

ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the European Union

ARISE PLUS REGIONAL

FINAL REPORT



ARISE+
Funded by
the European Union

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the many different stakeholders across ASEAN that have been instrumental in making ARISE Plus successful and relevant at the regional and national level. More specifically, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary Generals of the ASEAN Secretariat, the Deputy Secretary Generals of the ASEAN Economic Community, and Socio-Cultural Community, and the numerous other officials and colleagues at the ASEAN Secretariat who have supported ARISE Plus over the last five-and-a-half years.

We would like to thank the numerous ASEAN Sectoral Bodies who have extended their upmost cooperation and dedication to the many joint efforts. At the national level the commitment of the 10 ASEAN Member States and the various national agencies and bodies has been commendable. The involvement of the private sector has added immense value to the work that has been carried out.

We wish to thank the EU Delegation to ASEAN for their support throughout the project implementation period. We also thank the numerous experts and project office staff for their commitment and hard work which has contributed to the success of ARISE Plus.

Disclaimer

This text has been drafted in the framework of an EU-funded project. The views expressed herein are those of the project and do not reflect the official opinion of the European Union or of ASEAN.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCSQ	ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality
ACRF	ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework
ACSS	ASEAN Community Statistical System
ACTS	ASEAN Customs Transit System
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AECB	ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint
AFAGIT	ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit
AFAFIST	ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Inter-State Transport
AFAMT	ASEAN Framework Agreement on Multimodal Transport
AFSRF	ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework
AIMD	ASEAN Integration Monitoring Division
AMS	ASEAN Member States
APTLC	ASEAN Pharmaceutical Laboratory Technical Committee
ARAC	ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre for Food Safety
ARASFF	ASEAN Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
ARISE Plus	ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEC	ASEAN Secretariat
ASOA	ASEAN Standard for Organic Agriculture
ASSIST	ASEAN Solutions for Services, Investment and Trade
ATF-JCC	ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee
ATIGA	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement
ATR	ASEAN Trade Repository
AWEN	ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network
BE	Bio-equivalence
CCA	ASEAN Coordinating Committee on the Implementation of ATIGA
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam
CMT	Central Management Team (ACTS)
EU	European Union
FDIS	Foreign Direct Investment Statistics
IMTS	International Merchandise Trade Statistics
KE	Key Expert(s)
JNKE	Junior Non-Key Expert
MRA	Mutual Recognition Arrangement
MTO	Multimodal Transport Operator
MTR	Mid-Term Review (of the AEC Blueprint 2025)
NABs	National Accreditation Bodies
NSBs	National Standards Bodies
NKE	Non-Key Expert
NTB	Non-Tariff Barrier
NTM	Non-Tariff Measure(s)
NTR	National Trade Repository
PPWG	ACCSQ Pharmaceutical Product Working Group
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWG	Product Working Group(s)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDGI	Sustainable Development Goals Indicators
SNA	System of National Accounts
SNKE	Senior Non-Key Expert
TA	Technical Assistance
WTO	World Trade Organization

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FOREWORD

In a world where the political and economic landscape has been changing drastically, the European Union (EU) continues to be one of the most significant Strategic Partners of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Over the past two decades, the EU has extended its support to the development agenda of ASEAN in various forms, and notably to regional economic integration. Through ARISE Plus, the EU has provided strategic support to the ASEAN Economic Community's (AEC) integration efforts for the past five and a half years, from 2017 to 2023, investing over 20 million euro.

The commitment of the EU as a Strategic Partner of ASEAN and the good working relationship between the EU and ASEAN is evident in the numerous successes of ARISE Plus. The EU hopes that the many tangible achievements out of

this partnership will continue to support ASEAN in its pursuit towards economic integration and growth both at the national and regional level.

Despite significant limitations brought by Covid 19 such as border closures, movement control orders, disruptions to value chains, repurposing of budgets, various emergency measures and drastic changes to ASEAN's working practices, ARISE Plus has adapted well to the situation and pivoted to support ASEAN in both existing commitments and new demand driven areas. These efforts in the form of continuous and rich consultations, capacity building and training, workshops and roundtable discussions, dissemination and outreach events, reporting and publications have taken shape at different levels that complement each other and together benefit the ASEAN region as a whole.

The deep and strategic cooperation between ASEAN and the EU through ARISE Plus has now come to a conclusion with many achievement to be proud of. Moving forward it is important that what has been achieved is not lost. Sustainability of the tangible and significant results is key to enable greater and timely progress towards the ASEAN Economic Integration agenda. The EU will continue its strategic support towards ASEAN and remains confident that this partnership will continue to flourish with equal commitment and accountability to uphold our shared values and principles of a rules-based international order, effective and sustainable multilateralism and free and fair trade.

The EU and ASEAN working together towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous world

H.E. Igor Driesmans
EU Ambassador to ASEAN

OVERVIEW

“

ARISE Plus has extended the EU's commitment to supporting the ASEAN region in trade facilitation. The technical assistance extended by ARISE Plus and its built-in demand-driven feature has provided abundant support for greater economic integration in ASEAN through the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 and strengthened the institutional capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat and its sectoral bodies.

— **H.E. Satvinder Singh**

*ASEAN Deputy Secretary-
General for ASEAN
Economic Community*

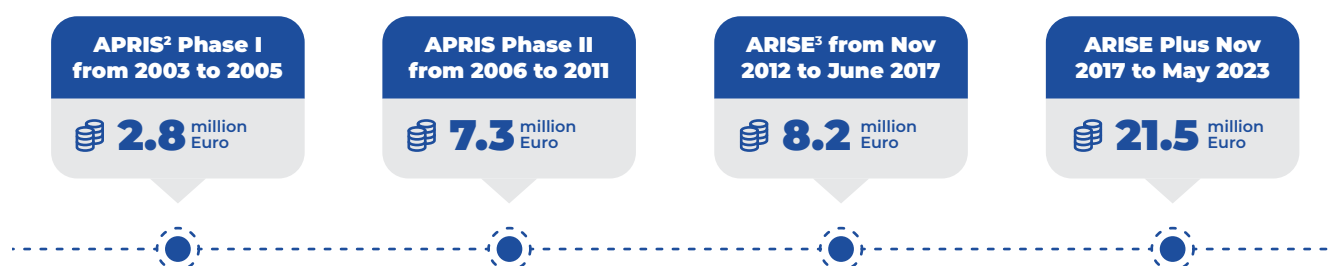
EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership

The European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have enjoyed a close partnership of more than 45 years, with the shared values and principles of a rules-based international order, effective and sustainable multilateralism, as well as free and fair trade. On 1 December 2020, the EU and ASEAN elevated their longstanding relationship by becoming Strategic Partners. The EU and ASEAN are the two most advanced regional integration initiatives in the world.

In trade and investment relations between the EU and ASEAN are significant. The EU is ASEAN's 3rd largest trading partner, accounting for around 10.6% of ASEAN trade¹. ASEAN is the EU's 3rd largest trading partner outside Europe with bilateral trade in goods and services reaching €189.47 billion in 2020. The EU is the biggest investor in ASEAN countries and in 2019, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stocks into ASEAN accounted for €313.6 billion.

Twenty years of EU Support for ASEAN Economic Integration

The EU is also one of the major dialogue partners of ASEAN to have supported ASEAN Economic integration efforts for the past 20 years.



Each of the EU projects have built on the achievements of their predecessor projects. This has led to enhanced capacity and stronger institutions for ASEAN economic integration, particularly for the single production base and seamless movement of goods.

Through ARISE and ARISE Plus, the EU has provided continuous support to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Under ARISE Plus support has targeted trade facilitation; harmonised regulatory regimes in food safety

and pharmaceuticals; harmonisation of customs, transport and logistics systems; and strengthened results-based management and evidence-based decision making.

The ARISE Plus Regional project worked closely with the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, Working Groups and the private sector. The project supported **16 Elements**, **19 Strategic Measures** and **38 Key Action Lines** of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint (AECB) 2025 and Consolidated Strategic Action Plan (CSAP).

RELEVANCE OF ARISE PLUS



38

**AECB & CSAP
Key Action
Lines**



16

**AECB
Elements
Supported**



19

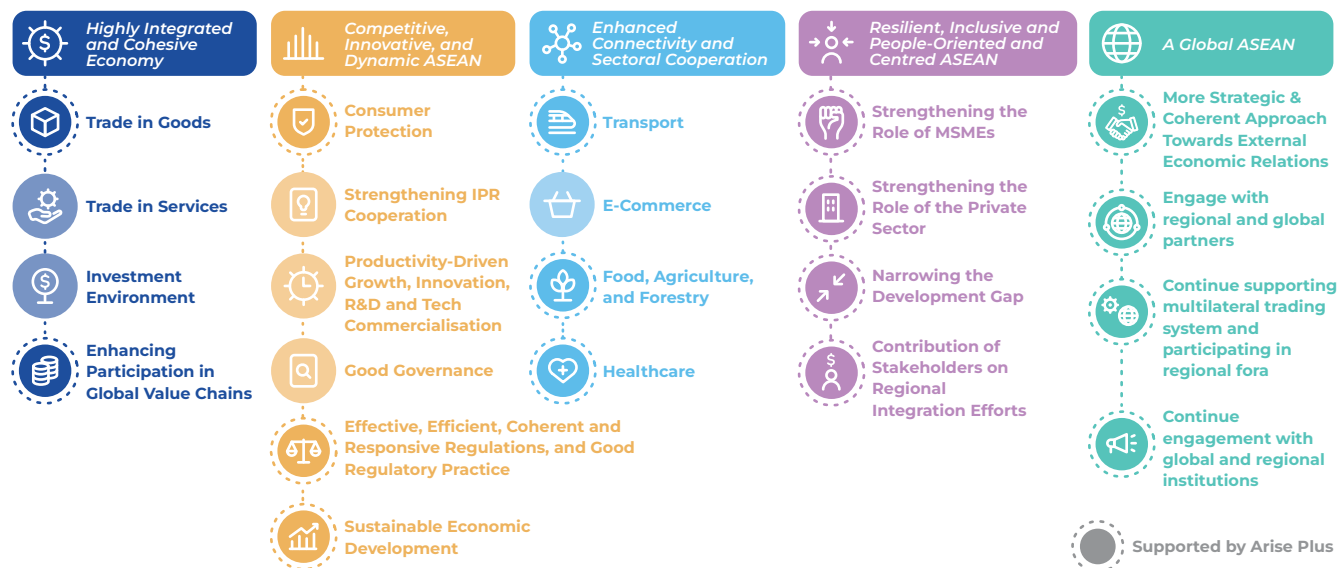
**AECB Strategic
Measures
Supported**

¹ Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/asean/european-union-and-asean_en?s=47

² APRIS: ASEAN-EU Programme for Regional Integration Support

³ ARISE: ASEAN-EU Programme for Regional Integration Support

ARISE PLUS REGIONAL PROJECT SUPPORT TO THE AEC BLUEPRINT 2025



ARISE Plus has also operationalised **5** themes and **7** priority areas of the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022



The initial contract for ARISE Plus Regional had a duration of 3 years from 8th November 2017 to 7th November 2020 and a total budget of €13.8. Following a successful Mid Term review of the project, ARISE Plus was extended by two years with an additional €7.4 million in funding until November 2022, with a total of €21.5 million. The project was further extended in May 2022 until May 2023, with a no-cost extension, at the request of the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Sectoral bodies,

highlighting the importance of the project in supporting AEC integration efforts.

The efforts of ARISE Plus have enriched EU-ASEAN collaboration by supporting AEC integration efforts. It has led to deeper and more strategic cooperation efforts involving a large number of partnerships.

ARISE PLUS PARTNERSHIPS



13 ASEC Divisions



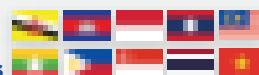
38 ASEAN Sectoral Bodies

Over

1000 private sector companies

Over

1500 organisations from ASEAN Member States



1. **ENHANCED TRADE- RELATED REGULATORY TRANSPARENCY IN ASEAN**

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Trade facilitation is an important limb of supply chain resilience and businesses must be able to benefit from our trade facilitation efforts. Two initiatives which ASEAN has embarked on, with the support of ARISE Plus, are the ASEAN Trade Repository (ATR) and the ASEAN Solutions for Investments, Services and Trade (ASSIST). I would like to thank the EU and ARISE Plus for their support to ASEAN in various areas, especially in trade facilitation and particularly for the establishment of the ATR and ASSIST. Singapore, and I believe I can speak on behalf of ASEAN on this, greatly appreciates the partnership.

— **Ms. Alpana Roy**

Director of ASEAN Division, Ministry of Trade and Industry (Singapore) and Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) representative

Enhancing intra-ASEAN trade through transparency mechanisms

Major deliverables

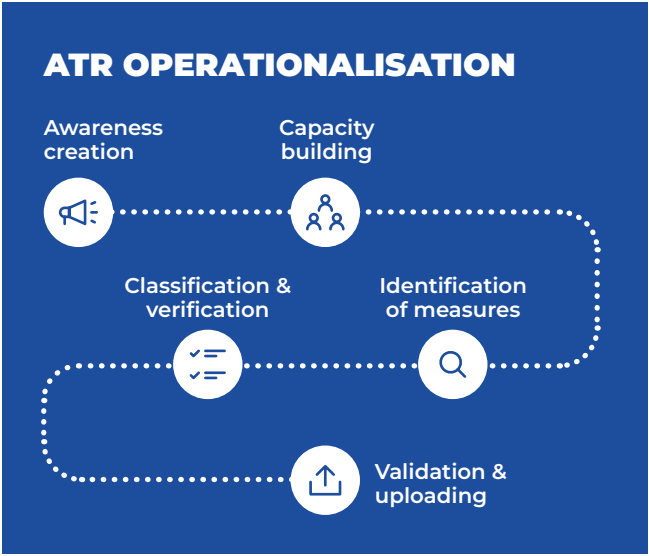
This component of ARISE Plus worked diligently on enhancing trade facilitation and improving regulatory transparency in ASEAN. Regional consultations and cooperation led to several key deliverables. The first deliverable is the operationalisation of the ASEAN Trade Repository (ATR), available at <https://atr.asean.org>. This elaborate effort is mandated under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). ATR is a dynamic platform that provides substantial and systematic access to the trade and customs laws and procedures of the 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS).

Over the years, ARISE Plus provided significant support for awareness creation and capacity building on the ATR, at the regional and national level. This was accompanied by extensive due diligence efforts such as identification, classification, and verification of trade measures. These were validated by AMS authorities before being uploaded to the ATR.

Key achievements

The value of the support provided by ARISE Plus is evident by the substantial increase in the number of measures validated and uploaded to the ATR. In 2018 the ATR contained 336 measures. Following ARISE Plus support, in 2023 there are currently a staggering 6,699 measures from the 10 member states. With the dedicated support of ARISE Plus all AMS have successfully completed the first four categories of the ATR namely: 1) Tariff nomenclature; 2) MFN tariffs and preferential tariffs offered under the ATIGA and other Agreements of ASEAN with its Dialogue Partners; 3) Rules of origin; and 4) Non-tariff measures (NTMs).

The ATR is an important mechanism for transparency at the regional level. It enables the private sector to obtain information on specific requirements they must comply to trade and access ASEAN Member State markets. The ATR enables regulatory transparency, legal certainty, and commercial predictability to support decision making by businesses. All entries in the ATR are available in English and are easily searchable. Regulatory transparency contributes to good governance, and specially in relation to NTMs is a fundamental catalyst to facilitate the seamless movement of goods across ASEAN.



ATR FACILITATES SEAMLESS MOVEMENT OF GOODS



Good governance



Support business decision making



Regulatory transparency



Facilitate access to ASEAN Member State markets



Legal certainty



Enhance intra-ASEAN trade



Commercial predictability

Ownership and the way forward

The ATR is a dynamic platform that requires regular updates and maintenance to remain relevant, accurate, comprehensive, and reliable. The commitment, institutional ownership and coordination across various authorities is pivotal in ensuring the medium and long-term continuity of ATR. Realising this, ARISE Plus dedicated efforts towards working closely with ATR and NTR focal points at the regional and national levels to create awareness on regulatory transparency and build capacity on implementing a robust ATR methodology.

Moving forward, continuous synergies within ASEAN and its development partners are an important requirement to ensure the sustainability of the ATR. Future EU support on economic integration in the region should include the flexibility to offer further support to the ATR if required to ensure the continuous operation of ATR and to build upon the efforts to date.



I would like to thank the EU and ARISE Plus for their support to ASEAN in various areas, especially in trade facilitation and particularly for the establishment of the ATR and ASSIST.

Ms. Alpana Roy

Director of ASEAN Division, Ministry of Trade and Industry (Singapore), and Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) representative

Empowering the private sector to support enhanced ASEAN trade

Major deliverables

Recognising the important role of the private sector ARISE Plus has, over the years, organised multiple roundtable discussions on trade facilitation at the national and regional level. These roundtables provided the platform for private sector, ASEAN regulators and policy-makers to discuss the effective implementation of the ATIGA. The roundtables explored new trade facilitation approaches, deeper thematic discussions, the upgrade of ATIGA and the sharing of EU and global best practices.

In line with the efforts to empower the private sector, ARISE Plus also extended support to ASEAN in operationalising and managing the digital tool ASEAN Solutions for Investments, Services and Trade (ASSIST), available at <https://assist.asean.org>. ASSIST is a non-binding and consultative mechanism to expedite and facilitate effective solution of operational problems encountered by ASEAN businesses when engaging in intra-ASEAN trade.

ASSIST allows ASEAN's private sector companies to address trade irritants, non-tariff barriers, and operational problems through an efficient online mechanism that engages the relevant authorities in each ASEAN Member State. If need be, the process can be done anonymously through business councils, trade associations, chambers of commerce, trade associations, law firms or lawyers.

In addition to the technical support provided, substantial private sector engagement and socialisation activities have been carried out over the years to increase awareness on the benefits and functions of ASSIST and ATR as digital tools that can enhance intra-ASEAN trade.

ARISE Plus conducted 19 ASSIST and ATR outreach events for businesses involving a total of 879 participants. All 19 events involved substantial efforts to engage women-owned businesses, such as those from the ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network (AWEN), resulting in 559 women and 320 men participating. The efforts to engage women-owned businesses are in line with the EUs Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and Gender Action Plan III. ASSIST and ATR outreach events have been conducted across all 10 AMS.

An ASSIST Diagnostic Study was also undertaken to capture usage of ASSIST and concerns from the private sector.

ASSIST & ATR OUTREACH

 **19** training events

 **879** private sector participants

 **320** men

 **559** women

Key achievements

ASSIST and ATR will only be able to serve its intended purpose through wider use among the various stakeholders. Therefore, greater private sector awareness of the existing ASEAN trade facilitation mechanisms was achieved through the various round table discussions, private sector engagement, socialisation activities and outreach events conducted over the years. To ensure continuous ASEAN integration, ARISE Plus also supported the institutional structures of the ASEAN Member States and of the ASEAN Secretariat through capacity building and implementation assistance.

During the duration of ARISE Plus, 27 new cases were triggered from entities based in four AMS through ASSIST, in comparison to just two cases prior to ARISE Plus support.

A number of matters were successfully resolved covering clarification on import requirements and customs procedures such as availing ATIGA tariffs, applications for import licenses and product registration, product classification, duties and taxes, and government services fees. Thus, ASSIST enabled costly and lengthy dispute settlement procedures to be avoided. Resolving trade irritants and removing trade barriers contributes to regional economic integration and encourages a healthy trade environment.

The ATR website has gained substantial traction from 2017 to March 2023, proving to be a useful tool for reference.

ATR WEBSITE

 New Users
74,254

 Sessions
99,876

Ownership and the way forward

ARISE Plus efforts included the transfer of knowledge. Outreach events were complemented with dedicated train-the-trainer (ToT) sessions at ASEAN Member State level. The ToT sessions focussed on building national capacity in the operation of ASSIST by identifying and training trainers from the private sector in each country, including female entrepreneurs from the ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network (AWEN). This approach will enable further transfer of knowledge in each AMS and ensures sustainability of efforts. A total of 19 ASSIST ToT events were conducted, with 377 trainers trained from the private sector including 240 women and 137 men.

The continued use of ASSIST has been enhanced by ARISE Plus through the ASSIST Diagnostic Study. This leaves ASEAN with a detailed analysis of the platform and actionable recommendations for future improvements.

The various stakeholder and private sector engagement activities organised by ARISE Plus will support the medium and long-term continuation of trade facilitation mechanisms like ASSIST and ATR. The increased awareness by the private sector of its rights and of the existing instruments to address trade problems together with the political will of ASEAN Member States to diligently implement such mechanisms will ensure the continuity of these.



The tools, mechanisms and public-private interactions created by the ARISE+ project have greatly enhanced the ability of the private sector to understand trade facilitative measures in ASEAN, and to raise issues for clarification, or points of concerns, to the regulators and policy-makers across the region. Tools such as ASSIST have the ability, when used effectively by both sides, to greatly enhance understanding for the private sector, and allow the public sector to identify pain points for industry when it comes to trade related issues. It is hoped that one of the legacies of ARISE+ will be the continued use, and further enhancement, of such tools and mechanisms.

Mr Chris Humphrey

Executive Director, EU-ASEAN Business Council

Enhancing decision making in ASEAN regulatory environment

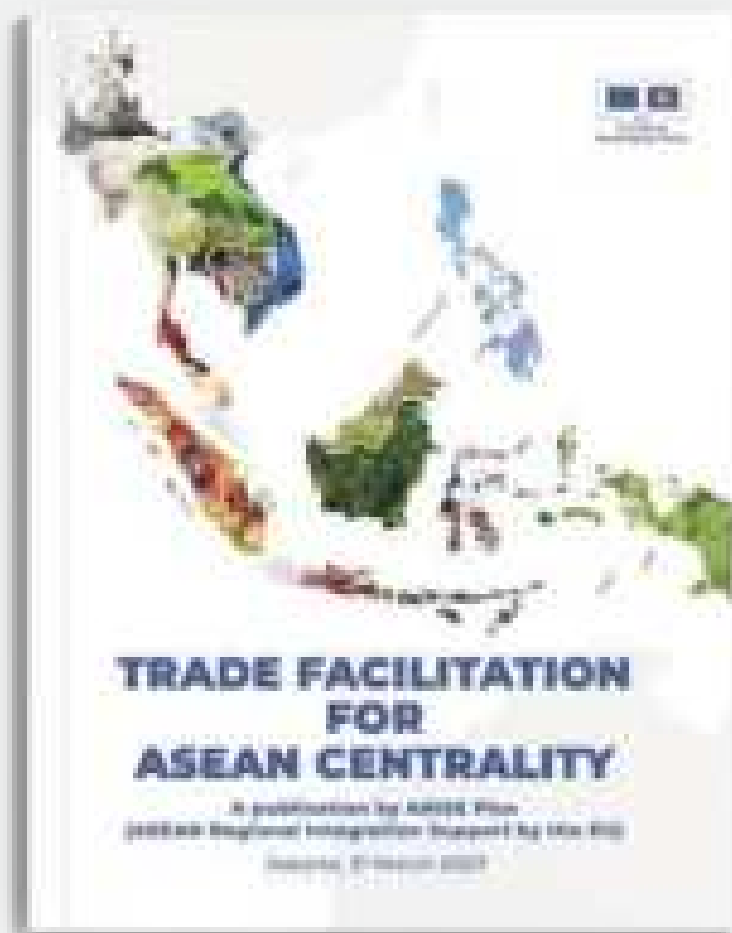
Major deliverables

ARISE Plus conducted a comprehensive legal review of ATIGA, to support ASEAN decision making in forthcoming updates to the regulatory environment. The comprehensive review included benchmarking of the ATIGA in light of relevant ASEAN developments, applicable WTO commitments and obligations and over 60 Preferential Trade Agreements including 'new generation' FTAs. Specific chapters and commitments on the Regional Comprehensive Economic

Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, in relation to Rules of Origin were also included.

To further support the process of the ATIGA update, 10 policy briefs were developed focussing on enhancing trade facilitation for ASEAN Centrality. These policy briefs were discussed extensively with the ASEAN private sector through a series of roundtable discussions.

SUPPORTING TRADE FACILITATION FOR ASEAN CENTRALITY



Digitalisation and e-commerce facilitation



Agricultural trade and SPS facilitation



New generation PTAs and ATIGA's structural reform



Regulatory transparency



Non-agricultural trade and TBT harmonization



Trade and sustainable development



NTMs streamlining and NTBs removal



Rules of origin and ASEAN centrality



ASEAN supply chain connectivity



Dispute avoidance and dispute settlement

Key achievements

The ATIGA upgrade shall be the legal basis for ASEAN to gather new momentum towards its vision of establishing a single market and production base with free flow of goods. The comprehensive ATIGA legal review supported by ARISE Plus is key in informing the process of the ATIGA upgrade and related negotiations among ASEAN Member States.

ARISE Plus developed policy briefs to address 10 key themes that are essential to achieve 'ASEAN Centrality'. These themes will need to be considered during the process of the upgrade to ATIGA. The private sector was systematically engaged to provide feedback to the 10 policy briefs and recommendations on trade facilitation for ASEAN Centrality.



Ownership and the way forward

The ATIGA Legal Review was presented to the ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee (ATF-JCC). A regional workshop was also held involving ASEAN Secretariat, members of the Consultative Committee on ATIGA (CCA) and representatives from the AMS. This created wide awareness on the findings and recommendations of the ATIGA Legal Review and potential improvements to ATIGA during its forthcoming revision.

The upgraded ATIGA needs to be an ambitious, modern and comprehensive 'new generation' agreement that can assist ASEAN to adapt to the fast-changing realities of international

trade and to achieve sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development. The support provided by ARISE Plus will help the region move towards 'ASEAN Centrality'. This strategy is fundamental for ASEAN Member States to achieve a greater share of intra-ASEAN trade vis-à-vis total trade and to reap the benefits of regional economic integration and greater regional supply chain resilience.

In support of the ATIGA upgrade, the summary of key takeaway points from private sector feedback on the 10 policy briefs were delivered to the meeting of the ASEAN Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) for the ATIGA upgrade in February 2023.

Key Figures



2.

FACILITATING AN ASEAN SINGLE PRODUCTION BASE THROUGH HARMONISED REGULATORY REGIMES IN FOOD SAFETY AND PHARMACEUTICALS

“

On behalf of ACCSQ, we would like to express our deepest appreciation to the EU, in particular the ARISE Plus Project and Team, for their long-term commitment in supporting the work of ACCSQ, its Working Groups (WGs) and Product Working Groups (PWGs). The ARISE Plus Project has contributed significantly to many milestones achieved by ACCSQ, its WGs and PWGs, in pharmaceuticals, prepared foodstuffs, conformity assessment and harmonisation of standards. We are looking forward for continuous cooperation with the EU moving forward.

— **Ibu Konny Sagala**

Co-Chair of ASEAN Consultative Committee for Standards and Quality (ACCSQ)-EU Dialogue, and Director Directorate for Standard Implementation System and Conformity Assessment, National Standardization Agency, Indonesia.



A stronger ASEAN through harmonisation and standardisation

Major deliverables

ARISE Plus has supported standards and conformity assessment to intensify harmonisation in ASEAN. Key deliverables include the *Guidelines for Implementation of Harmonised Accreditation in ASEAN* and the *ASEAN Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards*. These were jointly developed by ARISE Plus and ASEAN stakeholders, endorsed and successfully published. ARISE Plus also supported the ACCSQ in post-2025 planning and the formulation of its new Strategic Workplan through a concept note and workshops

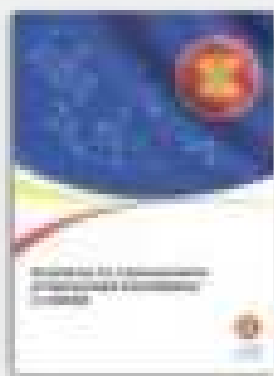
highlighting priorities from the AEC Blueprint 2025 Mid-term Review and emerging themes from the post-2025 AEC visioning process.

The project has also extended additional support to Cambodia to produce its draft law on accreditation which is being internally reviewed by Cambodian authorities before adoption.

Key achievements

The process for harmonisation of standards in ASEAN has been enhanced with the revised guideline. These now facilitate the adoption of a proactive programme for harmonisation of standards with direct involvement of Member States National Standards Bodies (NSBs). This will strengthen interaction between NSBs and increase the scope in the harmonisation of standards. These are expected to contribute to the increase in harmonised standards available for industry and regulators in ASEAN across all sectors and facilitate market integration across ASEAN economies.

The *Guidelines for Implementation of Harmonised Accreditation in ASEAN* provide guidance to National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) of AMS to strengthen national accreditation systems through the adoption of international standards, linkages to international recognition systems and promoting collaboration among the NABs. This will assist Member States in the implementation of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), harmonised regulatory regimes that facilitate the growth of intra-ASEAN Trade and for global recognition of accreditation performed by accreditation bodies in ASEAN.



Guide NABs and ASEAN PWGs



strengthen ASEAN accreditation systems



adoption of international standards



global recognition of accreditation



link with international recognition systems



promote collaboration among NABs



harmonised regulatory regimes to facilitate intra-ASEAN Trade



use of accredited certification, inspection and testing



support AMS in implementing MRAs



Guide NSBs



programme for harmonisation of standards



enhanced process for harmonisation of standards



strengthen interaction between NSBs



increase scope in harmonisation of standards



increase in harmonised standards for industry



facilitate market integration across ASEAN economies

Ownership and the way forward

The Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards have been adopted by ACCSQ and will shape the work of ASEAN committees and Member State NSBs in the harmonisation process and provide a permanent reference.

The Guidelines for the Implementation of Harmonised Accreditation will guide NABs and ASEAN Product Working Groups on the use of accredited certification, inspection and testing to support current and future ASEAN market integration initiatives.



The ARISE Plus Project has contributed significantly to many milestones achieved by ACCSQ, its WGs and PWGs, in conformity assessment and harmonisation of standards. We are looking forward for continuous cooperation with the EU moving forward.

Ibu Konny Sagala

Co-Chair of ASEAN Consultative Committee for Standards and Quality (ACCSQ)-EU Dialogue

Supporting safe and sustainable food in ASEAN

Major deliverables

Major deliverables from ARISE Plus included the ASEAN Food Safety Policy and the ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework (AFSRF) Agreement. Other key deliverables include ASEAN Sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Inspection and Certification Systems on Food Hygiene for Prepared Food Stuffs (Food Hygiene MRA), ASEAN Principles and Criteria For Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed, the ASEAN Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment of Maximum Use Level for Food Additives, ASEAN General Guideline on Food Contact Materials, and the ASEAN Guidelines on Specific Measures for Ceramic Articles Intended to come into Contact with Foodstuffs.

In the area of organic agriculture, the main deliverable has been the ASEAN Sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Certification of Organic Agricultural Products (MRA-OAP).

Six courses on food safety for use by ASEAN Regulatory Agencies have been developed in line with the principles of the ASEAN Food Safety Policy.



Key achievements

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SAFETY SYSTEMS FOR ASEAN



HARMONISED REGULATORY REGIMES

ASEAN Food Safety Policy AFSRF agreement, Food Hygiene MRA



HARMONISED GUIDELINES

9 Maximum Levels (MLs) on food contaminants, Maximum Use Level for Food Additives, Food Contact Materials, enhancing food safety through safe ceramics



CAPACITY BUILDING

training modules, training courses and workshops



MEANINGFUL CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

Cross-sectoral coordination and structures involving health, trade and agriculture sectors

ARISE Plus through its efforts in establishing a harmonised regulatory regime, traceability systems and a comprehensive capacity building programme has strengthened the sustainability of food safety systems in ASEAN.

The ASEAN Food Safety Policy mandates an integrated food chain approach, systematic risk analysis framework, and a science based independent risk assessment process. It also places responsibility on food business operators. The ASEAN Food Safety Policy promotes harmonisation with international standards and is consistent with ATIGA and World Trade Organisation sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

The AFSRF agreement provide a harmonised regulatory framework, based on the ASEAN Food Safety Policy, for AMS to develop and implement harmonised standards and technical requirements for safety of foodstuffs that are traded across ASEAN. It covers the entire food chain, from production to consumption. It provides a mechanism to coordinate the actions of ASEAN Bodies and Member State Regulators. The establishment of harmonised protocols such as the Protocol on Mutual Acceptance of Food Safety Standards on Food Additives, will reduce costs for business operators.

The Food Hygiene MRA enables Member States to recognise each other's food hygiene inspections and certifications to facilitate cross border movement of food products with minimal trade barriers.

The ASEAN Guidelines on Specific Measures for Ceramic Articles Intended to Come into Contact with Foodstuffs provides detailed guidelines to support the production of safe ceramicware, facilitates inspection and control measures. In addition to this it supports the traceability of the ceramicware produced. This further reinforces the rights of the ASEAN people to better health through the manufacturing and use of safe ceramic tableware and cookware that are intended to come into contact with food.

ARISE Plus has also supported efforts to harmonise the regulatory regime in organic agriculture through the ASEAN Sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Organic Agricultural Products (MRA-OAP). This establishes certification requirements for Organic Agricultural products based on harmonised standards to facilitate development and trade in certified organic agricultural products across ASEAN. The MRA-OAP is based on the ASEAN Standards for Organic Agriculture (ASOA), and provides an arrangement for AMS to recognise each other's organic agriculture certification systems. It additionally establishes an ASEAN Organic Mark to enable consumers to identify organic agricultural products produced in ASEAN Member States.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF HARMONISED REGULATORY REGIME AND TRACEABILITY SYSTEMS IN FOOD

For consumers



Increased availability of safe food for ASEAN consumers



Enhanced food security and nutrition

For business



Enhanced access to internal markets across AMS for food producers



Increased economies of scale for food suppliers and increased viability of business



Increased attraction of ASEAN as an investment destination due to access to internal market across AMS

Another major achievement has been the cross-sectoral cooperation, coordination and structures involving ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and member states from agriculture, trade and health sectors. When ARISE Plus started working with ASEAN in the area of food safety there was no coordination between agriculture, health and trade. ARISE Plus established an internal coordinating committee within ASEC. This started a change in practice at ASEC from sectoral based to a cross-sectoral approach. Workshops and

activities started involving AMS representatives from all three sectors. From here a task force was created for the finalisation of the AFSRF Agreement involving both ASEC and AMS. An AFSRF Coordinating Committee, will be established to oversee the implementation of the agreement. Similar approach was used for Organic Agriculture. The efforts of ARISE Plus have led to changes and enhancement to ASEAN integration structures and working practices for cross-sectoral engagement.

Ownership and the way forward

The AFSRF Agreement is an umbrella agreement based on the ASEAN Food Safety Policy and was developed jointly by the representatives of the Agriculture, Trade and Health authorities from ASEAN Member States. It provides for the further development of protocols to implement harmonised requirements for specific aspects of food safety. These will be developed over a period of time to cover the many aspects of food safety. The permanent AFSRF coordinating committee will be established for ownership and continuity of the AFSRF Agreement.

The MRA-OAP agreement provides for the establishment of a permanent Joint Committee of AMS representatives from national authorities responsible for organic agriculture to implement and maintain the recognition arrangement established by the MRA-OAP.



The ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre (ARAC) for Food Safety has been established with the support of ARISE Plus. This

will enable the identification and introduction of harmonised measures for food safety on a risk based approach.



ASEAN RAPID ALERT SYSTEM FOR FOOD AND FEED

In addition to ARAC, the ASEAN Regional Rapid Alert for Food and Feed (ARASFF) has been established. This enables food safety risk information sharing through national rapid alert systems.

Substantial efforts have been placed on developing AMS capacity through the development of training modules, training courses and training workshops for AMS officials to conduct inspections and evaluate food safety systems. Topics include how to conduct inspections on food hygiene including prepared foodstuff; food borne disease outbreaks, conducting risk-based inspections, such as profiles of pesticides used on leafy vegetables and food safety sampling; food safety risk communication; and managing health and nutrition claims and nutrition labelling. Trainings have been conducted and 676 officials have been trained. The materials handed over to counterparts are a useful resource for future training.



The cross-sectoral linkage demonstrated by the functional ASEC committee for food safety that has engaged relevant officers within ASEAN Secretariat involved with food-related initiatives was a proof of concept that having a cross-sectoral/ cross-pillar at the regional programmatic level can be very well facilitated if there is a similar platform at the Secretariat level. This has been applied in the ongoing initiatives on One Health and combating anti-microbial resistance (AMR), among others.

Dr F.M. Fernando

Assistant Director and Head of Health Division, ASEAN Secretariat

Towards a single ASEAN pharmaceutical market and production base

Major deliverables

Major deliverables in the pharmaceuticals area include the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Policy (APRP), the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Framework (APRF) and the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Framework Agreement (draft in final Stage of acceptance).

Additional deliverables support the implementation of the Mutual Recognition Agreement of Bioequivalence Study Reports of Generic Medicinal Products (BE MRA). These

include implementation procedures and three training modules to equip qualified ASEAN experts to conduct inspections of bio-equivalence centres seeking recognition under the MRA.

ARISE Plus also supported the establishment of the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Laboratory Technical Committee (APLTC) and the development of a five-year workplan for the APLTC.

Key achievements

ARISE Plus has contributed to the establishment of a harmonised regulatory regime, harmonised technical requirements, mutual recognition agreements and cross sectoral collaboration. These in turn contribute to the establishment of a single ASEAN pharmaceuticals market and enhance the availability, safety and reliability of pharmaceuticals.

The APRP and APRF which have been adopted and the APRF Agreement (in final draft) are a key development in the establishment of a harmonised regulatory regime for pharmaceutical products in ASEAN. These will consolidate the harmonised voluntary technical requirements and market authorisation processes for products under the

umbrella of the APRF Agreement. They will ensure that healthcare systems in ASEAN have timely access to high quality, safe and efficacious pharmaceutical products and availability through transparent and accountable procedures in order to support and protect public health. They will also strengthen cooperation among ASEAN National Regulatory Authorities in combating non-compliant pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical operators. The harmonised regulatory regime supports the removal and reduction of technical barriers for intra ASEAN trade in pharmaceuticals. These will contribute to the development of a single ASEAN pharmaceuticals Market and enhance ASEAN pharmaceuticals security and self-reliance.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A SAFE AND SINGLE ASEAN PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET

For consumers



Quicker approvals and timely access to pharmaceutical products



Increased availability of high quality, safe and efficacious pharmaceutical products



Availability of pharmaceuticals through transparent and accountable procedures



Efficient combat of non-compliant pharmaceutical products and suppliers

For business



Enhanced access to internal markets across AMS for pharmaceutical suppliers



Increased economies of scale for pharmaceutical suppliers and increased viability of business



Cost savings to manufacturers by eliminating the need for multiple BE Studies and inspection of premises



Increased attraction of ASEAN as an investment destination due to simplified drug approvals across AMS

The BE MRA is close to implementation and when implemented will remove the requirement for repeated evaluations of generic pharmaceutical products when these are undertaken by BE Centres listed under the MRA. It will also facilitate the approval and movement of generic medicinal products across ASEAN. The expected benefits include quicker approval, increased availability of medicines in ASEAN and cost savings to manufacturers by eliminating the need for duplicating expensive BE Studies.

The establishment of the APTLC will enable the exchange of information and promote technical cooperation between official pharmaceutical laboratories in ASEAN. It will support development of competency and future mutual recognition arrangements.

Cross-sectoral cooperation, coordination and structures involving the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Sectoral Bodies were established for pharmaceuticals covering the health and trade sectors. A pharmaceutical Coordinating Committee was established in ASEC and a Task Force Established to coordinate AMS efforts. As a result, the APRF Agreement draft text could be developed in a relatively short period of 2 years because of these institutional arrangements. In the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 Mid-term Review, one of the key areas identified was to have meaningful cross-sectoral work. ARISE Plus has been able to enhance working practices and structures towards a substantial cross-sectoral approach.

Ownership and the way forward

Given the importance of a permanent implementation and monitoring body, the APRF Coordinating Committee, will be established. This body will plan and implement the APRF Agreement and expand its scope of implementation progressively by developing specific protocols to cover the spectrum of harmonised regulatory requirements across the life cycle of pharmaceutical products.

ARISE Plus has also supported the establishment of a Joint Committee of ASEAN Member States and representatives of

ASEAN regulators. This will lead and coordinate a programme for establishing a list of recognised BE Centres that will be qualified to conduct BE studies for generic medicines recognised across ASEAN for products intended to be marketed in the ASEAN region.

The APTLC will serve as a permanent committee of Official Pharmaceutical Laboratories and provides the foundation for development of capability, sharing of expertise and supporting recognition arrangements.

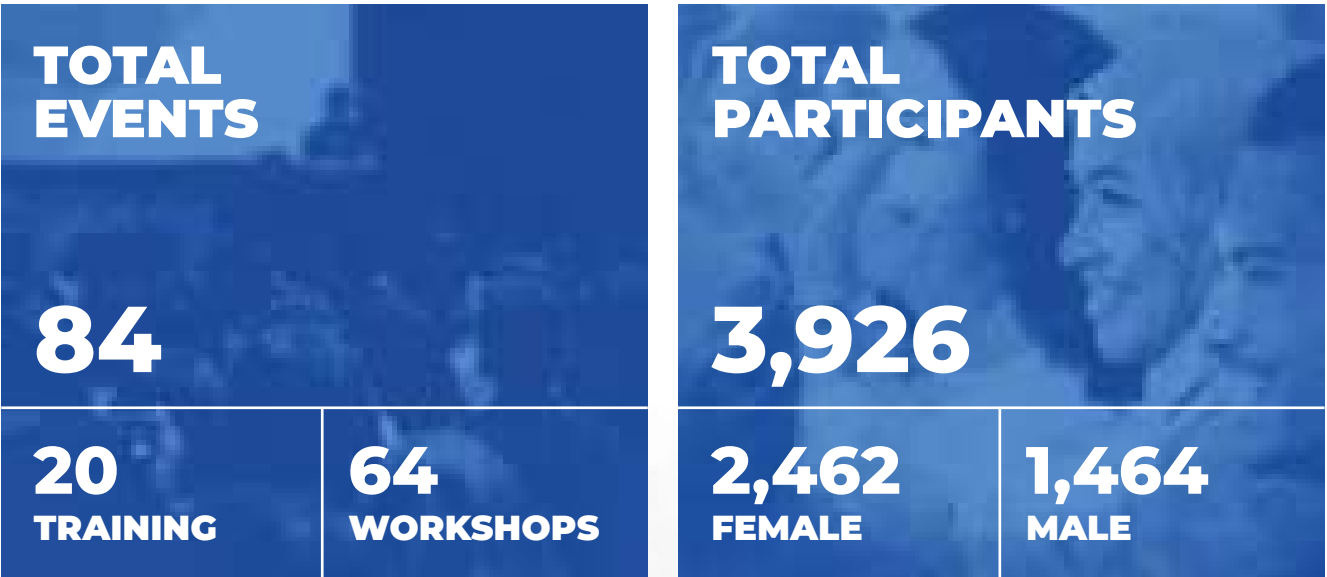


Thai FDA would like to thank AHC3 and PPWG for the development of the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Policy (APRP), Framework (APRF) and APRF Agreement with support from ARISE Plus and ASEAN Secretariat. The workshops you organized were very beneficial to harmonize standards and technical regulations in order to facilitate access to pharmaceutical products through the adoption of the APRP which provides the agreed principle for regulatory cooperation while APRF provides the framework to integrate the ASEAN Pharmaceutical sector. In addition, the workshops are the most feasible way to share and discuss among ASEAN Member States in order to achieve consensus. Thailand would like to commend ARISE Plus and ASEAN secretariat for these successful meetings.

Ms. Thanyapat Jirawattananon

*Pharmacist, Practitioner Level, International Affairs Division
Food and Drug Administration, Thailand (Thai FDA)*

Key Figures



3.

HARMONISATION OF CUSTOMS, TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT THE SEAMLESS MOVEMENT OF GOODS IN ASEAN

“

Great success would only come when we work for it, and it does not come overnight. The support provided by the European Union and the working relationship with ARISE Plus has been a great journey. In every endeavour, it is worthwhile to look back to move forward with a better vision, and through our collaboration, we have been able to achieve this.

— **Dr Ramlah Hj Mukhtar**

*Chair of ASEAN Customs Transit System
(ACTS) Sub-Working Group*

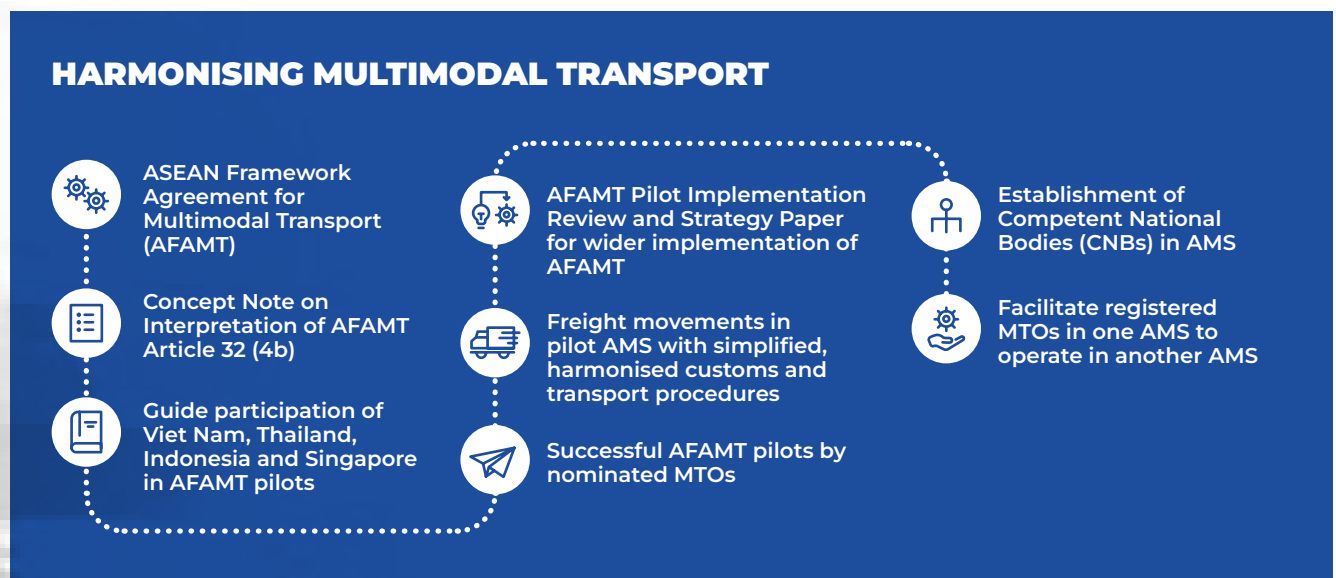
Harmonising multi-modal transport

Major deliverables

Harmonising multi-modal transport is one of the key areas of support by ARISE Plus under component three. The main regional mandate for this is provided by the ASEAN Framework Agreement for Multimodal Transport (AFAMT). In line with the aspirations of AFAMT, ARISE Plus has supported Multimodal Transport Operators (MTOs) in AMS to operate the freight network across the AMS with a harmonised set of regulations. A key deliverable was a Concept Note on the Interpretation of AFAMT Article 32 (4b) which supported the participation of Viet Nam, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore in AFAMT pilots. ARISE Plus also prepared the AFAMT Pilot

Implementation Review and Strategy Paper for the wider implementation of AFAMT in ASEAN. The support provided by ARISE Plus through the close cooperation with regional bodies, national governments, working groups and the private sector has enabled freight movements in AMS with simplified and harmonised customs and transport procedures.

Other deliverables include the establishment of the Competent National Bodies (CNBs) in AMS.



Key achievements

Pilots were conducted by nominated MTOs in Thailand and Viet Nam. This was followed by Singapore and Indonesia joining the AFAMT pilot.

Most challenges of implementation come with the lack of understanding and buy-in. The pilot implementation of AFAMT supported by ARISE Plus provided a proof of concept and provides AMS with a greater understanding of the role of MTOs in creating an integrated network of transport,

combining land and maritime-based transport, within and beyond ASEAN.

The successful implementation of the pilots will hopefully support the wider implementation of AFAMT in ASEAN. AFAMT will allow registered MTOs in each AMS to operate in another AMS, offering their multimodal transport services in enhancing the total logistics value chain, using a network of transport system that can incorporate road, rail, sea, or air.

Ownership and the way forward

AFAMT will be able to deliver its full potential and benefits with the buy in and commitment of all AMS. This could be enhanced with better transparency and access to information through the establishment of a digital platform

for multimodal transport. This platform can serve to guide the private sector and government authorities, directly or indirectly providing further facilitation, enhancements, and development to the ASEAN transport agreements.

Enhancing the seamless transit of goods across ASEAN

Major deliverables

In support of the ASEAN Framework Agreement for Goods in Transit (AFAFGIT), ARISE Plus has extended substantial support to the ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS). ACTS is a complete system that caters for government and private sector needs for Customs and transport compliance for goods in transit under the AFAFGIT. This flagship initiative transforms the landscape of movement of goods by road in ASEAN. It establishes free cross-border movement of goods in ASEAN under suspension of duties and taxes and backed up by digitally automated Customs procedures.

Over the years, ARISE Plus has provided extensive support in the implementation and operationalisation of ACTS based on best practices and expertise from the EU. Continuous commitment of ARISE Plus and the ability to provide the necessary support has led to ACTS being successfully implemented and operationalised in six ASEAN Member States, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Realizing the importance of private sector engagement and buy in, ARISE Plus organised 22 outreach events, involving 726 participants, to disseminate information and provide a platform to gain further understanding. These outreach events reached out to logistic partners, freight forwarders, business operators, and banks among others. As a result, the ACTS is currently used by private sector for their regular cross border transit operations by road with future options to expand to other modes of transport, such as railway.

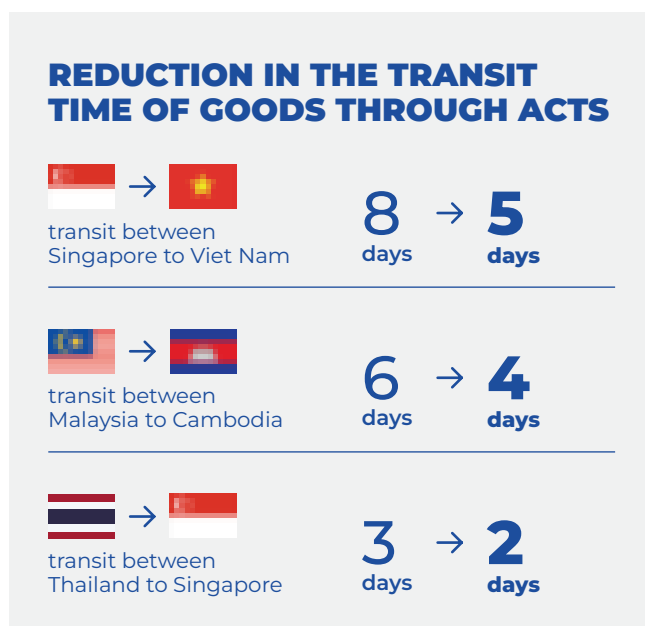
In line with the digitalisation agenda of ASEAN, ACTS provides a secure digital platform for information exchange between government agencies and the private sector. Much like its predecessor in Europe, the New Computerised System (NCTS), ACTS is flexible, expandable and will become a key digital platform supporting ASEAN Customs and Transport initiatives. The enhanced version of the ACTS portal is available at <https://acts.asean.org>



Key achievements

Harmonisation and standardisation are pillars of successful regional integration. The ACTS has improved the level of harmonisation and standardisation of regional Customs and transport procedures and exchange of information, building fundamentals for free movement of goods and digitalisation in the ASEAN region.

The continuous efforts of ARISE Plus have led to the operationalisation of the ACTS in four transit routes: Singapore -Malaysia -Thailand; Malaysia- Thailand- Cambodia; Malaysia- Thailand- Laos- Viet Nam; and Cambodia - Viet Nam. Among goods transported were advance materials for health care and manufacturing, followed by mechanical, electronic and printer components. The substantial increase of ACTS movements from 2022 onwards in comparison to 2021 is the result of increased uptake among the private sector owing to the success of the multiple outreach efforts.



The real time digital information available about the movement of goods in ACTS contributes significantly to the supply chains resiliency, enabling the supply chain participants to respond quickly to operational disruptions through improved contingency planning and forecasting. ACTS has added tangible benefits to offer such as transit time between various sectors of the journey are consistently

precise, making professional and personal lives of all involved parties easier: customers can rely on scheduled delivery time, logistic operators are able to plan various aspects of operations precisely, and finally the drivers enjoy higher quality of their professional lives, diminished anxiety levels, and guaranteed availability of quality personal time.

BENEFITS OF THE ACTS



Is the **most efficient mode of transit for goods** available in ASEAN



Increases efficiency for logistics companies which is passed onto importers, exporters, and manufacturers



Enables precise transit times that **improves production planning** and **inventory management**



Simplifies Customs procedures and offers **up to 40% in cost savings**



Helps **build trust** between the public and private sector through transparency and Customs compliance



Provides **improved work environment** and **quality of life** for logistics drivers

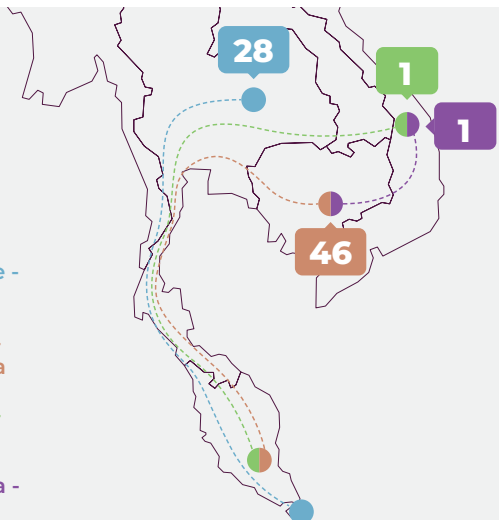


Improves regional supply chains through **seamless clearance, faster transit** and **reduced cost**

Support provided by ARISE Plus towards ACTS has brought together stakeholders from transport, customs, and the private sector. This initiative delivers proof of concept of the success of cooperation and collaboration between government agencies of AMS in implementing, operationalising and operating ASEAN initiatives related to the economic integration. Success has been achieved in real live application of the established legal framework, harmonised and standardised procedures and digital information exchanges to further achieve the objectives of the ASEAN Economic Community.

Operationalised 4 Transit Routes

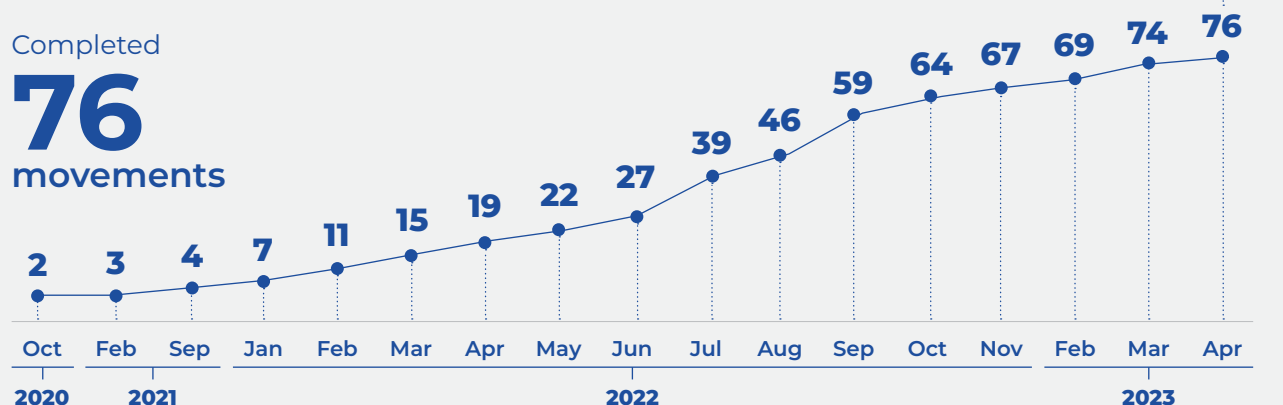
- Singapore - Thailand
- Malaysia - Cambodia
- Malaysia - Viet Nam
- Cambodia - Viet Nam



MONTHLY CUMULATIVE MOVEMENTS

Completed

76
movements





I would describe ACTS benefits as seamless clearance, faster transit, precise timing and cost reduction. My motto for ACTS is perfect logistics and digital connectivity for present-day supply chain needs

Mr S Prithviraj

the General Manager of City Zone Express Sdn Bhd, Malaysia

Ownership and the way forward

To ensure sustainability and ownership ARISE Plus has generated extensive outreach on the benefits of using ACTS by the private sector. These outreach efforts and close collaboration with the private sector will need to be continued.

At the management level, ARISE Plus has also worked closely with the ASEAN Secretariat to develop the necessary capacity at the regional level by establishing the ACTS Central Management Team (CMT), to support the ACTS live operations and further expansion of the ACTS geographically and functionally. The project with the support of the CMT have coordinated 57 bi-weekly meetings with customs and transport authorities from the participating member states and the customs and transport divisions from ASEC.

In addition to this, ARISE Plus has assisted the ASEAN Secretariat establish the helpdesk function to support IT infrastructure and correct application of procedures in the ACTS live operations in the short term.

Given the extent of investment and effort thus far and the importance of long term sustainability, ARISE Plus also analysed the requirements for long term sustainability of ACTS in a dedicated study. This provided guidance and recommendations on how to transform the institutional setup of ACTS within ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Member States to ensure smooth ACTS live operations and effective future development of ACTS independent from

external funding. Upon the conclusion of ARISE Plus, this study will serve as an important reference. Participation of the AMS both financially and materially in ensuring sustainability of live operations of the ACTS is a critical factor of the overall success in the long term.

ARISE Plus and CMT have established an ACTS Recognition scheme for the private sector with the following aims:

- Recognise logistics companies who undertake ACTS movements
- Enhance the take-up of ACTS by logistics companies
- Recognise staff from ASEAN logistics companies and professionals with adequate knowledge on ACTS

In addition, ARISE Plus has conducted several detailed studies providing analysis and guidance along with specific recommendations for the future development of the ACTS, including roll out of the ACTS to Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Philippines, use of the ACTS with other modes of transport, such as rail and sea, and inclusion of dangerous goods.

ARISE Plus has now passed the baton to ASEAN and hopes that the support provided by the EU for the past ten years has provided a strong foundation to continue the efforts of promoting ACTS as a functional and dynamic tool that supports the seamless movement of goods in ASEAN.

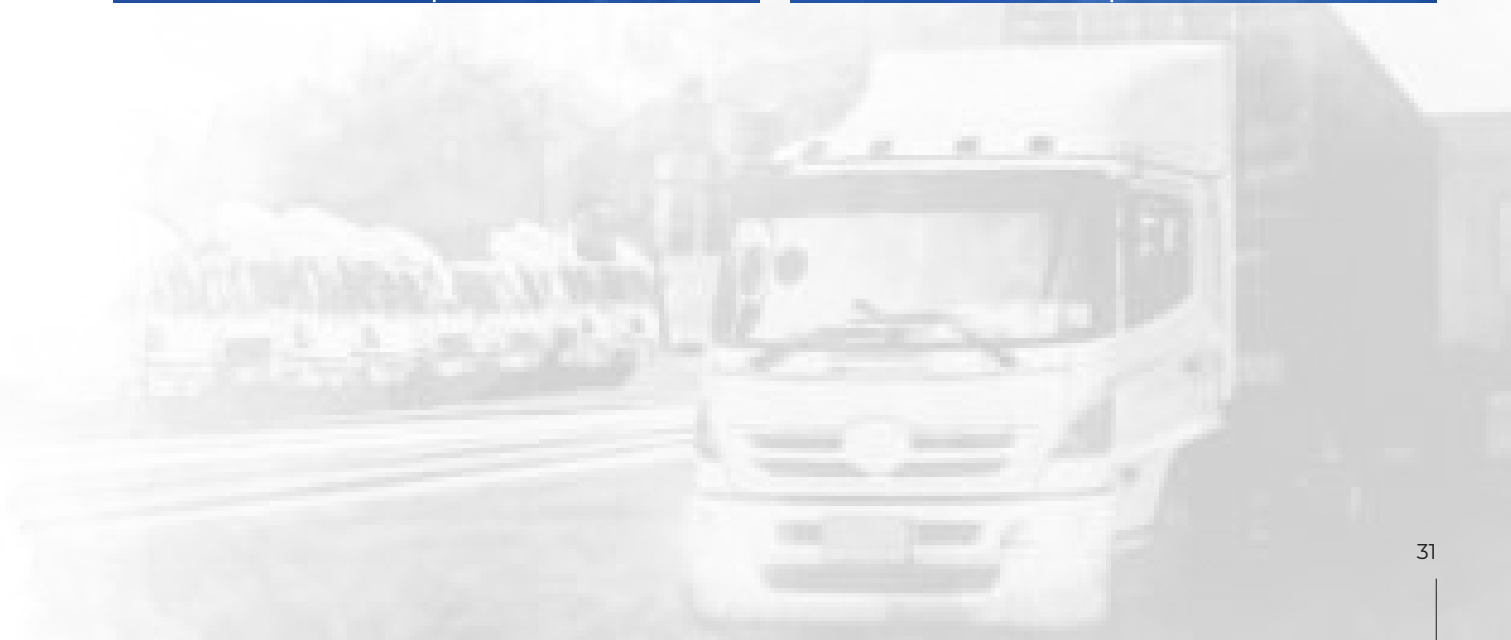
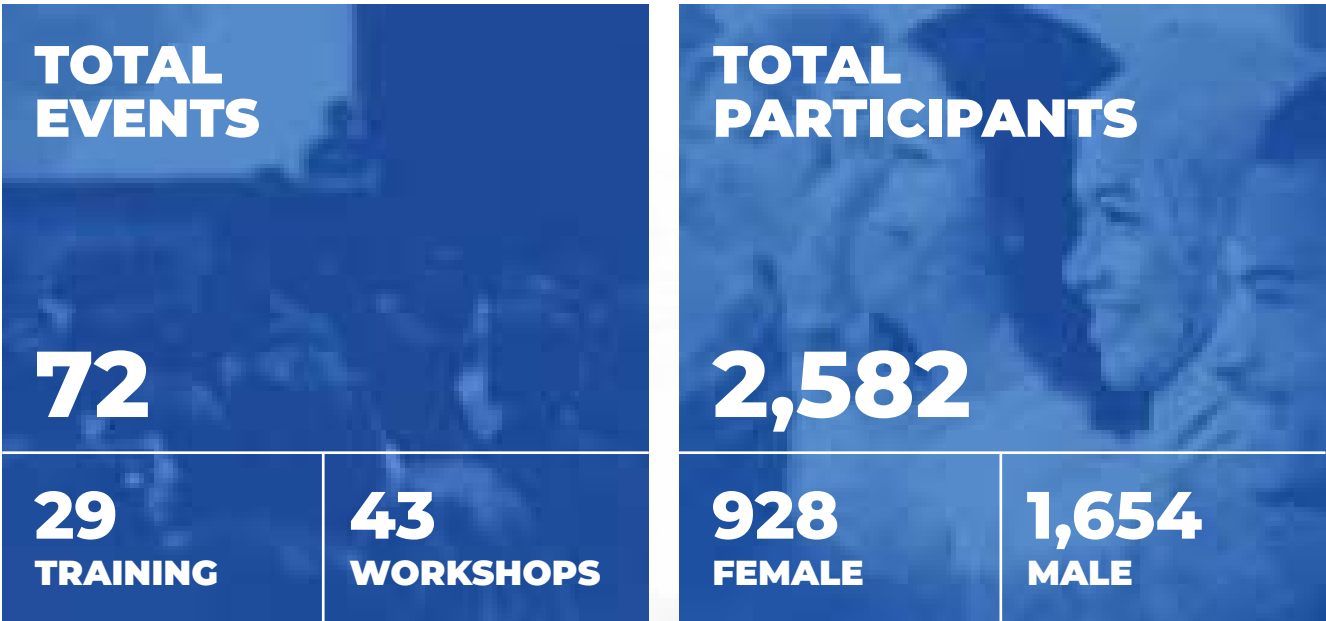


I discovered under ACTS we can shorten the transit time from Bangkok to Singapore. It takes only two and half days. This has never happened before!

Mr. Witoon Santibunyarat

Group Managing Director, Amazing Logistics & Supply Chain Co. Ltd, Thailand

Key Figures



4.

STRENGTHENED RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT AND EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING IN THE ASEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

“

ARISE Plus Programme, with strong support from the EU Delegation, has contributed to facilitating and enhancing evidence-based and informed decision making in ASEAN. This is important in advancing the ASEAN integration agenda by supporting strategic and well-informed policies and strategies that align with national priorities and respond proactively to the evolving global economic landscape; thereby contributing to sustained economic growth, social progress and stability in the region.

— **Dr. Ahmad Zafarullah Abdul Jalil**

*Director of ASEAN Integration Monitoring
Directorate, ASEAN Secretariat*

Strengthening evidence-based decision making in ASEAN Economic integration

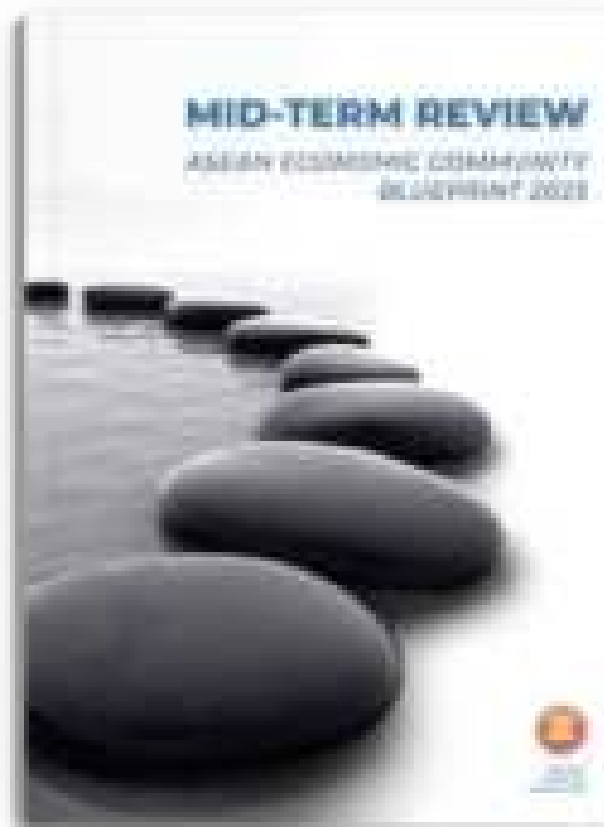
Major deliverables

A major deliverable was the contribution to the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025. ARISE Plus worked closely with the ASEAN Integration Monitoring Directorate (AIMD) at the ASEAN Secretariat to conduct a comprehensive MTR. The MTR was highly participatory in nature and engaged over **645 businesses** through a survey, undertook focus group discussions with **15 joint business councils** and **17 think tanks**. Through this high quality, inclusive and evidence-based collaborative effort, **ARISE Plus has contributed to ASEAN strategic decision making**.

Upon completion of the MTR, to uphold the commitment of the EU as a strategic partner to ASEAN, ARISE Plus continued providing support to ASEAN Economic Integration by channelling efforts into creating awareness and focussed on outreach initiatives to disseminate the main findings of the MTR. Several knowledge products were developed to **create awareness on the main results of the MTR** and **AEC integration efforts amongst the joint business councils, private sector** and **academia**. The materials including a video on the MTR of the AEC Blueprint 2025, two posters and five sets of social media posts were developed and widely circulated. For further reach and to be more inclusive in its efforts, some of the materials were translated into Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Khmer, Lao and Viet Nameese to support wider dissemination.

Pre MTR, ARISE Plus contributed to an enhanced methodology for the conduct of country visits to add depth and reliability to the AEC Compliance Monitoring. This included defining specific objectives for the country visits, criteria for the selection of informants, core questions and protocols for in-depth interviews. This support ensured that the most relevant data from the most informed people were being obtained in the most strategic manner to support the monitoring process.

Building on the strong collaboration between the project and the ASEAN Secretariat for the AEC Blueprint 2025 MTR, ARISE Plus responded to a demand to support AIMD and the High-Level Task Force in the Post-2025 Visioning process. ARISE Plus prepared a concept note to guide the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for the AEC Post-2025 Visioning process. The draft concept note includes key considerations based on findings from the AEC Blueprint 2025 MTR, and a detailed methodology to engage stakeholders from AMS governments, private sector, civil society, and research organisations in the Post-2025 Visioning process.



<https://youtu.be/4yH4HGKsmK0>

Key achievements

The MTR of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 was endorsed by the ASEAN Secretary General, the High-Level Task Force on Economic Integration (HLTF-EI) and AMS. The MTR which was publicly released in April 2021 has been acknowledged by ASEC and the HLTF-EI as the most **significant document to drive strategic decision making for the next five years** of the AEC Blueprint 2025.

The MTR led to five key messages to improve and intensify efforts towards the AEC integration process. In addition to this, the MTR also contributed 12 tangible recommendations to enhance AEC integration efforts from 2021 to 2025.

STRENGTHENED EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING FOR ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION



Strengthened Country Visit process



AEC Blueprint 2025 Mid-Term Review



Outreach materials



Strengthened stakeholder engagement strategy for AEC Post-2025 Visioning process

AEC BLUEPRINT 2025 MTR: RECOMMENDATIONS



Theme 1
Address Overarching Elements and Cross-cutting Issues



R1: Strengthen coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms



R2: Develop consolidated implementation frameworks for cross cutting issues



R3: Adopt a Community-wide strategy on 4IR and digital transformation



R4: Coordinated approach enhancing participation in global value chains



R5: Mainstream good regulatory practices



Theme 2
Strengthen ASEAN Centrality and Resilience



R6: Advance the AEC agenda amid diversity



R7: Strengthen the institutional ecosystem and strategic use of the ASEAN Secretariat



R8: Deepen sectoral cooperation beyond soft cooperation



R9: Keep ahead of emerging issues through dialogue and cooperation



R10: Strive for more proactive and strategic external engagement



Theme 3
Keep AEC Inclusive and Sustainable



R11: Pursue more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development



R12: Further strengthen stakeholder consultation and engagement

Through the support and expertise provided for the mid-term review of the AEC Blueprint 2025, ARISE Plus has improved the ability of ASEAN to monitor AEC progress through high quality data collection, analysis and triangulation. This evidence-based exercise has enhanced the strategic direction of ASEAN economic integration and broader community-building efforts for the second phase of the AEC Blueprint from 2021 to 2025. Moving beyond, the concept note prepared

by ARISE Plus will guide the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for the AEC Post-2025 Visioning process which will contribute to the formulation of the new AEC Blueprint. The MTR Report can be accessed via the link below



<https://asean.org/book/mid-term-review-report-of-the-asean-blueprint-2025/>

Ownership and the way forward

The MTR of the AECB 2025 includes strong ownerships from the HLTF-EI and AIMD of the ASEAN Secretariat. The MTR has been widely disseminated amongst ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and is influencing the post-2025 visioning process of ASEAN

which will lead to the development of the new AEC Blueprint covering the period from 2025 onwards. The sustainability of the support provided by ARISE Plus will live on beyond 2025 in the new AEC Blueprint.



Towards 2025 and beyond, ASEAN must take into consideration emerging and cross-cutting issues. The MTR opens up an opportunity to calibrate anew our approaches and initiatives moving forward. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic challenges us to take up innovative approaches, to do more and to do better than the usual in the new normal. I thank the European Union (EU) through the ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) Plus Programme for the additional support provided in the conduct of the MTR and more broadly in supporting integration monitoring and statistical capacity building at the ASEAN Secretariat.

Dato Lim Jock Hoi

Former Secretary-General of ASEAN

Authoritative source of ASEAN Statistics with growing ASEAN-Help-ASEAN practices

Major deliverables

In a world that is highly driven by demand for data, ARISE Plus has provided much-needed support for the ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS). This established system provides ASEAN authoritative statistics with increased comparability, accessibility, and openness. Given the importance of data driven planning and decision making.

ARISE Plus has also supported the ASEAN-Help-ASEAN framework and mechanism. The framework has led to closer regional cooperation in statistics and contributes to efforts to narrow the development gap and also to foster innovations in statistics.

Key achievements

The support provided by ARISE Plus has contributed towards the increased availability of quality ASEAN Statistics. This is enhanced by the added value of statistical dissemination in

various forms such as infographics, videographic and social media content.

The support provided in regional integration has contributed to wider collaboration and harmonisation with endless benefits to offer. Wider implementation of ASEAN-Help-ASEAN framework in all working groups led by ASEANStats and the lead countries has helped narrow the development gap in Statistics in International Trade in Services (SITS), Foreign Direct Investment (FDIS), International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) and System of National Accounting (SNA). Greater commitment by the lead countries and

ASEANStats has increased innovations in statistics, such as utilisation of big data for tourism, prices, and accommodation statistics, and adaptation to new technology in data collection and surveys. The commitment of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore in supporting ASEAN LDCs in the ASEAN Help ASEAN initiative strongly portrays the ASEAN spirit of Community of Opportunities for All. The benefits and potential of ASEAN-Help-ASEAN are for ASEAN to continue developing and capitalising on.

Ownership and the way forward

ACSS is an important driver of the ASEAN economic integration agenda. The support provided by ARISE Plus has enhanced data integration at the regional level. To help ensure that ACSS remains relevant to policy dialogue and wider regional integration, continuous support is necessary to help ACSS respond better to the requirements for harmonised systems, integrated statistics, and development of indicators.

Another immediate priority is to ensure good data governance procedures and stewardship to ensure data governance and protection measures are in place. This will ensure ASEAN through ACSS will be able to keep up with the challenges and opportunities related to data revolution and innovation, increased demand and at the same time providing greater accessibility, transparency, and openness.

Technology is constantly evolving; therefore, it is important to ensure continuous skills development to keep up with the advancement of technology. Post ARISE Plus, continuous support is needed to ensure the ASEAN Help ASEAN initiative is updated on statistical techniques and remains relevant through inter-agency and institutional cooperation and updated on legal aspects through capacity building activities.

Another sustainability mechanism to support ASEAN Help ASEAN is the work plan and working group that has been established. The strengthened role of ASEANStats and the lead countries in nurturing the ASEAN Help ASEAN practices in statistical cooperation will help narrow the development gap and expedite the harmonisation process.



In the last two years, ASEAN Member States have been demonstrating their ability and commitment in providing technical supports to each other. Capacity enhancement obtained during ARISE Plus programme had contributed in ensuring the continuation of the ASEAN-Help-ASEAN approach.

Dr. Anang Laksono

*Head of Statistics Division, ASEAN Integration Monitoring
Directorate, ASEAN Secretariat*

SDG indicators to support regional efforts with a global outlook

Major deliverables

The support provided by ARISE Plus has facilitated better alignment of regional data towards the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The support by ARISE Plus has enabled the release of annual data on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (SDGI), establishment of a

regional SDG database and a production system for biennial reports on SDG. Moving forward, this will pave the way for strategic efforts to include the other SDGs on climate change, energy, decent work, and employment.

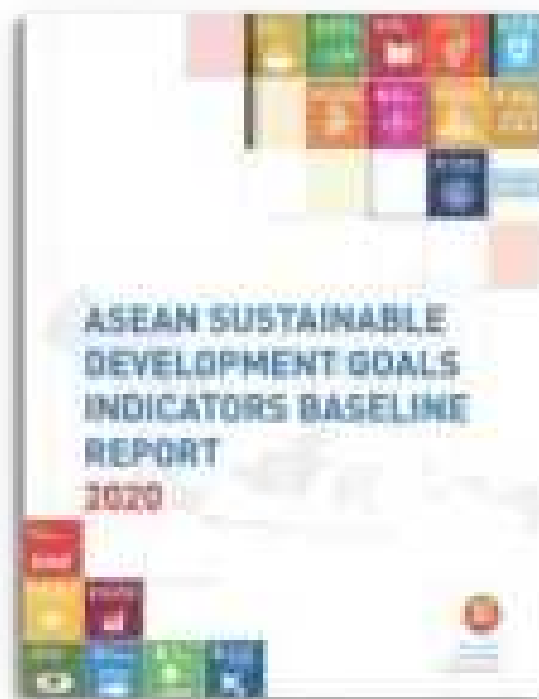
Key achievements

ARISE Plus has successfully supported the ASEAN Statistical Community, in the publication of the inaugural ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (SDGIs) Baseline Report 2020.

The report presents data at the regional and national level that serves as the baseline for selected SDGIs. Cooperation on SDGIs data collection and coordination across the 10 ASEAN Member States was supported by the project in conjunction with the Working Group on SDGIs, ASEANstats, and the National Statistical Offices. In conjunction with the release of the report, an online SDG database portal was launched on 23 October 2020, which provides stakeholders transparent access to SDGIs statistics.

The baseline report and online portal serve as good evidence-based points of reference for monitoring progress towards the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and planning at the national and regional level.

The SDGs are a shared ambition; therefore, it is important to ensure that progress at the national and regional level are well communicated to the various stakeholders and the wider ASEAN community as much as possible to promote joint accountability. ARISE Plus has channelled efforts towards producing visibility materials to disseminate information based on the SDGIs, this has now become a regular dissemination theme which highlights progress at the regional level towards the global outlook. These dissemination materials include suggested areas for improvement to better contribute to the sustainable development ambition and serves as a guide for the way ahead.



<https://www.aseanstats.org/>

Ownership and the way forward

Going forward, the logical next step would be to embark on other important development agenda indicators such as climate change, energy and natural resources conservation, decent work, and employment. These strategic areas of importance are currently being pursued by many international organisations with potential room for collaboration.

ASEAN should also work on the enhancement of indicators related to welfare, health, education, and gender which can provide insights on the impact of the post-COVID19 pandemic. Such data at the regional level is necessary for the ASEAN Economic Integration ambition and greater contribution to the global outlook.

“Comparable, timely and quality data on SDG indicators is paramount to measuring progress towards the achievement of the SDGs within the ASEAN region. The comprehensive range of indicators required for measuring the SDGs has prompted deeper and closer collaboration among the ASEAN Member States, and these have been facilitated by the crucial support from the ARISE Plus and the incredible efforts of the ASEANstats.”

Dr Koh Eng Chuan

Chief Statistician, Singapore Department of Statistics

Key Figures



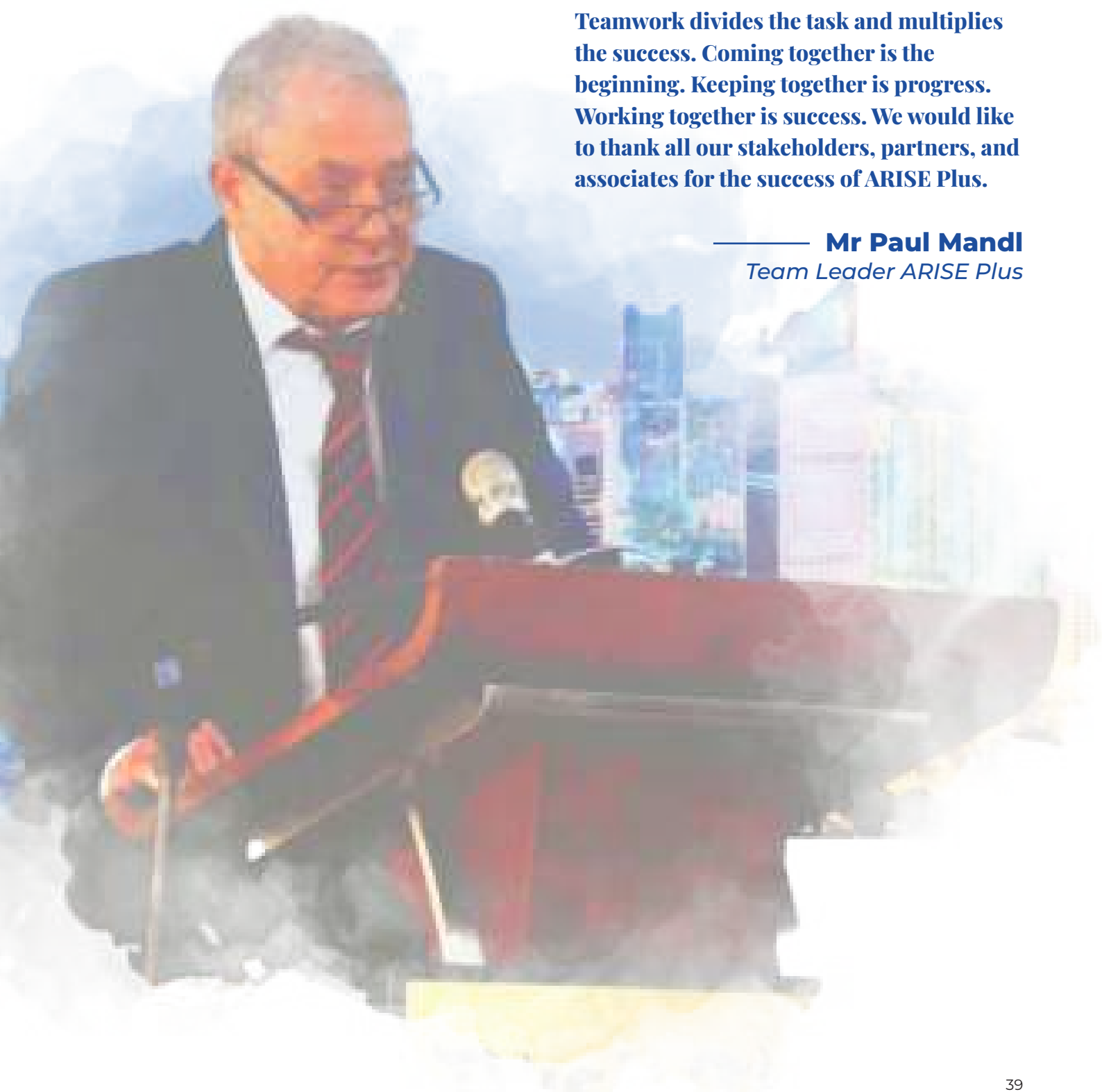
5. OVERALL PERFORMANCE

“

Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success. Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. We would like to thank all our stakeholders, partners, and associates for the success of ARISE Plus.

——— **Mr Paul Mandl**

Team Leader ARISE Plus

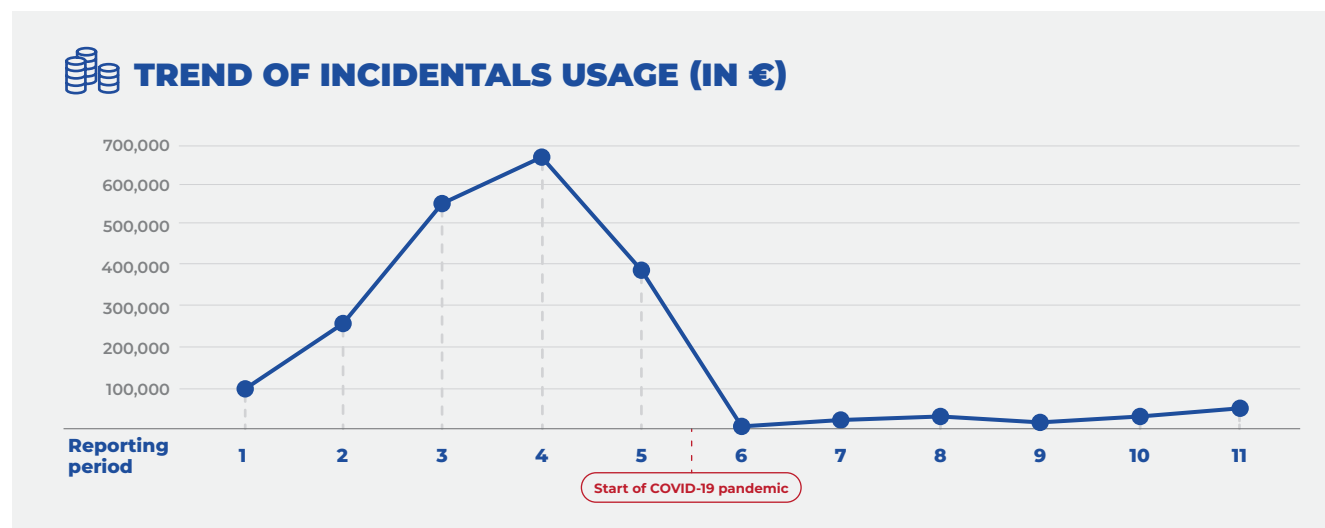


ARISE PLUS in action

Deployment of resources

A total of 4413¹ key expert (KE) days, 12,776 senior non-key expert (SNKE) days and 400 junior non-key expert (JNKE) days have been used from project commencement in November 2017.

Over 264 non-key expert (NKE) assignments have been contracted and 2,242,226 Euros of incidentals utilised since commencement to-date. The utilisation of resources can be visualised from the figures below by reporting period.



Despite significant movement controls and changes in working practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project continued to implement activities and deliver outputs. The

trend in decreasing incidentals following the start of the pandemic is the result of most events being conducted online, replacing physical events.



Out of 97 experts deployed by ARISE Plus, 54 were experts based in the region and 43 were international experts. Part of the ARISE Plus approach was to use a large proportion of regional experts to establish capacity and a core pool of experts in the ASEAN region. This also enabled the project to provide expertise with a blend of international, EU expertise and regional experience.



¹ According to figures as of April 2023 – these might be subject to change based on the approval process of the EU Delegation

Events conducted



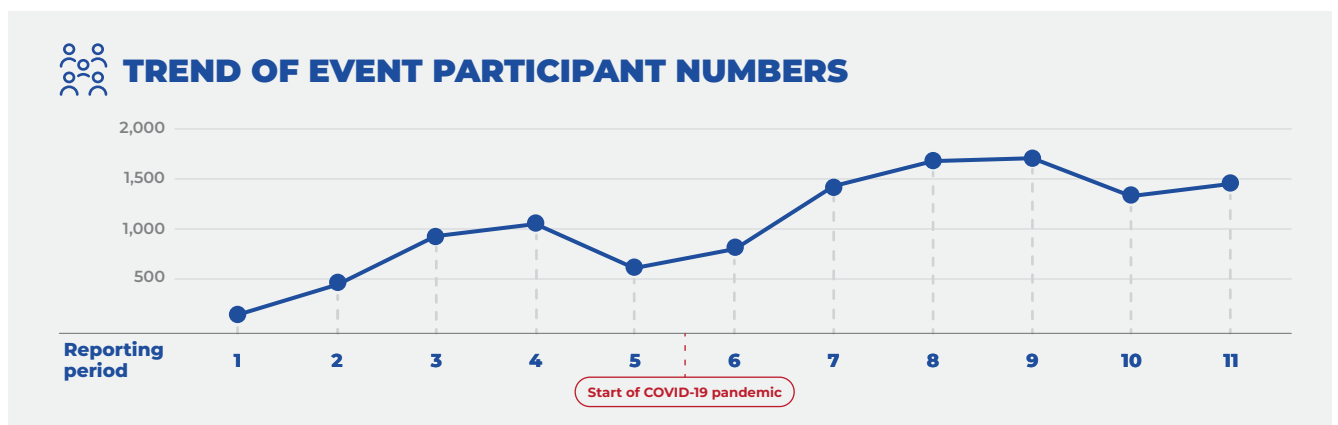
A total of 262 events have been implemented by ARISE Plus. This includes 156 regional events and 106 national level events. The events included 88 trainings and 174 workshops.

144 events were virtual conducted via online tools, and 118 were physical in-person events.

Event participants

The positive trend of increasing participants at events despite the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates the effective

adaptation by the project. A total of 11,501 participants took part across ARISE Plus events.









PARTICIPANTS AT EVENTS BY COUNTRY

Brunei Darussalam	519	Myanmar	562
Cambodia	793	Philippines	863
Indonesia	1167	Singapore	610
Lao PDR	698	Thailand	1097
Malaysia	1319	Viet Nam	1398
Others	2475		

ARISE PLUS events have been characterised by an effective inclusive approach. All 10 ASEAN Member states were well represented across the participants. A total of 3,451 participants from the CLMV countries have attended events.



Contribution to SDGs

SDG	SDG Target	Contribution by ARISE Plus
2 ZERO HUNGER 	By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems	The support from ARISE Plus in establishing a harmonised regulatory regime, harmonised guidelines, a capacity building programme and cross-sectoral institutional arrangements have contributed to the building of sustainable and safe food systems for ASEAN.
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING 	Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all	ARISE Plus achievements in the establishment of a harmonised regulatory regime, harmonised technical requirements, mutual recognition agreements and cross sectoral collaboration contribute to the establishment of a single ASEAN pharmaceuticals market and enhance the availability, safety and reliability of pharmaceuticals.
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	ARISE Plus conducted outreach events for businesses on the use of digital platforms ASSIST and ATR. Substantial efforts were made to engage women-owned businesses, such as those from the ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network (AWEN)
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all	The efforts of ARISE Plus in operationalising digital platforms such as ACTS, ATR and ASSIST enable the seamless movement of goods across ASEAN. The harmonised regulatory regimes established for the food and pharmaceuticals sectors also support the seamless movement of food and pharmaceuticals across ASEAN.
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome	<p>All components of ARISE Plus have provided dedicated support to the CLMV least developed countries of ASEAN.</p> <p>ARISE Plus statistical support has lead to wider implementation of the ASEAN-Help-ASEAN framework has helped narrow the development gap in Statistics amongst the LDC members of ASEAN.</p>
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	<p>Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships</p> <p>By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development</p>	<p>ARISE Plus has established strong multi-sectoral partnerships for the food safety, pharmaceuticals and transit logistics sectors.</p> <p>Facilitated cooperation and coordination across the 10 AMS on data collection for SDG indicators. Other contributions included the ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (SDGIs) Baseline Report 2020 and communications materials</p>

Contribution to gender equality and women empowerment

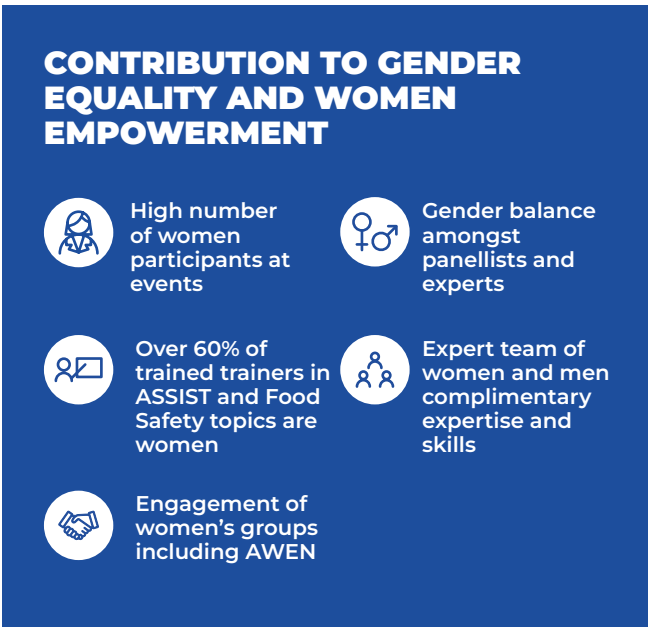
ARISE PLUS workshops have had a strong gender balance in participation during each of the reporting periods as visualised from the figure. A total of 6,159 women participants and 5,342 men participants have attended ARISE PLUS workshops since commencement.

The high number of women participants is the result of substantial efforts made by the project to engage women's groups in the AMS, such as ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network (AWEN) including women-owned businesses.

In Component 1, more than 63% of trained trainers in ASSIST were women. Similarly, in Component 2, more than 60%

of people trained in food safety topics were women. These efforts will enhance gender equality and empowerment through the use of new knowledge and capacities gained from ARISE Plus.

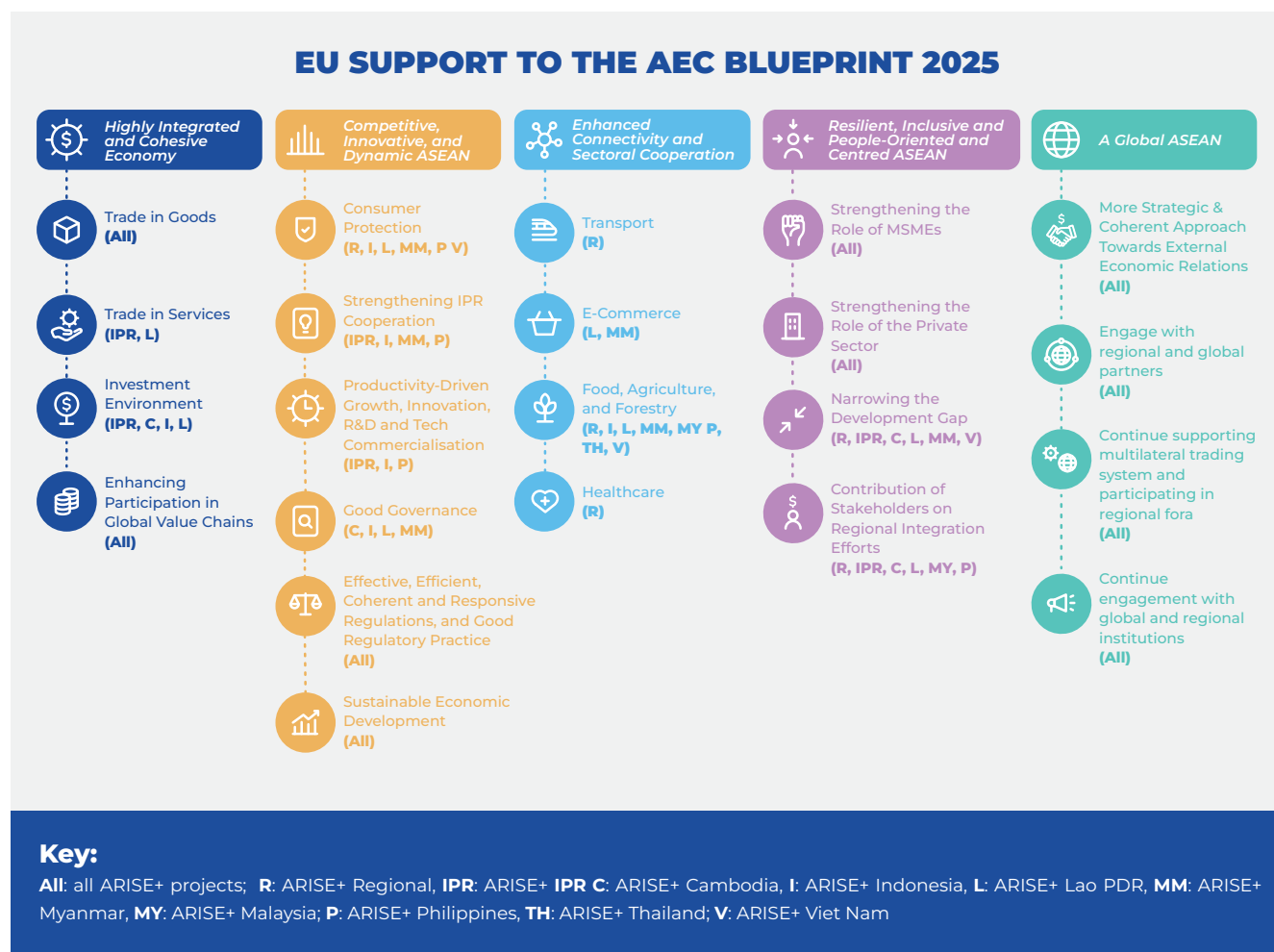
Gender balance amongst panellists and experts was one of the criteria in the design of panel discussions and workshops conducted by ARISE Plus. ARISE Plus was implemented by an expert team which included women and men with complimentary expertise and skills.



Regional coordination

The ARISE Plus Regional project and the EU Delegation to ASEAN have facilitated regional coordination efforts at a technical level across the family of ARISE Plus Regional and national projects. This was done through regional coordination meetings and consolidation of broad data across the ARISE Plus Programme. The efforts led to increased awareness

on potential synergies between the national and regional projects and collaboration. The EU, through the ARISE Plus family of projects is supporting integration efforts across all five characteristics and 22 out of 29 Elements (or sectors) of the AEC Blueprint 2025 as demonstrated below.



Lessons learnt and success factors

Challenges and recommendations

Like with any intervention ARISE Plus faced a number of challenges over its 66 months of implementation. Several of the challenges were linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges faced by each component and recommendations to address these are summarised below.

In Component 1 on trade facilitation and regulatory transparency, the work on identification, classification and validation of measures for the ATR faced challenges in systematically engaging with the relevant AMS stakeholders. This was partly due to effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also due lack of capacity and ownership among some AMS ministries and agencies due to high staff turnover rates. Recommendations to address this challenge include: a programme of regular and continuous long-term training workshops for AMS ATR and NTR Focal Points and competent agencies and regional training be held back-to-back with ATF-JCC meetings, so as to constantly report regionally to the AMSs on the state-of-play of the ATR. These measures can address the staff turnover at AMS agencies, enhance high-level awareness of the ATR, and political will. Other challenges faced include the lower-than-expected utilisation of the ATR and ASSIST by the private sector. Recommendations to improve utilisation of the ATR include embedding an Harmonised System (HS) code or product based indexing and search feature in the ATR to improve access to the information. Recommendations to increase utilisation of the ASSIST by the private sector include an 'appeal stage' to challenge the non-solutions offered by AMSs, or of an online process to continue engaging with AMSs after a non-solution has been offered through ASSIST by AMS.

In Component 2 on harmonised regulatory regimes for food safety, the deliberations on the Organic Agriculture MRA took place over 4 years to arrive at consensus on the text by AMS. Continuity and perseverance was important to ensure completion of the work, given the many stages of ASEAN consensus and approvals required in policy development. Component 2 was very successful in establishing deep cross-sectoral collaboration across ASEAN involving agriculture, health and trade for the food safety area; and health and trade for pharmaceuticals. This involved changes to working practices and working structures and greatly accelerated the process of consensus and finalisation for the APRF Agreement. These practices have been replicated across a number of sectors by ASEAN.

In Component 3 on harmonisation of customs, transit and logistics, although COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on border

SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION IN ASEAN



Establish internal Coordinating Committee at ASEC



Workshops and meetings with cross-sectoral participants



Establish cross-sectoral Task Force from AMS to oversee development of agreements



Establish cross-sectoral Task Force from AMS to oversee implementation of agreements

crossing were lifted in early 2023, the delays by certain ACTS Partner Member States (PMS) in issuing the ASEAN Goods Vehicle Cross-Border Permits (AGVCBP) and other national legislative measures have resulted in the trucks still having to change at borders. The importance of a duplicate or redundant system to be installed alongside the live ACTS to allow for immediate switch-over in the event of a critical failure is an important requirement. Other challenges include, delays in the ratification of the AFAMT and enactment of national regulations to support the implementation of the AFAMT by certain ASEAN Member States which limited the ability of certain AMS to participate in the AFAMT pilot. The initial low take-up of the ACTS by the private sector was successfully addressed through a comprehensive private sector partnership building programme. This involved outreach events, follow-up workshops and an ACTS Recognition Scheme for the private sector and their staff.

In Component 4 on results-based management and evidence-based decision making, the complex task of the MTR of the AEC Blueprint 2025, was conducted during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic within a very tight delivery timeline. It involved engagement of the private sector and research organisations, the exchange of confidential information online and continuous working between ARISE Plus, the AIMD of ASEAN Secretariat, and the High-Level Task Force on Economic Integration (HLTF-EI). The strong working relationships, regular communication and high-quality TA outputs served to build trust, credibility and strategic collaboration between the ARISE Plus expert team and AIMD to complete a high-quality MTR within the tight timescale.

Success Factors

SUCCESS FACTORS OF ARISE PLUS



Core expert team based at ASEC



Strong working relationships between experts & counterparts from ASEC, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies



Attendance at official meetings



Needs driven by AEC Blueprint 2025, Sectoral Working Plans & ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, to maximise ownership



Dedicated private sector engagement activities



Rapid TOR approval process



Demand driven flexibility and adaptive management approach

From 2020 onwards there were significant impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of movement control in the ASEAN member states, changes to official ASEAN working practices. ARISE Plus adapted its management and implementation approach well to the situation. It pivoted to support ASEAN in existing areas and new demand driven areas. The ARISE Plus team quickly adopted remote working practices across all key experts, lead experts for sub-components and short-term experts. During the initial stages of the pandemic extensive team consultations took place to adopt effective remote working approaches, streamline team communications, establish strong consultation approaches

with beneficiaries and adjust planning where required. These efforts were harvested in the form of continuous and rich consultations with the ASEAN Secretariat, Sectoral Working Bodies, and the EU Delegation to ASEAN. They have enriched EU-ASEAN collaboration in supporting AEC integration efforts and have led to deeper and more strategic cooperation.

The ARISE Plus project has always stood guided by the AEC Blueprint 2025. ARISE Plus dynamically adapted its approach, in the last 2 years, to activities to incorporate some of the key findings from the AEC Blueprint 2025 MTR. The adaptation was complementary to the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and Implementation Plan to COVID-19. The adaptation efforts included emphasis on strengthening results-based management including planning, monitoring, reporting and implementation as per MTR Key Message 1 and an enabling factor in the ACRF.

Strong Cross-pillar and cross-sectoral collaboration, from MTR Key Message 2, was a feature of ARISE Plus from its inception. It covered health, agriculture, and trade in the food security area; health and trade in the pharmaceuticals area; and transport, logistics, customs, banking and trade in the ACTS area.

ARISE Plus placed significant emphasis to deepen engagement with the private sector through in components 1, 3 and 4 in line with MTR Key Message 3.

For MTR Key Message 4, ARISE Plus focussed efforts on support for the increased operationalisation of digital platforms such as ATR, ASSIST and ACTS.

For MTR Key Message 5 accelerated the awareness and use of digital platforms (ATR, ASSIST and ACTS) and use of big data in planning; integrated sustainability considerations in organic agriculture, food safety and the use of SDG indicators. ARISE Plus also supported ASEAN systems to become more inclusive and resilient through harmonised regulatory regimes for food safety and pharmaceuticals establishing ASEAN Single Markets in these sectors and supporting the seamless movement of goods through platforms such as the ACTS, ASSIST and ATR.

AEC BLUEPRINT 2025 MTR: KEY MESSAGES



Key Message 1

Good progress made more needs to be done



Key Message 2

Better response to cross cutting issues



Key Message 3

Embark on broader and more meaningful engagements



Key Message 4

Use past lessons to inform future directions



Key Message 5

Embrace and adapt to new developments and trends

Service contract implemented by the following consortium:





Funded by
the European Union

ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) Plus

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