

### 3.3. ASEAN

#### 3.3.1. *The ASEAN as a partner of the EU*

ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations composed of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. With a population of 622 million people, a GDP of 2,574 billion \$ and a GDP growth of 4.6%<sup>56</sup>, ASEAN is emerging as one of the most rapidly developing regions of the world.

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), launched in late 2015, brings ASEAN to a new level of regional integration. Cooperation in research and innovation is administered now at regional level within the ASEAN secretariat under the pillar of Economic affairs. The recent ASEAN Plan for Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (APASTI, 2015-2020) and the ASEAN ICT Masterplan (2015-2020) lays out the principles and strategic activities for regional research and innovation policy.

The 2015 Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "The EU and ASEAN: a partnership with a strategic purpose" placed emphasis on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) cooperation. Scientific cooperation is part of the partnership between the two regions since 2007 and has always featured in the context of the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meetings. Cooperation of EU with the ASEAN countries in a variety of STI areas augments the capability to tackle challenges that are important for both regions and boosts their ability to compete in world markets.

#### 3.3.2. *Priorities for S&T cooperation*

Priorities for EU-ASEAN cooperation address several areas:

In the area of food security and safety, sustainable aquaculture production has been a major challenge for both sides. The aim is to achieve common standards and legislation, create business opportunities and consolidate EU-Southeast Asia education and training networks.

In the area of nanotechnology, nano-safety and nano-measurements, cooperation is being undertaken through Nanoreg (regulatory testing of nanomaterials), of which Thailand became the first ASEAN member in 2014.

In the health area, cooperation is undertaken via multi-lateral initiatives, e.g. on infectious diseases through the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness joined by Thailand; on the International Cancer Genome Consortium that Singapore joined, and also via the Human Frontier Science Programme in 2014 of which Singapore is a member. In addition, there is potential to conduct joint research at regional level on antimicrobial resistance.

The priority for ICT-related research is innovative service creation based on existing technologies, with particular focus on the involvement of innovation stakeholders and end-user community representatives, e.g. through innovation hubs or "Living Labs". This has been translated in the ICT WP 2016-17 into a call for "partnerships with to low and middle income countries" with ASEAN being one of the regions targeted and a total budget of €13 million. It asks for the co-design, adaptation, demonstration and validation (e.g. pilots) of ICT related research and innovation in relevant thematic areas addressed by Horizon 2020 including Content Technologies and Societal Challenges.

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<sup>56</sup> [http://www.asean.org/storage/2015/11/ASEAN\\_Statistic\\_Leaflet\\_2015.pdf](http://www.asean.org/storage/2015/11/ASEAN_Statistic_Leaflet_2015.pdf)

Prospects in new areas for cooperation are also strong. For example, the management and sustainability of water resources and river systems, such as the Mekong, is an important priority for many countries in the region, in particular in connection to food security, energy and pollution in cities. Another example is the improvement of waste management, which offers opportunities not only in urban and industrial contexts but also with a view to reducing marine litter.

Maritime transport is another major challenge and will play a role in regional integration by addressing transport safety. Knowledge transfer from the EU can support better operational standards to improve safety and raise environmental standards.

### 3.3.3. *Framework Conditions*

Efficient framework conditions are a necessary step for establishing balanced and long-term cooperation. Research and innovation cooperation between the EU and ASEAN countries is being hampered by a wide range of factors ranging from the lack of substantial common resources among ASEAN Member States to implement actions at regional level, very low R&D investment in some of the countries and low public-private sector links. Nonetheless, the situation is changing as the region develops, with emerging opportunities for Europe to engage especially on R&I to address societal and global challenges.

Given the absence of R&I funding at regional level, a multilateral mechanism to support projects of common interest between Southeast Asia and the EU countries would be of substantial value. Such a scheme on the basis of a flexible “variable geometry” principle is currently the subject of a pilot action under the SEA-EU-net project<sup>57</sup>, and was discussed at the latest EU-ASEAN Dialogue<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> <https://sea-eu.net/>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.asean.org/chairmans-statement-of-the-16th-asean-ministerial-meeting-on-science-and-technology-ammst-16/>