



# POLICY BRIEF

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## CAPITALISING ON ASEAN

### INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGIES FOR CLMV UNIVERSITIES

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the seventh in a series of Policy Briefs published by the EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE), a four-year initiative by the EU and ASEAN to support harmonisation and boost the quality of Higher Education (HE) systems across South-east Asia. Through its Policy Dialogue events SHARE supports the emerging ASEAN Higher Education Space by engaging with universities, policymakers and students.

This Policy Brief summarises the outcomes of a Policy Dialogue organised by SHARE and the Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR, in October-November 2017 in Vientiane entitled “Capitalising on ASEAN – Internationalisation Strategies for CLMV Universities”. The event attracted 140 university managers, government officials and students from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam, as well as representatives of ASEAN, EU, AUN and SEAMEO RIHED.

The Policy Dialogue explored the international dimension of higher education provision specifically with a view to the strategies employed by CLMV universities to position themselves to benefit from international

opportunities and developments. A key message was that internationalisation is, at its heart, a local issue, and is not the same everywhere. Each national context is different, but there are common issues across CLMV countries which emerged from the Policy Dialogue and are summarised here.

The focus of this Policy Brief is the international dimension evolving in ASEAN in the form of the ASEAN Higher Education Space. Participants in the Policy Dialogue identified common drivers and priorities in CLMV, as well as common bottlenecks. ASEAN was seen as a window of opportunity for internationalising and policy recommendations were addressed to national policymakers and university leaders in CLMV countries, as well as to ASEAN leaders.

The overarching recommendation from this Policy Brief is that universities and governments of CLMV countries should engage strategically with the evolving ASEAN Higher Education Space in order to benefit from internationalisation, while ASEAN should ensure that CLMV countries are included in the further development of regional systems, frameworks and mobility schemes.



## CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Internationalisation in Higher Education is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of HE. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire enterprise. It is essential that it is embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalisation not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. (Follows John K. Hudzik (2011). Comprehensive Internationalisation: From Concept to Action.)

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### **What drives CLMV Internationalisation?**

All CLMV countries are experiencing increased student demand for internationalisation and a desire to prepare young people for the modern world is a common imperative. Also common are commercial drivers, including competition with private HEIs, economic imperatives and changing education policies. For some countries building brand credibility is a driver. Alongside these are universal academic drivers to strengthen quality, to improve graduate outcomes and employability, and to upgrade some subjects while bringing in other subjects not available locally. Other national drivers include increased competition for students, increasing research funding, and the need to develop intercultural exposure. Finally, ASEAN is seen as a primary external driver for internationalisation.

### **Common CLMV Priorities**

While they vary in scale and scope, all four CLMV countries have national strategies for internationalisation under development or already in place. The most significant common priorities are a drive to improve English language proficiency among students and staff, and the need for capacity development for staff to improve a whole host of professional skills. The need for policies to attract international staff and to support wider participation agendas for HE was also identified. Some universities in the region have already increased international teaching, and are starting to build a culture of internationalisation at HEIs, through capacity development for academic staff, student exchange and programme development.

Other common priorities include academic issues such as a shift towards student-centred teaching and learning, and improving quality assurance processes. Institutions are committed to providing better support to students and creating new opportunities, such as international mobility and internships. All CLMV countries have or are developing National Qualifications Frameworks, which are crucial in boosting student mobility. Finally, creating a system of quality assurance for all international programmes is a common priority.

For all common priority areas, identifying funding is fundamental. A key question is what mix of institutional, national, regional and global funding is appropriate, and how to identify these funding opportunities.

### **Common Barriers to Internationalisation**

The most significant barrier identified is a lack of language skills among students and staff. Coupled with a need for improved intercultural skills, this leads to a sense of having multiple challenges in international communications. Inaccurate information on international opportunities adds to this picture of international isolation.

The lack of skills or expertise is mirrored by a general lack of systems and an absence of a supportive regulatory environment. Examples include a lack of credit transfer systems and a lack of resources/infrastructure (e.g. accommodation). Other issues identified included staff retention problems and outdated curricula. The role of governments is seen as generally supportive, but the lack of autonomy for HEIs is seen as an impediment to internationalisation. Finally, and very importantly, while there are CLMV HEIs with international ambitions, for many universities international activity is simply not a key pillar of their institutional strategy.

### **ASEAN opens a Window of Opportunity**

As ASEAN's regional Higher Education Space is gaining shape, the region offers opportunities for (more affordable) student mobility, staff exchange, research opportunities, improved reputation and quality assurance systems. These opportunities are aided by cultural familiarity, but require the lack of expertise at CLMV HEIs to be tackled first. To be successful, policies and strategies must be based on clear understanding and direction, have Institutional support with a focus on building capacity, and must be based on contextual and relevant approaches.

The Policy Dialogue emphasised the importance of the SHARE scholarship and credit transfer scheme, which has the potential to become as successful a brand for ASEAN as Erasmus is for Europe. The ASEAN Higher Education Space will benefit universities, students, societies and economies as a whole, so all 10 ASEAN countries, including CLMV countries, could benefit from these activities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL POLICYMAKERS IN CLMV**

1. Continue to set priority areas at national level, with ASEAN and SHARE as drivers.
2. For student mobility to succeed, a supportive cross-governmental immigration policy is needed and fit for purpose student

visa systems need to be in place. A welcoming environment for international students supports mobility, and should include international graduate employability opportunities. This works best where there is coordination across all institutions, ministries, and stakeholders.

3. Build a support structure that provides incentives for course tuition in English. Support translation of academic research into English language to encourage and increase international research citation.
4. Quality Assurance is critical. Mutual recognition of qualifications requires both formal and informal trust between countries.
5. Allow for credit transfer in ASEAN. This will make student mobility sustainable.
6. A phased approach to internationalisation is helpful: different universities have different capabilities in internationalisation and require differentiated interventions.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO UNIVERSITIES IN CLMV**

1. Understand the goals of internationalisation for your institution in your specific context. Then formulate an internationalisation strategy with milestones for implementation. Focus on practical issues, e.g. internationalise academic curricula, develop joint programmes, improve Quality Assurance, increase English as a medium of instruction, develop Research and Development capabilities, increase Student Mobility.
2. Internationalisation is not limited to international relations offices. Mainstreaming internationalisation is required across the campuses from reception to rector. Academics need support structures to help their departments to internationalise and successfully bid for international funding, and the process must have support from university leadership.
3. Build support structures for developing language skills among lecturers and students. International students on campus should be encouraged to develop local language and cultural skills.

4. Recruitment of international talent and faculty should be considered. This will lead to connections and global networks, routes to development of MoUs with other institutions, access to funding opportunities, and attracting international researchers.
5. Work closely with industry to meet local employers' needs.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ASEAN

1. Unify and strengthen the ASEAN Student Mobility scheme.
2. Further develop regional Quality Assurance and Qualifications Frameworks.
3. Further develop a robust credit transfer

- system, to increase outbound mobility within ASEAN and with other countries/regions.
4. Support CLMV countries to increase inbound student mobility.
5. Develop a mentoring programme between institutions in the ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries to support HE internationalisation.
6. Develop support structures for researcher mobility to increase regional research collaboration. Consider an ASEAN Research Council to channel funding to multi-country collaboration on ASEAN regional priorities.
7. Enable continued CLMV country participation in SHARE and other regional initiatives.

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## PREVIOUS SHARE POLICY BRIEFS (AVAILABLE AT [WWW.SHARE-ASEAN.EU](http://WWW.SHARE-ASEAN.EU))

Policy Brief 1 – Towards Greater Harmonisation of Higher Education in ASEAN. May 2016.

Policy Brief 2 – Enhancing Internationalisation in ASEAN: Credit Transfer Systems and Student Mobility. October 2016.

Policy Brief 3 – Towards a Shared Understanding of Quality Assurance: Policy Recommendations for Implementing a Regional QA Framework in ASEAN. January 2017.

Policy Brief 4 – Degree Structures and the Harmonisation of Higher Education in the ASEAN Region. February 2017.

Policy Brief 5 – Making National Qualifications Comparable Across ASEAN: The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. May 2017.

Policy Brief 6 – Studying Abroad, Becoming ASEAN: Regional Student Mobility As a Driver of the ASEAN Community. August 2017.

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SHARE, the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region, is a four-year initiative by the EU and ASEAN. Launched in Jakarta in May 2015, SHARE aims to support ASEAN in harmonising regional higher education by sharing European expertise. It does this through strengthening regional cooperation, enhancing the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education for institutions and students, and thereby contributing to a closer ASEAN community. SHARE is implemented by a consortium of Europe's major international education agencies, led by the British Council and comprised of Campus France, DAAD, Nuffic, ENQA, and EUA. More information on SHARE at [www.share-asean.eu](http://www.share-asean.eu).