



Building an effective ASEAN network of statisticians

The ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) is a partnership among all national statistical systems of the ASEAN Member States, ASEAN bodies and ASEAN Secretariat. Looking at the statistical offices only, there are over 20,000 persons involved in ASEAN statistics in the 10 National Statistical Offices (NSO) and the ASEAN Secretariat. But each National Statistical System is made up of many more people, i.e. the data providers. The NSO interact with customs authorities, central banks for economic statistics, and ministries of education or health for social statistics. This requires significant coordination and the challenge for a regional system is to make all the systems work together as partners to produce comparable, timely and relevant ASEAN statistics in support of ASEAN integration initiatives.

To achieve common goals, people need to get together. This is why the EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building (EASCAB) Programme is supporting people-to-people contacts. Connecting ASEAN statisticians strengthens the practice of working together towards building the ASEAN Community Statistical System. Only by building close professional relationships among the region's

"Networking is now a common practice at all levels and the close relationships we have built up over the last three years really help us find joint solutions to common challenges"

Mr San Sy Than,
Under Secretary for Planning, Director General NIS Cambodia, and Chair of the ACSS Committee, Phnom Penh

statisticians can the harmonisation process move forward successfully. The weakness of a single element puts the whole system at risk.

How did the EU Programme help?

The EASCAB Programme has been instrumental in further developing and strengthening the ASEAN network of statisticians, through:

- Providing funding to eight of the ten Member States to attend regular regional meetings to define common objectives, strategies and methods;
- Delivering training programmes including training of trainers, and workshops for the national statistical

authorities to facilitate stronger regional networks;

- Supporting coordination within the National Statistical Systems including specific data providers such as the National Central Bank for investment and the trade in services data, and the Customs service for the trade in goods;
- Linking people through IT systems.

What was the impact of this change?

One of the significant outcomes of the EASCAB Programme is the ASEAN network of statisticians, not only at management level, but also at operational level. They now know each other better, communicate regularly, meet at national and regional level, and work together towards common goals. The regular formal and informal meetings have built the necessary trust and provided fora to discuss issues and challenges, as well as to exchange ideas, lessons learned and best practices. EASCAB has also assisted the appointment of National Coordinators to effectively

- More than 650 ASEAN officials trained through 9 trainings at regional level and 23 at national level;
- 4 visits to the EU organised to study the European Statistical System, the role of EUROSTAT and the role of National Statistical Offices;
- 24 workshops organised in various statistical fields.

strengthen national and regional coordination.

What next?

All key actors of the ASEAN Community Statistical System are now much more aware of their regional commitments and are used to regular interaction with other agencies, at national and regional level, eased by the trust and mutual respect gained from regular contacts. The network may still need further strengthening but it is there to stay. The ASEAN Member States are now committed to maintaining the

high level of cooperation within the coordinating bodies established under the umbrella of the ASEAN Community Statistical System Committee.

