



# ASEAN Business Advisory Council



---

## BRIEF REPORT

### WORKSHOP ON: REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR AEC INFORMATION PROVISION TO BUSINESSES

**Date:** 16-17 October 2014  
**Venue:** Jakarta, Indonesia  
**Organisers:** ASEAN Secretariat, the GIZ, and the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany

#### What is the event about?

The workshop on 'Regional Cooperation for AEC Information to Businesses' tackled the issue of information dissemination on AEC-related issues to Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). More specifically, the workshop has the objective of developing common understanding amongst participants, or key stakeholders of AEC-related information, on how AEC information provision could look like in the future, and how options could be submitted to the next meeting of ASEAN SME Working Group (SMEWG).

The workshop that was co-organised by the ASEAN Secretari, the GIZ, and the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany was attended by representatives of ASEAN SMEWG Members, officials from the ASEAN Secretariat, as well as representatives of private sector bodies. It was a continuation of a similar workshop that took place last June 2014 that discussed about the necessity of AEC-related information for SMEs.

Aside from the implementation status of the AEC, presentations and discussions at the workshop also covered issues, such as 'One Stop Centres for AEC Information', regional networks for AEC information, and identification of ways forward that ASEAN needs to undertake in order to improve its AEC information provision to the public. In addition, speakers also provided inputs on best practices in ASEAN, as well as cooperation model for public outreach from the European Enterprise Network (EEN).

#### Why the event was important for ASEAN-BAC?

An area worth closer examination from ASEAN-BAC is the initiative of ASEAN SMEWG to establish the so-called 'ASEAN SMEs Service Centre'. Assigned by the ASEAN SMEWG to lead the project's completion, the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP) of the Kingdom of Thailand expects that this initiative to be completed by the end of 2015. Aside from developing a web portal using the Cloud system that offers AEC-related information to the region's SMEs, the implementation of this project also entails initiative to establish connection between SMEs and SME service providers. Once implemented, the sustainability of this initiative would depend highly on the information provided by different stakeholders of AEC, such as the ASEAN Member States (AMS), the private sector, academic institutions, and the wider civil society groups.



# ASEAN Business Advisory Council



---

Presenting the progress of the project at the workshop, the representative of OSMEP also stated that the website could be made available by early 2015 ([www.AseanSME.org](http://www.AseanSME.org)). OSMEP representatives also explained that, aside serving as a communication channel amongst SMEs in the region and beyond, this web portal could also serve as a platform to discuss and share ideas on issues related to SMEs development.

The workshop also allowed different stakeholders to express their views concerning AEC information provision to be provided by the ASEAN SME Service Centre and government-funded SME Service Centres. It was decided that the scope of AEC-related information could cover, amongst other things, general information, events, market access and entry, access to finance, sectoral information, as well as information concerning business start-up.

Given the diversity amongst AMS, information provided by government-funded SME Service Centres could be adapted to individual country contexts. At the national level, for example, SME Service Centres in different AMS could adapt different instruments (e.g. medium of communication, national level events, face-to-face discussion with experts, etc.), as well as languages. Inputs provided by stakeholders, including those representing the ASEAN-BAC Secretariat, also called for the institutionalisation not only of information service centres, but also the way in which AEC-related information is socialised to the public.

## What's next?

Some concrete ways forward were discussed at the end of the workshop. For example, in addition to the existing ASEAN SME Service Centre mentioned above, there was also a call by stakeholders present at the workshop to establish the so-called ASEAN Resources Network, which is expected to allow information exchange amongst experts in the region. The component of such a network would include, amongst other things, professional associations from ASEAN Member States (AMS), retired professionals from multinational corporations, as well as national SME focal points. It was proposed at the workshop that the process of building such a network is to encourage regular meetings amongst these key stakeholders to make the ASEAN Resources Network to become a real entity.

Once established, the ASEAN Resource Network could serve as a platform for ASEAN-based SMEs collaboration, as well as for SMEs to build partnership with multinational corporations. To ensure the sustainability of the Network, the ASEAN Resources Network would require a well-established entity to serve as an umbrella, such as the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN-BAC, ASEAN SME Advisory Board, or other SME Service Provider clubs/associations.