 1

Malaysia and the EU—ASEAN Economic Cooperation

by Fumitaka Furuoka, Beatrice Lim and Rostika P. Boroh 7

Malaysia and the EU—ASEAN Political Cooperation

by Patrick Ziegenhain 18

Malaysia and the EU—ASEAN Socio-Cultural Cooperation

by Sameer Kumar 27

Malaysia and the EU—ASEAN Cooperation in Higher Education

by Azirah Hashim and Yee Chee Leong 39

Conclusion and Perspectives

by Patrick Ziegenhain 55

Introduction: A Historic Overview

by Patrick Ziegenhain

With this booklet, the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) aims to provide a well-structured academic overview of the most important issues of EU-ASEAN relations. We are thankful for the financial support given by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Malaysia, whom are sponsors of this publication.

The aim of this text is to provide up-to-date information on the EU-ASEAN dialogue. Despite being of an academic background, the text in this booklet shall be readable for the general public and the limited size of the articles is intended to allow readers to get a quick impression of the most significant aspects. The specific value of this publication is that it includes the Malaysian perspective.

In this chapter, a historic overview of the EU-ASEAN relationship will provide initial and basic insights on the topic. Next, in Chapter 2, the economic dimension of the relationship between the two regions is dealt with, as written by Fumitaka Furuoka, Beatrice Lim and Rostika Petrus Boroh. Following on, Chapter 3 as written by Patrick Ziegenhain, and Chapter 4, which is written by Sameer Kumar, shall then portray the political and the socio-cultural cooperation respectively. In Chapter 5, as written by Azirah Hashim and Yee Chee Leong, an analysis of the collaboration between ASEAN and the EU in Higher Education is covered. Finally, Patrick Ziegenhain will provide a short summary combined with a look ahead to the near future of the EU-ASEAN relations

The first official dialogue between the then European Community (EC) that was represented by the European Commission and ASEAN, represented by its

member states' ministers took place in 1972. At the time, there was a huge gap between the economic development of the highly industrialized European states and the poor Southeast Asian countries. Therefore, in the first years of cooperation, talks tended to focus on market access for ASEAN's primary commodity export in Europe. In 1975, an ASEAN-EC Joint Study Group was created not only to discuss trade matters but also to prepare further cooperation in other fields. Three years later in 1978, ASEAN-EC relations were given greater political significance with the inaugural ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting (AEMM). Under the direction of the AEMM, the ASEAN-EC Cooperation Agreement was formulated and signed during the second ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting that was held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1980.

With this agreement, ASEAN was assigned a Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status from the European Community. Subsequent to this, the EC and ASEAN worked together on issues such as the international conflicts in Cambodia and Afghanistan in the 1980s, and the two organisations were able to develop joint statements on the two issues.

Until the 1990s, the ASEAN-EU relationship was seen very much as a donor-recipient relationship. It was not considered a relationship between equals and thus, ASEAN countries did not receive the due respect by the European Union member states. Under political terms, ASEAN remained at the bottom of the EU's hierarchy of relations—lesser than even the African, Caribbean & Pacific (ACP), and Latin American countries. The low priority was reflected in the fact that the former British and French colonies represented in the ACP countries received more favourable trade benefits (among others covered by the Lomé Convention). In his speech at a conference of the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) on 4 August 2017, Kishore Mahbhubani highlighted the issue of the EU being “arrogant, ignorant, and looking down on ASEAN” at the time.

Not surprisingly, political relations between the EU and ASEAN turned somewhat sour in the 1990s. The end of the Cold War and the wave of regime changes in the former Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the successful signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, led the EU countries to a new assertiveness vis-à-vis developing countries. Previously, during the Cold War, dictatorships in ASEAN countries such as those of Marcos in the Philippines and Suharto in Indonesia were supported because of their anti-communist stance. After the end of the Cold War, the EU countries introduced new policies of conditionalities linking trade and aid to issues on human rights, democratization, and environmental protection. This new “moralism” of the West was criticized as “neo-colonialism” or “oppression” by Southeast Asian leaders such as the Malaysian Prime Minister at the time, Mahathir Mohamad. Together with other ASEAN leaders, they introduced the concept of Asian Values, which emphasized loyalty and respect towards figures of authority and principles such as collectivism and communitarianism, in contrast to the alleged neo-liberal and over-individualistic values of the EU.

ASEAN had no difficulties in accepting communist countries such as Vietnam and Laos, or post-communist countries such as Cambodia as new members without changing the rules of ASEAN. In contrast, the European Union only accepted membership from countries that had already transformed into democracies—setting up the Copenhagen criteria which demanded applicant countries to preserve democratic governance and human rights, reform their economic system to a market economy, and required them to accept all obligations and legal documents (*acquis communautaire*) of the EU.

The EU (together with the USA) took a particularly tough stance against the military regime in Myanmar, a country which became an ASEAN member in July 1996. In October 1996, the European Union confirmed the previously imposed EU sanctions: an arms embargo that was imposed in 1990, the

suspension of defence co-operation in 1991, and the suspension of all bilateral aid other than strictly humanitarian assistance. The EU additionally introduced a visa ban on members of the military regime, members of the government, senior military and security officers, and all their family members.

The case of Myanmar divided the EU and ASEAN. Whilst the EU favoured harsh measures and sanctions, ASEAN accepted the full membership of Myanmar under the ASEAN principle of mutual non-interference in domestic affairs. It took the EU more than 20 years to finally suspend its sanctions against Myanmar which eventually occurred in May 2012. Until then, the EU-ASEAN relations suffered due to the unequal treatment towards the military government by the two regional organisations.

Another issue that arose was the East Timor crisis in 1999, creating further friction between the EU and ASEAN. Previously, Portugal which has been an EU member since 1986 and is the former colonial ruler of East Timor (Timor Leste in Portuguese language), had repeatedly complained at several EU-ASEAN ministerial meetings about the annexation of the island by Indonesia in 1976. When violence erupted after a UN-sponsored independence referendum in 1999, the European Union (EU) decided on an embargo of military sales to Indonesia in September of the same year (this embargo against Indonesia was then suspended in May 2000).

The economic boom in many ASEAN states after the year 2000 displays the increased interest of the EU to invest in the rapidly growing market of more than 500 million people in Southeast Asia. Therefore, and also as a result of internal struggles within the EU, the Europeans were willing to place aside sensitive political issues such as human rights violations and dictatorships in the ASEAN countries. The EU member countries then returned to a pragmatic course of focusing on economic issues such as during the time before 1990.

Due to the enormous economic development in recent years, the ASEAN states are now accepted as a more important and equal trading partner. The European Commission presented its strategy paper "Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships" in September 2001, and this was followed up with another strategy paper with the title "A New Partnership with South East Asia" in 2003. The latter launched the Trans-Regional EU-ASEAN Trade Initiative, abbreviated as TREATI; amongst other activities.

Both ASEAN and the EU are regional organisations that are closely connected by trade relations. The ASEAN states represent the EU's third largest trading partner outside of Europe (after the USA and China) with more than 250 billion Euro of trade in goods and services. At the same time, the EU member states are ASEAN's second largest trading partner after China, accounting for approximately 13% of the ASEAN trade.

Consequently, the most important topic in the EU-ASEAN relations in the 2000s was the intention to create a region-to-region Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Negotiations were launched in 2007, but paused in 2009 since the EU did not see enough progress on the ASEAN side. Instead, the EU started to negotiate bilateral FTAs with all 10 ASEAN member countries, conceived as building blocks towards a future region-to-region agreement.

Negotiations with Singapore and Malaysia were launched in 2010, followed by negotiations with Vietnam in June 2012, Thailand in March 2013, the Philippines in December 2015, and finally Indonesia in July 2016. Negotiations of an investment protection agreement are also under way with Myanmar. The European Commission finalised negotiations of a bilateral FTA with Singapore and Vietnam in October 2014 and December 2015 respectively. In March 2017, it was decided amongst the EU and senior ASEAN officials to establish a framework for talks to restart the negotiations

on a region-to-region FTA, albeit without a targeted time-frame thus far. Both sides declared that it is important to connect two growing markets and to take away as many obstacles to trade.

The fact that the member states of both regional organisations are quite different in terms of economic development and political systems is what complicates cooperation on political, economic, and socio-cultural issues. The gap between rich and poor states is bigger in Southeast Asia than in Europe; and whilst every European country has to be democratic, authoritarian regimes still tend to dominate in Southeast Asia. Additionally, it is important to note that ASEAN and the EU have developed different forms of regional cooperation. In the near future, ASEAN will remain as an intergovernmental organisation, simply because no member state is willing to transfer any national sovereignty to the regional level.

For a long time, many EU politicians believed in the European model with its supranational elements. However, with all the serious problems currently ongoing within the EU, many European decision-makers and scholars have developed a better understanding of the ASEAN states and their intergovernmental model of regional cooperation. This is a positive sign that the EU—ASEAN relationship will be one that is more equal and respecting in the future.

Malaysia and the EU–ASEAN Economic Cooperation

by Fumitaka Furuoka, Beatrice Lim and Rostika Petrus Boroh

Abstract

The economic cooperation between Southeast Asian and European countries can be considered as one of three main pillars, along with the political pillar and the socio-cultural and education pillar, in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) cooperation mechanism. Many issues on inter-regional cooperation between the EU and ASEAN are discussed as well during the EU-ASEAN ministerial meetings. At present, the EU and the Southeast Asian countries have significant trade relations and are important trading partners. Despite its importance, economic cooperation does not seem to work without difficulties. The initial EU-ASEAN negotiations were not successful due to the challenges in setting common standards amongst the ASEAN countries with varying political systems as well as the considerable differences in the size of their economies and populations. Other obstacles in the partnership between EU and ASEAN countries include human rights issues in trade policies as well as sustainable agriculture practices in emerging ASEAN economies. The inter-regional economic cooperation between Asia and Europe could contribute to the global economy. In this regard, the role of ASEM and the EU-ASEAN ministerial meetings therefore is very crucial.

Introduction

The economic cooperation between Southeast Asian and European countries is one of three main pillars, along with the political and the socio-cultural and education pillars; and can be considered the most important of the three in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) cooperation mechanism. This ASEM cooperation mechanism consists of 51 partner countries, and two institutional partners: the European Union Commission (EU) and the ASEAN Secretariat. More specifically, the ASEM economic cooperation was entrusted to three closely-connected organizations. Firstly, the Asia-Europe Business Forum

(AEBF) is a meeting of business leaders in the ASEM region that aims to promote business partnership in the region. Secondly, the Senior Official's Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI) is a meeting of the economic senior officials in the region aiming to strengthen economic partnership, and this includes the free trade agreement (FTA). Thirdly, the Financial Ministers' Meeting (FinMM) is a meeting of finance ministers with the aim to coordinate the monetary and financial policy in the region.

The economic cooperation in the region is one of the most important agendas in the ASEM. Since the establishment of the Single European Market in 1992, some Asian countries expressed their concern that the EU was increasingly becoming an "economic fortress" with protective barriers against non-member countries. In order to overcome the shortcomings of the "close regionalism", the ASEM could be a crucial multi-faceted "open regionalism" method to promote economic and business activities between Asia and Europe. For Europe, Asia can be an important market for their products; whereas for Asia, Europe can be an alternative source of new investments and advanced technologies. Despite its importance, economic cooperation does not seem to produce successful results. For example, the Asia-Europe Vision Group (AEVG) proposed to establish a comprehensive ASEM free trade area (FTA) by 2025 (Park, 2004). There have been numerous suggestions and policy dialogues on a long-term economic objective to establish an ASEM-FTA. However, no formal discussion about the ASEM-FTA has not taken place since 2006 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, 2015). This failure of the general ASEM-FTA seems to led to numerous discussions to establish bilateral FTA between the EU and ASEAN member countries. Singapore is the first ASEAN country to establish a bilateral FTA with the EU under the name of the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA) in 2014 (Sanderson,

2015). Following in their footsteps, Vietnam also established its own bilateral FTA with the EU in the subsequent year.

Awhile before the establishment of ASEM, the EU had been an ASEAN dialogue partner since 1977, and the ASEAN-EU cooperation agreement was formally signed three years later. Since then, many decisions on the economic relationship between the EU and ASEAN are made at EU-ASEAN ministerial meetings (ASEAN, 2017a). Furthermore, inter-regional cooperation between ASEAN and EU was strengthened by the “Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action (2013–2017)” which was adopted in 2012. Under this plan, ASEAN and EU made significant progress in the area of security and political cooperation as well as in economic and trade issues. In August 2017, the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan was replaced by a new ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022). Under this new plan, the ASEAN and EU would pursue a cooperation in conformity of international laws (ASEAN, 2017b).

In the case of Malaysia, it is considered one of EU’s important trade partners. Malaysia is the EU’s 22nd largest partner in the world and the 3rd largest trade partner amongst ASEAN countries. The international trade between Malaysia and EU is mainly comprised of manufacturing products. Malaysia exports machinery, appliances, plastics, rubber, and animal and vegetable fats to the EU. In return, Malaysia imports electrical equipment, machinery, and mechanical products from the EU. The total amount of exported goods from Malaysia to the EU amounted to €22 billion in 2016 whilst the total amount of import of goods from the EU into Malaysia amounted to €13.2 billion in the same year. The Malaysian government started a formal discussion to create the FTA between Malaysia and the EU in September 2010. However, the EU-Malaysia FTA negotiations were put on hold in April 2012 due to a formal request from the Malaysian government (European Commission, 2017a).

This chapter aims to give a brief overview of the development of the economic relationship between the EU and ASEAN, stressing herein the role of Malaysia. This chapter consists of four sections: this first section is the introduction, the second section focuses on the international trade relationship between ASEAN and EU, the third section analyses the general characteristics of the EU's investments in ASEAN, and the final section provides the conclusion.

Trade relationship between ASEAN and EU

ASEAN as a group represents the EU's 3rd largest trading partner after the US and China (European Commission, 2017b). It was reported that more than €246 billion of trade in goods and services occurred between ASEAN and the EU in 2014. On the other hand, the EU is ASEAN's second largest trading partner after China, accounting for around 13% of ASEAN trade (European Commission, 2017b). The EU's main exports to ASEAN are chemical products, machinery, and transport equipment. The main imports from ASEAN to the EU are machinery and transport equipment, agricultural products as well as textiles and clothing (European Commission, 2017b).

Besides that, the EU plays an important role in financing regional projects related to trade and this includes the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE PLUS); COMPASS (Statistics and integration monitoring); ASEAN Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (ECAP III); ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project (AATIP); and the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (e-READI) (European Commission, 2017b). The EU Commission is willing to negotiate a significant liberalization of trade in services between the EU and ASEAN regions. However, the initial EU-ASEAN negotiations were not successful due to challenges in setting common standards amongst the 10-member countries of

ASEAN having various political systems and stark differences in the size of their economies and populations (Morales, 2017).

Human rights problems have been an issue for many ASEAN states such as Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Laos, creating an obstacle for the EU given its requirement to consider human rights in its trade policies. While ASEAN is loosely modelled on the European Union, it has yet to establish successfully common standards that includes the free movement of goods, capital, and labour (Morales 2017). On the other hand, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was formally established at the end of 2015. Under the name of the economic community, ASEAN countries promised to implement ambitious plans such as the free movement of goods and services, as well as a freer flow of capital and skilled labour (ASEAN, 2017c).

The EU, however, was aware that negotiating an agreement with a single nation would be less complicated. Such talks have had mixed success, with deals so far agreed only with Singapore and most recently, Vietnam, which is yet to be implemented (Morales, 2017).

Other ongoing trade issues between the EU and ASEAN countries include the strict conditions imposed by EU on certain export goods from ASEAN such as palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia. Recently, on 4th of April 2017, the European Parliament (EP) adopted the Resolution on Palm Oil and Deforestation of Rainforests, aiming to reduce the negative impacts of deforestation due to unsustainable or illegal palm oil production (Singapore Institute of International Affairs, 2017). However, this new palm oil registration would only be legally enforceable if the European Commission and Council approved the EP resolution. The European Commission is expected to publish a proposal on the palm oil registration before the end of 2017 (The Guardian, 2017). In any case, there are two controversial proposals

in the Resolution which firstly involves the development of a new, single certification scheme for palm oil and palm oil products by 2020. The second involves phasing out and replacing palm oil used in biofuels with EU-grown vegetable oils by 2020 (Singapore Institute of International Affairs, 2017).

If enforced, ASEAN member countries, namely Malaysia and Indonesia will be significantly affected. The EU palm oil market accounts for 17 percent (4.37 million tonnes) and 13 percent (2.09 million tonnes) of Indonesian and Malaysian palm oil exports respectively. The livelihoods of numerous communities within ASEAN that depend on palm oil will be affected. These include migrant workers from Myanmar who work on palm oil plantations, as well as Indonesian and Malaysian smallholders who contribute about 40 percent to the global palm oil production (Singapore Institute of International Affairs, 2017).

Following this potential development, Malaysia sent a delegate to the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg to hold a discussion with the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Karmenu Vella, and two Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), Syed Kamall and Antonio Lopez-Isturiz White. During the meetings, Malaysian delegates expressed commitment to ensure that Malaysia would remain as the world's sustainable palm oil cultivation, particularly through the recent decision made by the Malaysian Government in making it mandatory for the Malaysian palm oil producers and processors to adopt the Malaysia Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) certification, targeted to be achieved by the end of 2019. The effort was welcomed by Karmenu Vella and two MEPs (Mah, 2017).

EU investments in ASEAN

The EU is by far the largest investor in ASEAN countries accounting for 22% of total FDI inflows in the region. EU companies have invested an average of

€19 billion annually in the region (2012–2014) (European Commission, 2017b). Albeit being one of the major investors in ASEAN countries, the FDI flows from the European Union declined by 20 per cent, from \$25 billion in 2014 to \$20 billion in 2015 (UNCTAD & ASEAN, 2016). The share of the top 10 investors from EU in ASEAN rose from 71 per cent in 2014 to 75 per cent in 2015. Of the top ten EU investors, Luxembourg was ranked 4th in 2014, whilst France and the Netherlands were positioned 9th and 10th, respectively. In 2015, the Netherlands ranked at 6th place. The FDI flow from Denmark increased, and was positioned in 9th place, whilst Luxembourg and France dropped out of the rankings. Germany's investment in ASEAN amounted to US\$409 million in 2016 and the country was positioned 5th amongst the EU countries (UNCTAD & ASEAN, 2016).

FDI from different economies dominated in different industries in ASEAN. In 2014, the FDI in extractive industries was dominated by investors from the EU and ASEAN. Japan, ASEAN, the Republic of Korea, and the European Union, in that order, accounted for 64 per cent of total FDI inflows into the manufacturing industry in 2015 (UNCTAD & ASEAN, 2016). In terms of services, three industries were the primary recipients (i.e. finance, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate). Australia, the European Union, and Japan were the largest investors in wholesale and retail trade activities (UNCTAD & ASEAN 2016). In 2015, three quarters of the European Union's FDI of US\$19.6 billion in ASEAN was concentrated in the services sector (UNCTAD & ASEAN, 2016).

In similar vein, foreign MNEs continue to expand their operations in ASEAN. The European MNEs including BASF, Continental, Infineon, Nestlé, L'Oreal, and GN ReSound; alongside MNEs from other countries such as the United States, Japan, and China, increased their operations in ASEAN through expansion of their investments in ASEAN host countries (UNCTAD &

ASEAN, 2016). Thus, the trade relationship between ASEAN and EU continue to look promising. The EU-ASEAN Business Council Business Sentiment Survey 2015 found that European businesses have a positive outlook for their operations in the region and view ASEAN as a bright spot for future investment and development of their businesses (EU-ASEAN Business Council 2015). Some 70 per cent of respondents predicted an increase in profits in ASEAN and 80 per cent expect that trade and investment within the region to increase over the next five years (UNCTAD & ASEAN, 2016).

Apart from the flow of capital, the flow or mobility of labour is also often a subject of regional cooperation. In the European Union, the right to unfettered movement of people is a fundamental part of regional integration and the policy for labour mobility has not changed much since 1957, when it was enshrined in the Treaty Establishing the European Community (Rubrico, 2015). However, it was only recently that ASEAN announces that the “free movement” of skilled labour was going to be one of the pillars of its economic integration and ambition to form a single market by 2015 (Rubrico, 2015). In future, to encourage enhanced people-to-people connectivity and to facilitate the flow of labour across ASEAN and the EU, the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting, as a dialogue and policy cooperation forum could consider a holistic approach to the free mobility of labour. Besides labour mobility, other topics such as academic/student exchanges, rights of migrants, as well as control and border management are discussed together (Jurje & Lavenex, 2016).

Concluding remarks

The bipolar security competition between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War era has been replaced by the economics-driven tripolar global competition amongst Asia, Europe, and North America in the post-Cold War period. In order to strengthen a “weak link” in this triadic inter-

regional relationship, the ASEM is expected to play a crucial role in the global economy. As a “building block” in the positive-sum game of inter-regional cooperation, economic cooperation between Asia and Europe is expected to spill over other regionalisms (Hänggi, 1999). More importantly, the inter-regional economic cooperation between Asia and Europe could contribute to the global economy by acting as a feasible inter-regional alignment against the hegemonic unilateralism (Dent, 2004). Under the Donald Trump administration, there is an increasing awareness that excesses of the US hegemonic unilateralism poses a potential threat to global prosperity. In January 2017, President Donald Trump intentionally weakened the inter-regional linkage between Asia and North America by signing the Presidential Memorandum to withdraw officially from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Before the US withdrawal, the TPP was considered the “biggest” trade deal in history which contained an aspiring plan to create a rule-based inter-regionalism, strengthening economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. As a result of this situation, the role of ASEM in the triadic global economy is proving to be of utmost importance.

References

- ASEAN (2017a). ASEAN-European Union Dialogue Relations. Retrieved from <http://asean.org/asean/external-relations/european-union/> [Accessed on 25 October 2017]
- ASEAN (2017b). ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022). Retrieved from <http://asean.org/asean-eu-plan-action-2018-2022/> [Accessed on 25 October 2017]
- ASEAN (2017c). ASEAN Economic Community. Retrieved from <http://asean.org/asean-economic-community/> [Accessed on 25 October 2017]
- Dent, C.M. (2004). The Asia-Europe Meeting and inter-regionalism: Toward a theory of multilateral utility. *Asian Survey*, 44:213–236

- European Commission (2017a). Countries and Regions: Malaysia. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/malaysia> [Accessed on 16 August 2017]
- European Commission (2017b). Countries and Regions: Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/asean> [Accessed on 21 August 2017]
- The Guardian (2017). MEPs vote to ban the use of palm oil in biofuels. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/apr/04/palm-oil-biofuels-meps-eu-transport-deforestation-zsl-greenpeace-golden-agri-resources-oxfam> [Accessed on 25 October 2017]
- Hänggi, H. (1999). ASEM and the construction of the New Triad. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 4:56–80
- Jurje, F. & Lavenex, S. (2016) Europe-Asia Connectivity: A Case for Labour Mobility. In A. Prakash, (Ed.), *Asia–Europe Connectivity Vision 2025: Challenges and Opportunities: An ERIA–Government of Mongolia Document* (159-170). Jakarta: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia
- Mah, S. K (2017, June 14). EU Resolution on Palm Oil and Deforestation of Rainforest: Special Mission to EU Parliament, Strasbourg
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand (2015). ASEM Symposium on the Future Direction of ASEM. Retrieved from <https://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/2015> [Accessed on 15 August 2017]
- Morales, N. J. (2017, March 10). EU and ASEAN agree to put free trade pact on agenda. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-asean/eu-and-asean-agree-to-put-free-trade-pact-back-on-agenda-idUSKBN16H0S7> [Accessed on 23 August 2017]
- Park, S.H. (2004). ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations: Background, characteristics and challenges. *Asia Europe Journal*, 2:341–354
- Rubrico, J. G. (2015). Free Flow, Managed Movement: Labour mobility policies in ASEAN and the EU, EIAS Briefing Paper 2015/03, European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels
- Sanderson, C. (2015). Singapore and Europe: From Strength to Strength. Round Table, 4, 499–501
- Singapore Institute of International Affairs (2017). Why does the EU’s recent Resolution on palm oil matter to ASEAN? Retrieved from

<http://www.siaaonline.org/why-does-the-eus-recent-resolution-on-palm-oil-matter-to-asean/> [Accessed on 23 August 2017]

- UNCTAD & ASEAN. (2016). ASEAN Investment Report 2016: Foreign Direct Investment and MSME Linkages. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat. Retrieved from <https://www.mpic.gov.my/mpic/index.php/en/media-mpic-vbi/media-release/3104> [Accessed on 23 August 2017]

Malaysia and the EU–ASEAN Political Cooperation

by Patrick Ziegenhain

Introduction

The EU and ASEAN are the two most important regional organisations worldwide, working together in many ways. This chapter describes the various dimensions of political and security cooperation of the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018–2022) before discussing the most urgent challenges currently faced. One aspect of this overview chapter is looking at Malaysia's specific role in the political dialogue between ASEAN and the EU, and the explanation of the most important aspects of the recently signed EU-Malaysia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

Political Cooperation between the EU and ASEAN

As highlighted in the introduction of this booklet, the cooperation between the EU and ASEAN has gone through its ups and downs since 1972 when its informal dialogue first took place. At the initial stage and throughout the first two decades, the dialogue was highly asymmetrical and the main focus was on trade and economic issues. Until now both regional organisations place strong emphasis on the economic aspects, but in the 2000s, also agreed to broaden the dialogue to other areas of interaction to include cooperation on political and security matters.

Important milestones in this regard were the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership, adopted in March 2007, which sets out the long-term vision and commitment of both sides. In 2012, the EU became the first regional organisation to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in

Southeast Asia (TAC), which underlines the EU's political and security engagement with ASEAN.

The ASEAN-EU Plan of Action, designed to define the cooperation between 2018 and 2022, was signed by representatives of both regional organisations in August 2017. It replaced the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action that was valid from 2013 to 2017. The action plan lines out the most important issues of the interregional cooperation between the EU and ASEAN for the subsequent years. It intends to enhance the strategic dialogue between the two regional organisations and deepen political and security cooperation.

The EU reiterated its support for ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture in East Asia. Additionally, the EU offered to deepen the cooperation with ASEAN in defence and security matters such as in the areas of maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations, military medicine, and counter-terrorism. To implement the latter, both sides agreed to review the implementation of the ASEAN-EU Work Plan to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Crime (2014–2017). The EU also agreed to facilitate the implementation of the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities against Illicit Drugs (2016–2025). Regarding this issue, the EU has already clashed heavily with Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 and 2017. The outspoken president of the Philippines has repeatedly threatened to expel all EU member states' ambassadors after the European Parliament issued a resolution expressing concern over the “extraordinarily high numbers killed during police operations” in the drug war waged in the Philippines.

Another issue of mutual cooperation in the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action is the strategy to enhance maritime security cooperation and share knowledge and expertise in the sustainable joint management of marine resources. A High Level Dialogue on Maritime Security Cooperation has been taking place

regularly since 2013 exploring maritime security, inter-agency coordination, investigation of incidents, and port security.

The EU and ASEAN have also agreed to promote disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. With this strategy, both regional organisations pursue their traditional security policies, although the international environment (a rising and military dominant China for ASEAN, unclear future of NATO, and tensions with Russia for the EU) does not encourage such pacifistic policies. Nevertheless, ASEAN and the EU speak out in favour of the promotion of peace-oriented values and are set on strategies of dialogue and cooperation instead of using military and diplomatic threats.

Finally, both sides agree to promote cooperation on human rights and good governance. With regard to the different levels of democracy in both regions and the tensions from the 1990s, the EU is quite diplomatic when it offers to promote capacity-building and support ASEAN's efforts in strengthening democracy, good governance, rule of law, and judiciary systems through the sharing of experiences and best practices.

Political Cooperation between the EU and Malaysia

The relationship between the EU and Malaysia is based on a well-developed mutual trade or, more specifically, the mutual cooperation in trade and economic issues is the driving force for closer ties between the EU and Malaysia.

In political terms, the EU supports a variety of cooperation projects with Malaysia in areas such as higher education, human rights, the environment, and sustainable economic development. Since the opening of an office for the EU Commission in Kuala Lumpur, bilateral ties between Malaysia and the EU have been significantly strengthened through political dialogue and a variety of cooperation activities in many areas. The EU sponsors a significant number

of Malaysian authorities and civil society organisations under different programmes.

The EU's cooperation in terms of human rights aims to strengthen the role of Malaysian civil society by promoting human rights and democratic reforms. The EU promotes various human rights issues in Malaysia whereby its priorities are promoting the ratification of core human rights conventions; the promotion of children's, women's, and indigenous peoples' rights; and the abolishment of the death penalty. In this regard, the EU Commission has worked closely together with the Malaysian Bar Council and the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM), organising a campaign to abolish capital punishment. Additionally, the EU has worked together with SUHAKAM since 2008 to organise an annual human rights seminar in conjunction with the International Human Rights Day on 9 December.

In December 2013, the EU and Sabah Forestry Department launched a 16 million Ringgit programme on tackling climate change and create sustainable forest management. Under the Migration EU Expertise II (MIEUX II) facility, European experts provide training to Malaysian authorities to effectively manage migration through improved border management practices and procedures to curb irregular migration with regards to human rights principles. In addition, the EU has funded projects for the capacity building of local civil society organisations that work to promote the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers. An example is the Humana Learning Centres in Sabah, run by the Humana Child Aid Society, and aims to provide basic primary education to over 12,000 children of illegal immigrants and stateless communities. Under the current Malaysian regulations, these children are excluded from access to school education.

Until 2016, bilateral relations between the EU and Malaysia were based upon a European Commission–ASEAN Cooperation Agreement signed in 1980. In October 2010, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak and EU leaders launched two major EU-Malaysia bilateral initiatives, namely the negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Whilst the FTA negotiations are at an advanced stage but have yet to be finalised, the PCA was signed in April 2016 after six years of consultations by the Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. Malaysia was the sixth ASEAN member state to have a PCA with the EU. During this occasion, Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy had said that "today's initialling is a concrete step that will further advance our bilateral relations. The Agreement will reinforce our political dialogue with Malaysia on a range of issues" (European External Action Service 2016).

The EU-Malaysia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement provides an overarching legal framework for strengthening EU-Malaysia bilateral cooperation. It aims to enhance political dialogue to intensify the EU-Malaysia relationship regarding regional and global issues such as counter-terrorism, the fight against corruption, the promotion of human rights and of international justice, and the strengthening of the international framework for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The PCA also intends to give more scope for sectoral cooperation in a broad number of areas of mutual interest such as migration issues, money laundering and terrorism financing, information society, cyber security, science and innovation, green technologies, energy, transport, education, environment, health, labour and employment, and public administration.

The bilateral FTA between the EU and Malaysia which started in 2010, was put on hold in April 2012 at Malaysia's request. The EU Commission stated that it had already reached the half-way point of the FTA negotiations with Malaysia, however, the most difficult issues remain unresolved. In 2016, a stocktaking exercise took place to assess the prospect to resume negotiations. In March 2017, representatives from the EU Commission and Malaysian ministers agreed in principle to re-launch the negotiations in due course.

Conclusion and Current Challenges of EU-ASEAN Relations

At the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting in Manila in August 2017, Federica Mogherini, Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy stated: "We, Europeans, care about your countries, your people: we have an interest in the security and development of your countries, because these are essential to security and development all over the world" (European External Action Service 2017).

In reality however, despite some occasional rhetoric such as the abovementioned, ASEAN is still not judged as central to the EU's interests. Despite the paper of the European Commission from 2015 which intended to create a strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN, the EU foreign and security policy considerations focus on its immediate neighbourhood, Russia and the Middle East; Southeast Asia as a region continues to be neglected. In Asia, only China is often regarded as relevant for the future of Europe. The same holds true for the ASEAN member states. China is not only the most important business partner but also generally seen as the greatest challenge for the future. Europe is still considered an important trade partner, but is also often more seen – with regard to the colonial period – as the past. The current crises in Europe (Euro debt crisis, refugee and migration issue, Brexit, rise of populism) led to internal discord amongst the Europeans and did not improve

the situation. Despite more than 35 years of dialogue and cooperation, Singapore-based scholar Lay Hwee Yeo wrote in a critical manner that “ASEAN-EU ties continued to be low key, fraught with challenges and some say even benign neglect” (Lay Hwee Yeo, 2010).

Nevertheless, this relationship should not be underestimated because the regular inter-regional (EU-ASEAN) and trans-regional (ASEM) dialogues have had at least some minor impact to build and deepen diplomatic ties. The EU and ASEAN are working together in many fields, and this includes the political dialogue, not just trade issues. The former EU ambassador to Malaysia, Luc Vandebon, said in a speech at the AEI in 2014 that there is “hardly any area of public policy without some degree of cooperation between EU and ASEAN” (Vandebon, 2014).

At the same time, the political and security cooperation between ASEAN and the EU continues to work quite smoothly. The cooperation takes place through existing ASEAN-EU mechanisms such as the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting, the ASEAN-EU Senior Officials’ Meeting as well as through dialogue and cooperation frameworks initiated by ASEAN such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMCs) 10+1. Due to the frequent and regular meetings held, the ASEAN and EU governments should be able to learn from each other and have a better understanding of one another. Thus far, the dialogue on political and security issues between the EU and ASEAN contributes to better coordination of the activities of both regional organisations.

At an AEI conference on 4 August 2017, former ASEAN secretary Surin Pitsuwan said that the exchange of scholars, students, and transfer of technology were extremely important to connect and familiarise the two regions with each other. He stated that “regional organisations such as EU and

ASEAN must work together to ensure the road into the future has to involve multilateralism. It has to also involve collective bargaining where nobody is going to get 100 per cent but some parts of the agreement.” He also stated that he “would like to see EU make its case more forcefully through human resource development and transfer of technology, to become a positive force in the growth of ASEAN" (Pitsuwan 2017).

The dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues between ASEAN and the EU are relevant, even if trade and economic issues are of higher importance for both sides. The same refers to Malaysian-EU relations. Of course, the most decisive topics are trade and tariffs, because they are of utmost importance for both sides. Nonetheless, the dialogue on political and security issues provides both the regional organisations and the individual member state countries with more insights on each other and this will surely help to improve mutual understanding.

References

- ASEAN (2017): ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022. Retrieved from <http://asean.org/storage/2017/08/ASEAN-EU-POA-2018-2022-Final.pdf> [accessed 8 November 2017]
- European Commission (2015): Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council– The EU and ASEAN: a Partnership with a Strategic Purpose. Retrieved from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/> [accessed 8 November 2017]
- European External Action Service (2016): European Union–Malaysia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement initialled today. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5348/european-union-malaysia-partnership-and-cooperation-agreement-initialled-today_en [accessed 8 November 2017]
- European External Action Service (2017): High Representative Mogherini co-chairs in Manila EU-ASEAN Ministerial meeting. Retrieved from <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters->

homepage/30833/high-representative-mogherini-co-chairs-manila-eu-asean-ministerial-meeting_lt [accessed 8 November 2017]

- Lay Hwee Leo (2010): Institutional Regionalism versus Networked Regionalism: Europe and Asia Compared, in: *International Politics*, Vol. 47, Issue 3–4, pp. 324–337
- Manea, Maria-Gabriela (2008): Human rights and the interregional dialogue between Asia and Europe: ASEAN—EU relations and ASEM, in: *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 369-396
- Vandenbon, Luc (2014): *The EU Relationship with ASEAN*, AEI Occasional Paper 23, Kuala Lumpur: Asia Europe Institute
- Pitsuwan, Surin (2017): Speech delivered at the Asia-Europe Conference 2017, 4 August 2017, Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The EU–ASEAN Socio-Cultural Cooperation

by Sameer Kumar

Abstract

While the other two communities of ASEAN—the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), stress political and economic cooperation respectively, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) reflects on the ASEAN’s social agenda of poverty eradication and human advancement. Since the last 40 years, EU has been a strategic partner of ASEAN supporting its community building process. Keeping ASCC as the central actor, this paper looks into the past, present and future of ASEAN-EU Socio-Cultural cooperation, as evidenced through Blueprints, Plan for Action, and other policy documents. A section is devoted to the Malaysia-EU relations. This chapter is concluded by looking at some of the recent challenges the ASCC is facing and possible ways these could be addressed.

Introduction

The association of EU (originally EEC, then EC) and ASEAN have come a long way since 1977, when their relations were formalized at the ministerial level. Today, there is a deepened existing cooperation and enhanced dialogue in addition to expanded financial support. An increasing number of citizens from both regions travel between them for cultural, business, academic, and other reasons. Although ASEAN Socio-Cultural community is fairly new in its conceptualization, it remains an important agenda item in ASEAN-EU cooperation. ASCC adds a ‘human’ component to the ASEAN community by committing itself to improve the quality of life through people-oriented, people-centric activities that are environmentally friendly and geared towards the promotion of sustainable development. Being the two major regional organisations in the world, the EU and ASEAN share ‘a common DNA’ and are thus considered to be natural partners (EEAS, 2017b). Both these

organisations share the same goals of peace, stability, and prosperity for its citizens and addressing issues through multilateralism.

The three pillars of the ASEAN Community do not work in isolation, but rather collectively to make ASEAN a stable, safer, more prosperous, sustainable, and peaceful region. Making opportunities accessible to all without the barriers of religion, language, gender, or other social and cultural backgrounds is embedded in the ASEAN Vision 2020, Declaration of ASEAN Concord I and II, and the Hanoi Plan for Action (HPA). Socio-Cultural cooperation is crucial to ASEAN, as it juxtaposes normative or identity regionalism with its functionalist role. The very idea of an ‘ASEAN Way’ for diplomacy, for example, has constructivist roots in the Malay culture of consultations and consensus (*musyawarah dan mufakat*). By and large, ASEAN has been successful in establishing a ‘prototype regional identity’, which itself is a phenomenal success given its extreme diversity, and the fact the young nations of this region were involved in a difficult and complex nation-building process during the Cold War period.

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Cooperation

Although socio-cultural cooperation was featured in both the Bangkok declaration of 1967 and in the 1997 Vision 2020 document of the ASEAN, it was not until the adoption of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) in 2009 that such a cooperation between ASEAN nations was formalized. Adopted as part of the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap of ASEAN Community (2009–2015) at the 14th ASEAN Summit, the blueprint aims to improve the quality of life of its people through cooperative activities and through the promotion of human and social development. With the formation of ASCC, ASEAN expanded its dimension of cooperation, which hitherto had been mainly in the areas of economics and political security.

Another aspect of ASCC is engagement with civil society to create a common ASEAN identity. ASEAN nations and ASEAN itself have several projects that involve the media and events (i.e., cultural events or competitions) to create a kind of regional identity amongst its people. Although not specifically an ASEAN-sponsored event, the Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) held recently in Kuala Lumpur (19–30 August 2017) is one such example, where the region with all its diversity nonetheless feels a sense of unity. Such events undoubtedly fan the feelings of common regional identity. The ASEAN Foundation, as an ASEAN body, has been instrumental in bringing this sense of identity. This foundation is working with strategic partners to promote awareness about ASEAN through its varied culture and heritage.

ASCC goals are achieved through the cooperation in the areas of education, sports, culture and arts, information, labour, youth, women, civil service, science and technology, and providing for the region's human capital needs. Plans are worked out for region-wide cooperation and implementation in the areas of social welfare and development health, disaster management, transboundary haze pollution, the environment, rural development, and poverty eradication. There is a regional agreement, for example, on disaster management and emergency response and the Peatland Management Initiative for the sustainable management of peatlands in addressing the haze problem.

The implementation of the first ASCC Blueprint (2009–2015) saw significant progress in the advancement of human development, social justice and protection, environmental sustainability, and a general reduction in the human development gap. Policy and legal frameworks for the elimination of violence against women and children and a declaration on non-communicable diseases have seen increased commitment. During these years, the ASEAN nations saw a rapid decline in poverty levels, an increase in primary education enrolments, and a decrease in maternal mortality rate, among others. The ASCC Scorecard

developed by ASEAN Secretariat in association with S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies confirms this positive level of achievements. The Scorecard has 208 indicators across 5 broad segments to measure and reflect how far the goals and targets of ASCC pillar have been achieved (Secretariat, 2016a).

With achievements in the implementation of the roadmap for an ASEAN community (2009–2015) and the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community on December 31, 2015, the goal for ASEAN nations is now to have greater regional integration, set through its post-2015 vision and guided by the ASEAN Charter. The current ASCC Blueprint 2025 seeks to consolidate the progress made by the earlier blueprint so that its benefits can be secured. Amongst these benefits is the necessity to protect lower-income people, who tend to be more vulnerable to both the vagaries of nature and human-induced disasters. While addressing issues of social protection, the community also needs to address more recent concerns of migration, extremism, and climate change (Secretariat, 2016b).

Taking inspiration from the year's theme of "Partnering for Change, Engaging the World", the ministers of all ten ASEAN member nations met on 8 March 2017 in Iloilo City at the 17th ASCC Council meeting under the chairmanship of the Philippines, and extended strong support for the realization of the Socio-Cultural community under thematic priorities which included a renewed stress on a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN. The 17th ASCC also took stock of the implementation of the ASCC 2025 Blueprint through the various sectoral ministerial bodies under the realm of the ASCC. These include AMRI (Information), AMCA (Culture and Arts), ASED (Education), AMMDM (Disaster Management), AMME (Environment), COP (Transboundary Haze Pollution), AHMM (Health), ALMM (Labour), AMRDPE (Rural

Development and Poverty Eradication), AMMY (Youth), and AUN (ASEAN Universities Network), among others.

ASEAN-EU Socio-Cultural Cooperation

The 2007 Nuremberg Declaration underlined the EU and ASEAN's mutual resolve to build strong regional organisations in accordance with the UN Charter, and to further deepening of its dialogue relations by sharing their experience of community building. The declaration reiterated their resolve to combating the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and recognising that climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today. Although there had been several discussions of cooperation on economic, political security, energy security, and Socio-Cultural cooperation in the past (i.e., Bali Concord II, Vientiane Action Programme, etc.) between the EU and ASEAN, the Nuremberg Declaration was perhaps the first most elaborate action plan to increase cooperation between the two regions. There was a resolve to work closely in addressing the growing concern of the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, disaster management, increasing people-to-people contact through cultural exchanges, interfaith dialogue, etc., and expanding cooperation in S&T, education, arts and culture, etc.

In April 2012, the foreign ministers of ASEAN and the EU adopted the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan for action, building on the ASEAN-EU cooperation from 2013–2017. The plan provides support for higher education in ASEAN, backing for the AUN (ASEAN University Network), S&T, environmental policies, sustainable development, and disaster response. A proportionate sum of the EU financial contribution, which runs into several million Euros, supports the implementation of the ASCC blueprint. Two supports provided by the EU to ASEAN need special mention here. The first is the READI

(Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument) Facility which provided 4 million euros from 2011–2014 and supported policy dialogue, study visits, and exchanges in areas such as ICT, S&T, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). A further support for human rights in ASEAN comes in the form of READI-HRF. This facility was a two-year EU initiative from August 2015–August 2017 to support the policy development process with particular respect to human rights, with major beneficiaries (human rights bodies) being the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human rights (AIHCR), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), and the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers (ACMW). Another initiative by the EU is EU-SHARE (EU Support of Higher Education in ASEAN Region) which aims to strengthen ASEAN higher education, thus contributing to the ASCC. The current duration of the project is 4 years (January 2015–January 2019) and a sum of about 10 million euros has been committed to the initiative. However, it also remains crucial that for the benefits to reach the citizens, the integration initiatives need to be sustained. Hence, there are discussions to support projects like these on a more long-term basis. In order to contribute to reducing regional disparities, CLMV countries receive special attention from the EU with extra allocations of resources.

There has been significant cooperation in higher education, where scholarships under schemes such as Erasmus+ are provided to both scholars and students to carry out studies and research in the EU member states. Specific foundations such as Alexander Von Humboldt promote educational cooperation between Germany and rest of the world, including ASEAN nations.

As all member nations of EU are also members of the UN, ASEAN-UN relations deserve a mention. During the 14th ASEAN Summit, a commitment to the attainment of UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was made.

MDGs are a set of 8 goals that includes, amongst others, the resolve to reduce extreme poverty and improve general well-being by 2015. MDGs were replaced by SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in 2016, which now include 17 global goals with the aim of transforming the world by 2030. The common goals of ASEAN's Vision 2025 blueprints and the SDGs make ASEAN recognise the importance of creating synergies for implementing respective agendas within the ASEAN-UN framework. During 2015, ASEAN-UN set out to develop an Action Plan (2016–2020) for a comprehensive partnership between the two organisations.

EU nations as members of UNESCO have been involved in cooperation through the Framework Agreement for Cooperation developed in accordance with the ASCC blueprint, in the seven priority areas of common interest, namely education, STI, disaster risk reduction, environmental sustainability, social and human sciences, culture and communication, and information. An ASEAN-UNESCO Indicative Joint Programme for Action (2014–2018), which forms part of the Framework Agreement, is periodically reviewed. The ASEAN Secretariat (DSG, ASCC) and UNESCO office in Jakarta have been the designated focal points for the implantation of the framework (Secretariat, 2013). In October 2016, the two parties met and reviewed the progress before setting three priority clusters for joint activities, namely education and culture, communication and information, and environment and STI.

ASEM's (Asia-Europe Meeting) Socio, Cultural and Educational pillar, coincides with the goals and aspirations of ASEAN's Socio-cultural community. In this regard, ASEM's only institution, ASEF (Asia-Europe Foundation) in Singapore has worked as a 'cultural broker' in inter-regional co-operation (Le Thu, 2018). ASEF was founded in 1997 as an outcome of an agreement during Ministerial Declaration of the 1st ASEM Foreign Ministers'

Meeting (FMM1). The foundation runs several programmes including initiatives in Cultural Mobility, Environment and Education.

The new ASEAN-EU Plan for Action (2018–2022) has now replaced the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan for action (2013–2017) (EEAS, 2017a). The plan seeks to enhance cooperation in the area of education and culture by having student exchanges, institutional collaborations, facilitating increased interaction with AUN (ASEAN Universities Network) and EU member states, and promotion of cultural understanding between the two regional blocs. The plan also proposes cooperation to counter the challenge of pandemics, EIDs and other potential health threats, promote the rights of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and migrant workers, looking for ways to improve dialogues in crisis, and disaster management and address global environmental challenges. The EU plans to work with the ASEAN Commission on the Protection of the rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and ASEAN Committee on Women (AWA) to promote gender equality, women living with HIV/AIDS, and reduce gender-based violence, among others.

EU-Malaysia Socio-Cultural Cooperation

The 1980 EU cooperation with ASEAN is the principal framework for cooperation with Malaysia. Since the opening up of an EU delegation in Malaysia, there has been increased cooperation, and dialogues on shared interests and issues have been regularly held. The EU has a comprehensive environmental cooperation with Malaysia that covers areas such as green technology, renewable energy, and sustainable forest management. In order to facilitate Malaysia in moving towards a green economy, the EU holds annual policy dialogues with the relevant ministries in Malaysia. Climate change is a serious issue, and the EU is providing support to Malaysia in order to reduce

its carbon footprint, thus doing its part to keeping global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. Other projects backed by the EU include support for small producers of *batik* and biomass industries, and the protection of peatland forests. Scientific collaborations between the EU and Malaysia (and ASEAN) is provisioned through Horizon 2020 (2014–2020), EU’s instrument for funding research in Europe and elsewhere. EU’s earlier FP7 (2007–2013) programme significantly benefited Malaysian scholars and institutions. During this period, 15 Malaysian scientists received the prestigious Marie Curie Fellowship. The EURAXESS-ASEAN network provides further opportunities for Malaysian researchers to network with thousands of researchers from Europe and the world over, in addition to providing opportunities conducting research and studies in the EU. Through EIDHR, the EU provides financial support to CSOs to promote human rights and democratic reforms. With SUHAKAM, it has held an annual seminar on human rights on 9 December, the International Human Rights Day. In accordance with the UN’s Child Rights Convention, EU’s Humana Learning Centers provide education to marginalized or stateless children in Sabah (Commission, 2017; EEAS, 2017c).

Conclusions

The people of the Southeast Asian region have been interacting with one another over the last two millennia. The Indian (Hindu-Buddhist) influence over its kingdoms of Srivijaya, Shailendra, Majapahit, Champa, Khmer, Pagan, Ayutthaya and others, and later the arrival of Islam in the fifteenth century gave Southeast Asia a certain degree of ‘region-ness’. The porous boundaries and the various feudal arrangements between kingdoms meant unceasing interaction between its people (for trade, etc.), leading to the cross-diffusion of cultures. Add to these the tropical climate, cultivation of rice, folk migrations, common language families, etc. that further bind the people and hold the region together as a collective. Hence, the formation and strengthening of ASEAN as

an organisation was a natural progression of its historical lineage and ecological similarities. The crises in the region during the Cold War period, especially between 1979–91, provided ASEAN with a renewed sense of unity. ASEAN today has emerged stronger and is coming even closer with the establishment of the Community in 2015.

The EU has been a strong supporter of ASEAN socio-cultural initiatives and has significantly contributed in making Southeast Asia a more peaceful and prosperous region. However, in order to make ASEAN a more “people-centred” or “people-oriented” community, the future direction has to take into consideration the new challenges that the region is facing. A person in ASEAN today is expected to live 15 years longer than in 1967. Conversely, the population has grown 3.4 times in these 56 years. All these pose new challenges to the national governments in meeting the needs and aspirations of their people. The challenges are enormous, ranging from combating the threat of emerging infectious diseases and transboundary haze to more effective disaster management to policies to reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty amongst its people. As just one of the steps, for people to be more productive, more investment in education, TVET, and lifelong learning are required. Several such measures need to be meticulously executed so that the benefits directly reach its people. With the drafting of the ASEAN–EU Plan for Action 2018–22, opportunities for deeper cooperation remain bright.

Interaction amongst people through sports, tourism, cultural events, academic exchanges, educational credit transfer, and effective use of online and offline media needs to be enhanced in order to promote ASEAN awareness. Such an effort would also bring an increased sense of a common identity percolating down to the masses.

If there are two aspects that could drive ASEAN forward, it would be innovation and accommodation. Innovation through Science and Technology (STI) R&D would spur growth, leading to sustainable prosperity in the region and thereby bringing a general sense of happiness among its people. Through accommodation, we would learn to respect others' cultures, ideas, and beliefs.

ASEAN, which still remains top-down or inter-governmental, is perceived as needing to reach out to the people. The genuine involvement of CSOs plays an important role here, otherwise the idea of a people-centred ASEAN would remain more rhetorical than a reality. Community-building should remain an ongoing process, and the ASCC Blueprint 2025 is undoubtedly a guiding light for the next decade and beyond.

References

- ASEAN Secretariat (2013). Framework Agreement for Cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Retrieved from http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2013/socio_cultural/asean-unesco%20fac-%20final%20text%20formatted%20for%20signing__.pdf
- ASEAN Secretariat (2016a). 2015 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Scorecard, 1-60. Retrieved from <http://www.asean.org/storage/2016/04/9.-March-2016-2015-ASCC-Scorecard-1.pdf>
- ASEAN Secretariat (2016b). ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025: Jakarta: Author, 2016a. Implications of the Urban Landscape Commission, I. C. a. D.-E. (2017). Human Learning Centers. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tags/humana-learning-centres_en
- European External Action Service (2017a). ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022 - EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission. Retrieved from [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/30781/ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/30781/ASEAN-EU%20Plan%20of%20Action%202018-2022)

- European External Action Service (2017b). EU-ASEAN Natural Partners. Retrieved from http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/asean/docs/eu_asean_natural_partners_en.pdf
- European External Action Service (2017c). Malaysia and the EU - EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission. Retrieved from [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malaysia_en/1487/Malaysia and the EU](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malaysia_en/1487/Malaysia%20and%20the%20EU)
- Le Thu, H. (2018). The Value-Added ASEM: The Socio-Cultural Dialogue. Paper presented at the Inter-Regional Relations and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Malaysia and the EU–ASEAN Cooperation in Higher Education

by Azirah Hashim and Yee Chee Leong

Introduction

The mobility of academics and students has been an important feature in higher education cooperation between ASEAN and the EU. Each year, ASEAN students and academics travel to the EU countries on education scholarships and research fellowships through the Erasmus Mundus and Marie Curie programmes and other EU member states' scholarships. These exchanges have generated closer ties and brought about socio-economic impact for both regions mainly through the Bologna process in European higher education. This process has created both the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), which are instrumental in guiding today's multilateral developments in higher education in ASEAN. An overview of the EU higher education landscape will provide a better understanding about the ASEAN-EU cooperation in higher education.

Higher education in the European context

The Bologna Process, named after the University of Bologna, during which the Bologna declaration was signed in 1999, arose from a series of ministerial meetings and cooperative agreements between European countries to ensure comparability and recognition of higher education standards, quality and qualifications. It was “an example of a successful policy coordination of national policies and regional cooperation [within and] beyond the European Union” (Pol, 2015, p. 12). Some of the core values that underpin the foundations of the Bologna process such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, mutual dependency of teaching and research, and the increasing

outreach role of universities in international society have inspired its success. These values and purposes were referenced in the Bologna Charta Universitatum (1988) in view of the needs for a knowledge economy i.e. the creation of a ‘Europe of knowledge’, as stipulated in the La Sorbonne Declaration (Pol, 2015, p. 14).

Following the aspiration of EHEA, the development of a European academic community was driven through the Erasmus Mundus programmes for student and staff mobility across Europe during 2004–2013. This programme operates through scholarships and cooperation between European countries, and subsequently between the EU and the rest of the world. It supports key actions to improve the development of human resources, promotes dialogue and communication between people and culture for enhancing the quality in higher education, and promotes Europe as a centre of excellence in learning around the globe. Hence, it has become the living emblem of the Bologna Process as it successfully “builds bridges with other regions of the world” (Pol, 2015, p. 12) and becomes the elite mobility programme under the Key Action 1 of Erasmus+ programme, which is the EU’s signatory programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sports for the period 2014–2020 (Erasmus Commission, 2017a, p. 5).

Erasmus Mundus (and today, cf. Erasmus+) programmes are facilitated by various Bologna principles, tools and instruments necessary for the establishment of the EHEA. These enablers are important in higher education and have been adopted since the Yerevan conference in 2015 and within all other Ministerial Communiques. Notably, the EU efforts have generated a myriad collection of Bologna initiatives and instruments to achieve quality in higher education and recognition of higher education qualifications. Such initiatives include, but are not limited to, the 3 Bologna cycles; the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); the European Credit Transfer System

(ECTS); the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG); the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and so on. Tools such as the ECTS user guide, Diploma Supplement, Transcript of Records, Erasmus+ Programme Guide and others are key to intra- and international mobility.

Following the main action lines of EHEA, Erasmus+ programmes and the Europe 2020 Strategy for education development, all subsequent Ministerial meetings have also included relevant strategies for the external dimension of the Bologna Process (Pol, 2017; European Commission, 2017a). This includes more internationalisation of EHEA with the world to address global challenges. Hence, the European Commission is pursuing a global approach for interregional higher education exchange for and beyond 2020. With a renewed engagement outlook between the EU and ASEAN, and with both parties celebrating their 40th anniversary in 2017 since the establishment of formal cooperation and dialogue at the 10th Ministerial meeting in 1977 in Brussels, all existing and future ASEAN-EU cooperation in higher education will bring forth closer ties for mobility and cross-fertilisation of knowledge between both regions (European Commission, 2017b). The ultimate aim of this synergy would be a sustainable increase in human calibre and greater people-to-people connectivity for socio-economic prosperity that leverages on comparable and/or harmonised education systems.

Higher education developments in ASEAN

While the ASEAN integrative model of intergovernmental organisation may resemble somewhat the EU supranational organisation in some respects, the region has shown significant progress in higher education developments that are in tandem with the Bologna Process. The aspirations for a higher education area in ASEAN vis-à-vis EHEA underpin the principles of higher education as

a catalyst for economic integration that depends on human development and more so, for people-to-people connectivity. Regionalisation and harmonisation of ASEAN Member States' higher education systems are crucial for the creation of this common space to facilitate mutual understanding and promote regional identity. An increased growth in intra-ASEAN collaboration among universities, international mobility within and beyond ASEAN, and knowledge exchanges with the EU to tackle global challenges, are some significant impacts that are benefiting the ASEAN region tremendously.

The 'ASEAN Vision 2020' (1997) and the ASEAN Charter (2007) have highlighted the importance of education integration for human capital development and empowerment to strengthen the ASEAN Community. Education "permeates through all the three pillars of ASEAN Community in enhancing competitiveness of individual member states as well as ASEAN as a region" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009)—in particular, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint (ASCC) 2009 has outlined several important goals to nurture human resources to achieve sustainable development in a harmonious and people-centred ASEAN. The ASEAN Senior Official Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) and the ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM) manage various actions that are relevant to education as stipulated in this Blueprint.

As indicated by the Cham-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community (2009–2015), the education sector has a pivotal role in "ensuring the solidarity and unity among the nations and people of ASEAN" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). Therefore, regional cooperation in higher education is very much encouraged and promoted during this period. Internationalisation of education and the external dimension akin to the EU's Erasmus+ programmes is further explored within the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011–2015). Subsequently, the KL/ASEAN Declaration

on Higher Education in 2015 also supports the cross-border mobility theme by enhancing and intensifying regional cooperative efforts in academic, research and community development. All ASEAN member states are encouraged to share good practices of higher education in the region, and to explore the intra ASEAN mobility phenomenon that involves students and scholars, as well as a common Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) standard of competencies for a harmonised TVET education in the region. These significant developments have created many opportunities for higher education in ASEAN to collaborate with their EU partners. Both focus areas have been incorporated in the ASEAN Work Plan for Education (2016–2020).

Since the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, higher education has become an enabler in its driving forces that include free flow of people (educators, students, scholars, etc.), and free flow of information and knowledge within the region. These resonate with the aspirations of the ‘Europe of knowledge’ or the ‘knowledge economy’ (Pol, 2015, p. 14) within the Europe 2020 Strategy in the EU context. In the ASEAN Post-2015 Vision on Education (2014), the post AEC vision and key elements of education emphasise the ‘widening of educational cooperation’ for quality inclusive education and lifelong learning which leads to the outline of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together (ACV 2025) in 2016.

Subsequently, all three pillars of the ASEAN Community including the ASCC Blueprint (now referred to as the ASCC Blueprint 2025) were upgraded to incorporate the vision of a ‘Dynamic ASEAN’ to promote “an innovative ASEAN approach to higher education” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015, p. 59) through people-to-people connectivity and mobility; free flow of ideas, knowledge, expertise and skills; and strong regional and global cooperation in higher education. Hence, the ASEAN 5-Year Workplan on Education (2016–

2020), under the ASCC 2025, contains key elements such as higher education quality assurance, university-industry and global partnership, capacity building for educators, education for sustainable development and so on, in order to fulfil the vision of a dynamic ASEAN higher education area as envisioned in the Blueprint.

Over the course of higher education developments in ASEAN, both SOM-ED and ASED which are formed within the ASEAN Secretariat of the Education, Youth and Sports Division, conducted a series of programmes to promote ASEAN cooperation in higher education according to blueprints and work-plans described earlier. Working closely with these mechanisms, other key players involved include:

- the ASEAN University Network (AUN);
- the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN);
- the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) and SEAMEO-RIHED (Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development);
- individual ASEAN member states (education ministries, institutions and bodies);
- various Dialogue Partners of ASEAN+3 (Japan, China and Korea), East-Asia Summit nations, the EU, the US, etc.;
- global institutions such as UNESCO and UNICEF; and
- other stakeholders, industry players as well as the civil society.

Similar to European initiatives and strategies undertaken to modernise higher education, these ASEAN key players have also innovated various mechanisms for:

- international mobility (notably the AIMS programme, ASEAN-China and ASEAN-ROK academic exchange programmes, AUN/SEED-NET education network with the Japanese government, etc.);

- harmonisation of higher education in ASEAN (such as AQAN and the developed ASEAN Qualification Assurance Framework or AQAF, the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework or AQRF, the AUN-QA programme), and a few credit transfer systems including AUN-ACTS (ASEAN Credit Transfer System), UMAP-UCTS by the University Mobility in Asia-Pacific, the ACTFA (Academic Credit Transfer Framework), etc.;
- intra-ASEAN cooperation in higher education (scholarships via bilateral and sub-regional agreements, leadership building programmes, research collaboration, TVET training), etc.; and so on.

Table 1: Corresponding Efforts in Higher Education between ASEAN and the EU.

ASEAN-initiatives	EU-initiatives
ASEAN Vision 2020 and 3-pillars, Ministerial agreements, Common Higher Education space in ASEAN	Europe Strategy 2020 (Education), Ministerial involvement, European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (AQRF)	Bologna 3-cycles, European Qualification Reference Framework (EQF) / Life Long Learning, and the Lisbon Recognition Convention
ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN)	European Association for QA in HE (ENQA), and the European QA Register in HE (EQAR)
ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF)	European Quality Assurance Framework (EQARF) + VET, and

	the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA
ASEAN University Network (AUN)	European University Association
ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS), and etc.	European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)
Student mobility programmes e.g., AIMS	Eramus Mundus → Erasmus+ programmes

(Adapted and modified from Zita, 2016)

Table 1 illustrates all relevant higher education efforts in both ASEAN and the EU, and the resemblance between them. This similarity has been instrumental towards greater inter-regional cooperation in higher education in contemporary areas of concern such as internationalisation of education, cross-border mobility, research collaboration (to solve global challenges), harmonisation of higher education (to fertilise knowledge and expertise), and intercultural exchange of experiences.

ASEAN-EU Cooperation in Higher Education

Based on the current ASEAN initiatives and a successful paradigm shift in European higher education stemming from the Bologna process and driven by the external dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy for education, several on-going ASEAN-EU cooperations are underway. The synergies between related initiatives as shown in Table 1 have paved the way towards a long and lasting relationship and effective cooperation between stakeholders in higher education between both regions. This cooperative environment has motivated

the EU-SHARE, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Newton Fund, and the ASEAN-QA programmes.

EU-SHARE (EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region)

This is a 10-million European grant that funds projects from 2015–2019 to strengthen the regional cooperation, enhance the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students, that complement the ASEAN Community beyond 2015. EU-SHARE comprises a consortium of EU partners including the British Council, ENQA, DAAD, EUA, Nuffic and Campus France, ASEAN players (AUN, AQAN, SEAMEO, etc.) including the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and all other relevant national level target beneficiaries and stakeholders (governmental bodies, university leaders and managers, higher education experts, quality assurance agencies, students, and industrial employers) (EU-SHARE, n.d.). All partners work together to enhance cooperation between the EU and ASEAN Economic Community, in order to provide lasting benefits from the harmonisation of higher education across ASEAN. Hence, EU-SHARE's Result Areas dictate the level of cooperation and intervention in all spheres of higher education including:

- policy dialogues with high-level-ministries to implement joint actions;
- harmonising efforts to align national QFs to AQRF and learning efforts for quality assurance agencies (AQAF and ESG/ENQA); and
- mobility programmes involving the ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS) and the ASEAN-EU Credit Transfer System (AECTS), as well as the SHARE Scholarships for the ASEAN community.

Erasmus+ Programmes

This is an EU programme dedicated for education, training, youth and sports during the period of 2014–2020, which supports the European policy agenda

for growth, jobs, equity and social inclusion. Part of the Erasmus+ aims is to enhance the opportunities for cooperation and mobility with Partner Countries (ASEAN nations are included in Region 6: Asia), notably in the fields of higher education. Erasmus+ was built on successful achievements of more than 25 years of European programmes since 2007 such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Edulink, Alfa and many more, and thereby promotes programmes with an international cooperation dimension to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills in different fields of education across various regions (European Commission, 2017a).

With support by the Bologna Process and its instruments, Erasmus+ programmes are delivered through various key actions such as capacity building in higher education (Key Action 2), learning mobility and scholarships via Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (Key Action 1), Jean Monnet activities to stimulate teaching and research in EU studies worldwide, strategic partnerships, knowledge alliances, and so on. In relation to ASEAN higher education development, Erasmus+ KA2 particularly aims to improve the quality of higher education, develop competences and skills of national and regional players, enhance the management, governance and innovation of education programmes, in order to foster regional integration and cooperation between ASEAN and the EU.

Horizon 2020 Programmes

As the successor to the EU's Framework Programmes (FP) for research and innovation, Horizon 2020 has become the new FP8 that will shape the future of European research from 2014 to 2020 (European Commission, n.d.). Horizon 2020 also complements the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth for the EU by focusing on innovative key areas such as excellent science, industrial leadership and research related to

societal changes. Participation from researchers from all over the world (including the ASEAN nations) is encouraged as partner countries are eligible for funding as long as they are invited to be part of a consortia that is led by the applicant entity from the EU or Associated Countries. Action types that are supported by the Work Programme of Horizon 2020 includes:

- Research and innovation actions (RIA): new knowledge, basic/applied research
- Innovation actions (IA): plans, prototypes, pilot testing
- Coordination and support actions (CSA): dissemination, awareness-raising, communication, networking, etc.
- SME instrument actions: innovative SME's programme for development, growth and internationalisation

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSC), which falls under the Excellent Science category also provides support for training and career development.

Prior to Horizon 2020, European researchers have been cooperating with their ASEAN counterparts on the examination of research landscape in higher education between both regions. For example, FP7's SEA-EU-NET projects (2008–2012, followed by another phase in 2012–2016) have supported many activities such as stakeholder dialogues, H2020 information, thematic workshops, alumni activities and bibliometric analyses regarding the internationalisation of research output and potential in the ASEAN region as compared with the European Research Area. Notably, some of the success stories shared by ASEAN-EU cooperation in higher education includes collaborative events such as the ASEAN-EU Year of Science, Technology and Innovation (2012), the EU Journalist tour of Southeast Asia, Summer School on Bio-Technology, EURAXESS ASEAN conferences, and many more.

The Newton Fund

This is a UK-government initiative that was launched in 2014, and will last until 2021, with elements of co-funding with several ASEAN partner funders from Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand (British Council, n.d.). The aims of this programme is to develop science and innovation partnerships to promote the economic development and welfare of collaborating countries, which is also part of the UK's official development assistance (ODA) goals. Through this branding of support programmes, many types of funding are available to the partner funders including research and innovation grants (Institutional Links), workshop grants for networking (Researchers Links), capacity building grants for scholars and researchers (Mobility Grants), and talent-building activities through training and reciprocal visits between UK and funding partners' countries (Advanced Fellowship).

The ASEAN-QA Project

Significant progress to harmonize higher education in the ASEAN region have been made since the establishment of a joint initiative known as the 'ASEAN-QA Project' by AUN, AQAN, SEAMEO-RIHED, DAAD, ENQA and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) in 2011 (ASEAN-QA Secretariat, n.d.). This project is currently in Phase 3 (2016–2018) and continues to strengthen the capacity for internal and external quality assurance (QA) through dialogue and training events for ASEAN-QA professionals based on regional standards. European partners have contributed their expertise and experience by sharing the best practices of QA in Europe for the Southeast Asian higher education. Through a series of hands-on training for relevant stakeholders involved in internal and external QAs, European and ASEAN universities are able to promote harmonisation of QA policies and mutual recognition of degrees as well as QA standards. This project has built relevant foundations to support the

aims of EU-SHARE programmes and it provides an impetus to the creation of a common ASEAN higher education space.

Malaysia's approach to higher education regionalism

In 2015, Malaysia contributed to higher education regionalism by offering the KL Declaration on Higher Education that was adopted by all ASEAN member states. By doing so, Malaysia demonstrates that it has taken on a leading role in the ASEAN higher education landscape through this Declaration. This also illustrates the implementation of Shift 8 (Global Prominence) under the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015–2025 and Malaysia's efforts in developing its higher education system to attract students from within ASEAN to pursue higher education in Malaysia. A framework and action plan have also been developed to support this Declaration with the aim of making Malaysia an education hub in the region. Through this Declaration, Malaysia indicates its commitment to drive core initiatives in two focus areas, higher education student and staff mobility, as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Where Malaysia-EU project collaborations are concerned, Malaysia is now an eligible potential partner in the development country list for collaborative research and EU-ASEAN cooperation e.g., Erasmus+, Marie-Curie actions, Horizon 2020, etc. A Malaysian university is therefore able to lead projects funded by Erasmus+ with partners from both EU and Asian universities.

In Malaysia, the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) at the University of Malaya serves as a platform for Asia-Europe engagement and acts to enhance ties between universities from ASEM countries. AEI origins were curated from the conceptions of tightening higher education linkages between Asia and Europe, within the provisions of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) initiative in 1996. By organising conferences, seminars, and an annual summer school on Asia-

Europe/ASEAN-EU as well as offering postgraduate programs on Regional Integration and ASEAN Studies, the institute is the only such institute in the region that has such a focus on Asia-Europe relations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we had set out to examine ASEAN-EU cooperation in higher education by firstly, describing higher education developments in Europe followed by those in ASEAN. We then discussed cooperation between ASEAN and EU higher education with an emphasis on the role of Malaysia in fostering intra ASEAN and inter-regional cooperation. A number of initiatives that further and foster relations through higher education cooperation have been identified and highlighted. Opportunities for inter-regional as well as intra-regional cooperation have opened up in the last decade with expectations for increased mobility and inter-regional projects in higher education for ASEAN and the EU.

References

- ASEAN Secretariat (2009). The Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve an ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community. Retrieved from <http://www.asean.org/storage/images/archive/15thsummit/Declaration-Education.pdf>
- ASEAN Secretariat (2015). ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together. Retrieved from <http://asean.org/storage/2015/11/67.-December-2015-ASEAN-2025-Forging-Ahead-Together-2nd-Reprint.pdf>
- ASEAN-QA Secretariat (n.d.). About the ASEAN-QA Project. Retrieved from <http://www.asean-qa.de/article/about.html>
- British Council (n.d.). Newton-Ungku Omar Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.my/programmes/newton-ungku-omar-fund>
- European Commission (2017a). Erasmus+ Programme Guide (version 2). Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

- European Commission (2017b). ASEAN & EU: Renewed Engagement. [Brochure]. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-asean_brochure_jan_2017.pdf
- European Commission (n.d.). What is Horizon 2020? Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>
- EU-SHARE. (n.d.). About SHARE. Retrieved from <http://share-asean.eu/about/>
- Pol, Patricia (2015). The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area from Consolidation to the Search of a New Impetus. In Azirah Hashim (Ed.), AEI Occasional Paper 28: The ASEAN Higher Education Forum (AHEF) 2015 (pp. 12-24). Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Asia-Europe Institute.
- Zita, Mohd Fahmi (2016). ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework: AUN Institutional Assessment Instrument [PowerPoint slides]. Presented at the AUN International Conference, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 27-28 March 2016.

Bibliography

- AcademicLib.com. (n.d.). ASEAN Regional Harmonisation of Higher Education. Retrieved from https://academlib.com/25452/education/asean_regional_harmonisation_higher_education
- ASEAN Secretariat (n.d.). ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework: Governance and Structure. Retrieved from <http://asean.org/storage/2017/03/ED-01-AQRF-Governance-and-Structure-document.pdf>
- Ghosh, Leena. (2016) Highlights of ASEAN Higher Education and TVET Sectors [Speech notes]. Retrieved from http://www.aipasecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Fc_Speech-ASEAN-Secretariat-for-the-6th-AIPA-Caucus.pdf
- Hazman, Shah Abdullah (2016). MQA in Facilitating Student Mobility [PowerPoint slides]. Presented at the 3rd EU-Malaysia Higher Education Conference on Cooperation in Mobility for Students and Academics. Retrieved from <http://www.ehef.asia/images/Malaysia/presentations/Roundtable.on.International.mobility.panelist.Prof.Dr.Hazman.Shah.Abdullah.pdf>
- Hazman, Shah Abdullah (2017). Implementation of Malaysian Qualification Framework, its Review & Referencing to ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework [PowerPoint slides]. Presented at the AUN-QA Conference, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 28 March 2017. Retrieved from http://www.ukm.my/pjk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SESSION-5_01-AUN-QA-Conference-28th-March-2017-Dr-Hazman-9-10.pdf

- Hell, Stefan (n.d.). SHARE: European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://www.ehef.asia/images/Malaysia/presentations/Roundtable.on.International.mobiliy.panelist.Stefan.Hell.SHARE.pdf>
- Kamal, Mamat (2014). Higher Education in ASEAN [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://dept.sophia.ac.jp/pj/saims/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/%E3%80%90Mr.Kamal%E3%80%91ASEAN-Higher-Education-Tokyo-Dec-2014.pdf>
- Limantara, Leenawaty (n.d.). Outlook in ASEAN Cooperation: Steps, Challenges and Implementation [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://slideplayer.com/slide/5689993/>
- Omar, Roziah (2016). The Role of Higher Education Ministry in Strengthening Internationalisation with European Union (EU) [PowerPoint slides]. Presented at the 3rd EU-Malaysia Higher Education Conference on Cooperation in Mobility for Students and Academics. Retrieved from <http://www.ehef.asia/images/Malaysia/presentations/Roundtable.on.International.mobiliy.panelist.Prof.Dr.Roziah.Omar.pdf>
- SHARE (2016). Student Mobility and Credit Transfer System in ASEAN. Jakarta, Indonesia: SHARE.
- Zita, Mohd Fahmi (2016). Harmonisation - ASEAN Regional Qualifications Reference Framework / Quality Assurance Framework and Malaysian Quality Assurance Development [PowerPoint slides]. Presented at the ENQA Seminar/GA 2016, Gloucester, UK, 20-21 October 2016.

Conclusion and Perspectives

by Patrick Ziegenhain

2017 marks the 40th anniversary of the formal cooperation between the EU and ASEAN. In the previous chapters, this text provided an academic overview of the most important issues (economic, political, socio-cultural, and higher education) of the EU-ASEAN relations—with a specific view on Malaysia. In this summary, you will find a short conclusion combined with a look to the future of the EU-ASEAN relations.

The economic relations between ASEAN and the EU have been well developed. ASEAN has become the EU's third largest trading partner whilst the EU is now ASEAN's second largest partner after China apart from being the region's biggest investor. Despite this close trade relationship, a region-to-region free trade agreement does not yet exist. Therefore, the re-launch of the negotiations in March 2017 at the annual EU-ASEAN ministerial consultations in Manila marked a crucial improvement of the trade relations between the two regional organisations. The EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström stated at this occasion: "I am glad to see that both sides are now ready to seize the momentum and start preparations towards re-launching these negotiations. This is a significant and timely initiative, and it shows that the EU and ASEAN are committed to take the lead together on regional and global trade. The EU remains strongly committed to advancing a positive global trade agenda in which all sides are winners" (European Commission 2017).

In terms of political and security cooperation, the relationship between the EU and ASEAN remains far less developed than in trade and economic matters. Despite the Paper of the European Commission from 2015 which foresees a strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN, the EU's foreign and

security policy refers to ASEAN only peripherally. The same applies to ASEAN.

The future cooperation between 2018 and 2022 is outlined in the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action, which was signed by representatives of both regional organisations in August 2017. Both organisations agreed on fighting terrorism, transnational crime and illicit drugs in joint operations. This plan of action also contains a chapter on the promotion of human rights and good governance. In terms of higher education, ASEAN as well as the EU could make significant progress in internationalising and harmonising higher education in both regions. Several ASEAN-EU cooperation programmes such as the EU-SHARE, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Newton Fund, and the ASEAN-QA, are currently underway.

The relationship between the European Union and Malaysia, as an important ASEAN member state, has developed very well. In economic terms, however, there is a recent dispute on the import of palm oil, an economically and politically important Malaysian export good, into the EU. Negotiations of the Malaysian government with EU representatives on this issue are still ongoing. In terms of political cooperation, the EU-Malaysia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PAC), signed in April 2016, provides the framework for the current EU-Malaysia bilateral cooperation. The ASEAN-EU Plan of Action forms the basis for the socio-cultural cooperation between the EU and Malaysia. In this document, a comprehensive environmental cooperation in areas such as green technology, renewable energy, and sustainable forest management has been agreed upon. Annual policy dialogues on these issues, as well as on climate change, will be conducted between the relevant ministries. With the launch of the KL Declaration on Higher Education in 2015 that was adopted by all ASEAN member states, Malaysia took the lead for

higher education regionalism. Nevertheless, improvement of Malaysian-EU relations in terms of higher education still remains.

The full potential of the EU-ASEAN relationship has not yet been unlocked. Both regions have more than one billion citizens; and hence, consumers. However, an inter-regional free trade agreement is yet to be achieved. China is widening its influence in Southeast Asia with its Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI), whereas European investments in ASEAN infrastructure are still progressing slowly. ASEAN's Master Plan on Connectivity 2025 deserves more attention from the European side.

Political and security dialogue between both regional organisations is hampered, due to other priorities on both sides. Additionally, nationalistic and xenophobic movements are on the rise in both regions. If these were to gain more influence, or if more narrow-minded, inward-looking leaders come to power, the cooperation between ASEAN and the EU is subject to being weakened.

It is important that both the EU and ASEAN acknowledge their common interests but at the same time, accept the differences that exist between them. Both sides should agree on the pursuit of business interests and trade with each other, which poses the biggest potential for an improvement of the mutual relationship. The European Union, which was the Noble Peace Prize laureate in 2012, perceives itself as a region that promotes democracy, rule of law, human rights, religious tolerance, and environmental protection. Nearly all of these form very sensitive issues for most ASEAN member state governments. Not surprisingly, ASEAN has rejected all EU attempts to pressure for domestic reforms and challenge the Asian doctrine of non-intervention.

The fact that the EU used its perceived moral superiority only selectively to push particular and sometimes symbolic policies in the ASEAN's member states cries hypocrisy or double standards. These misunderstandings have often

lead to a certain estrangement between the two regional organisations. The strategy to mix economic interests with issues of governance did not produce much reputation for the EU as a normative actor, nor did it help to foster economic ties with ASEAN (Meissner et al. 2014: 6ff.). It would thus be beneficial for both sides to cooperate with a realistic view on each other.

In order to improve the future EU-ASEAN relationship it could be beneficial to expand the regular meetings of government officials and top bureaucrats to ordinary citizens of both regions. ASEAN has declared itself a people-oriented and people-centred organisation whilst the EU is proud of its democratic political culture based on civil society participation, transparency, and open dialogue. As such, it would be logical to improve EU-ASEAN relations through increased dialogue between academics, professionals, civil society activists, politicians, artists, journalists, and youth group leaders. ASEAN and the EU both “would gain in legitimacy if it would do more for democratizing regional governance and involving civil society in the decision-making process. Bridging the communication gap between the two sides through increased exchanges” (Nuttin 2017: 36) would contribute significantly for a much better economic, political, and socio-cultural cooperation between the EU and ASEAN.

The rapidly changing international environment brings the two regions closer together. The economic and political rise of China as well as the potentially declining role of the USA in both regions (as indicated by the Trump administration!) has changed the international landscape in which ASEAN and the EU operate. Whereas China is perceived as a potential threat to Southeast Asia, not only in disputed areas such as the South China Sea, the EU is facing increasing demands on strengthening its joint security policy. This is especially in the case of the USA reducing its military support for Europe, and the other

factor being the United Kingdom's (the best equipped military power of the EU) "Brexit" from the EU.

In times of globalisation and an increasingly interdependent world, the EU-ASEAN relations shall face additional challenges constantly. Nevertheless, it can be rated very positively that both sides are working together on issues such as climate change; migration; natural disasters; the fight against terrorism; environmental protection; and pandemics, amongst many others. Both the EU and ASEAN have to be seen as civil powers, which in contrast to other global powers, do not seek for military dominance and conflict. Thus far, both regional organisations have been successful in preventing wars between their member states. Hence, maintaining an increased and fruitful cooperation between the EU and ASEAN will serve to make the world a safer and more peaceful place.

References

- European Commission (2017). EU and ASEAN gear up for possible re-launch of trade talks, 10 March 2017. Retrieved from <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1631> [accessed 8 November 2017]
- Meissner, Katharina L./ Imke Pente/ Nelly Stratieva/ Boonwara Sumano (2014). Unlocking the Potential of Interregionalism. Mutual Perceptions and Interests in EU-ASEAN Relations, IFAIR Impact Group "EU-ASEAN Perspectives" Policy Paper. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276241352_Unlocking_the_Potential_of_Interregionalism_Mutual_Perceptions_and_Interests_in_EU-ASEAN_Relations [accessed 8 November 2017]
- Nuttin, Xavier (2017). The future of EU-ASEAN Relations, Paper requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, April 2017. Retrieved from [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/578043/EXPO_STU\(2017\)578043_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/578043/EXPO_STU(2017)578043_EN.pdf) [accessed 8 November 2017]



Published by:

Asia-Europe Institute
University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

December 2017