



Information and communication technology: a key enabling factor

The collection of reliable regional data on the trade in goods, trade in services, and foreign direct investment is essential to the ASEAN integration process. This function, accorded to ASEANstats, is not achievable without a solid information technology (IT) system in place. An effective IT system is needed to speed up and automate the harmonisation process, including the analysis and dissemination of large volumes of data across the region on a regular basis.

To minimise the time for data transmission, processing and dissemination, the EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building (EASCAB) Programme developed a Regional Information Exchange Database System (REXDBS) among ASEAN National Statistical Offices and ASEANstats. This gives ASEANstats, for the first time, a single, centralised, secure entry point for data with

"REXDBS has revolutionised the way I work. I can have access to a huge repository of relevant and accurate data at the click of a mouse - it is that simple"

Ms Elizabeth Alarilla,
Senior Officer ASEANstats, Jakarta

ASEANstats role includes:

- *Collecting data from Member States;*
- *Harmonising statistics;*
- *Standardising formats for data submission;*
- *Compiling statistical reports;*
- *Disseminating and analysis of regional level data.*

powerful built-in tools to analyse and present statistics rapidly and accurately.

How did the EU Programme help?

To facilitate implementation of the system, the EASCAB Programme provided significant support through;

- The provision of computer equipment to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam as well as to ASEANstats;
- The provision of software such as Eurotrace and PC-Axis to process ASEAN statistical data quickly and efficiently;
- A study visit to the EU to see how Eurostat and OECD organise the production of regional statistics in cooperation with national data

providers;

- Technical expertise to develop the system and conduct intensive training on how to use it at national and regional levels.

The REXDBS dissemination system allows the publication of statistics in any field. However, for the time being it covers three major statistical fields: the trade in goods, foreign direct investments, and the trade in services.

The entire data management system has been completely overhauled, bringing a number of improvements, including:

- Easy to use, centralised database system in place;
- Availability of higher level of detail;
- Much faster data processing;
- Internet-based access for multiple users;
- High level of flexibility to process a variety of information;
- Improved levels of accuracy in the statistics disseminated (fewer errors due

Main REXDBS features:

- One centralised system for all levels;
- Secured data transmission tool (DTT);
- Automated data production system (DPS);
- Multi-level data dissemination system (DDS).

to manual processing; data harmonised for comparability);

- Improved delivery schedule and frequency of data release (quarterly data are now available).

Now, ASEANstats can generate aggregate reports quickly to enable ad hoc detailed analyses, all via a user-friendly internet-based application.

What next?

For ASEAN, the REXDBS is an indispensable tool for the transmission, production and dissemination of ASEAN statistics. It guarantees more comparable data across all Member States. ASEANstats will continue to develop REXDBS as the official tool for data collection and processing, and expand it to emerging statistical fields.

