



The journey to the ACSS Committee

The ASEAN integration process has led to an increased need for regional statistics. With a view to respond to this emerging demand, the ASEAN Heads of National Statistical Offices decided to initiate cooperation in statistics: in October 1997, the ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting (AHSOM) was created – an annual meeting aimed at harmonising national and regional statistics, promoting capacity building and best practice in statistics, and providing regional statistics in support of the ASEAN decision-making process.

After 12 years, with a broader range of statistics to address, the need for a stronger and clearer mandate became more pressing. Initially, AHSOM did not report directly to any of the ASEAN official bodies. In other words, no measure proposed by AHSOM could be endorsed at ASEAN ministerial level, and therefore implementation of necessary reforms at national level lacked political support.

How did the EU Programme help?

The EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building (EASCAB) Programme provided assistance for institutional building through the



Launch of the ACSS Committee, 4th November 2011, Jakarta, Indonesia.

organisation of a series of meetings as well as study visits to the EU - in EU Member States and to Eurostat - to showcase how the European Statistical System works and to facilitate an exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience to inspire regional cooperation in ASEAN. It also provided training sessions to give the opportunity for the National Statistical Offices to discuss how the ASEAN statistical system would, and should, work.

As a result, the ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee was set up in November 2011. It is the highest policy-making and coordinating body on statistical matters in the ASEAN region.

What is the impact of this change?

The ACSS Committee is an official body of ASEAN, with a clear mandate reporting to the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) through the Senior Economic Officials. With its official recognition, decisions on statistical issues at regional level can now be referred to by the entire national statistical system, providing a real opportunity to produce comparable statistics and enhance the quality of the regional data that forms the basis of regional policy.

Beyond this, the EASCAB Programme also helped the ACSS Committee in defining key tools to effectively fulfil its role as the official body on statistical matters in the ASEAN region including;

- A revised broad framework for the sustainable development of ASEAN statistics;
- Rules of Procedure for the effective functioning of the ACSS Committee;
- A strategy to achieve the ACSS by 2015;
- A multi-annual action plan including annual work plans and monitoring tools;
- A Code of Practice providing important principles concerning the institutional environment, statistical process and statistical outputs to ensure users' trust and satisfaction in the products and services of the national and regional statistical authorities of ASEAN.

This set of documents forms the new institutional framework, laying the

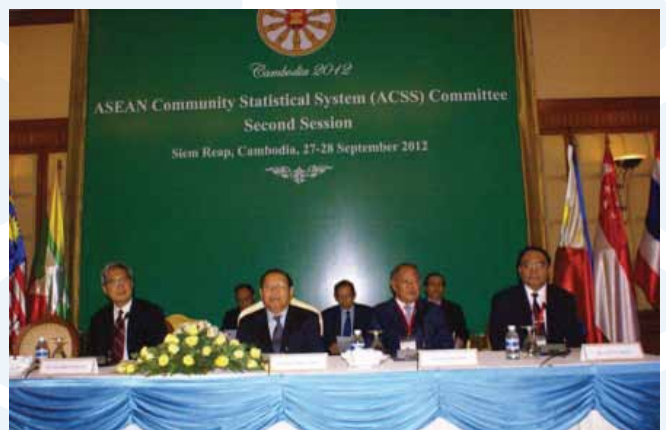
foundations of a modern and effective ASEAN Community Statistical System.

What next?

Based on the remarkable progress achieved so far since its establishment, the ASEAN Community Statistical System is certainly up to the challenges ahead. However, the ACSS Committee is still in its infancy and some obstacles remain.

Discrepancies between ASEAN Member States in terms of capacity and funding still need to be resolved. This is something that ASEAN is addressing head on, most recently through the Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing the Development Gap of 2011.

Future EU support will also have a fully dedicated component to address the development gaps in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.



Second meeting of the ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee on 27-28 September 2012, Siem Reap, Cambodia.