# Frameworks for Regional Harmonisation of Quality Assurance:
## The ASEAN Example

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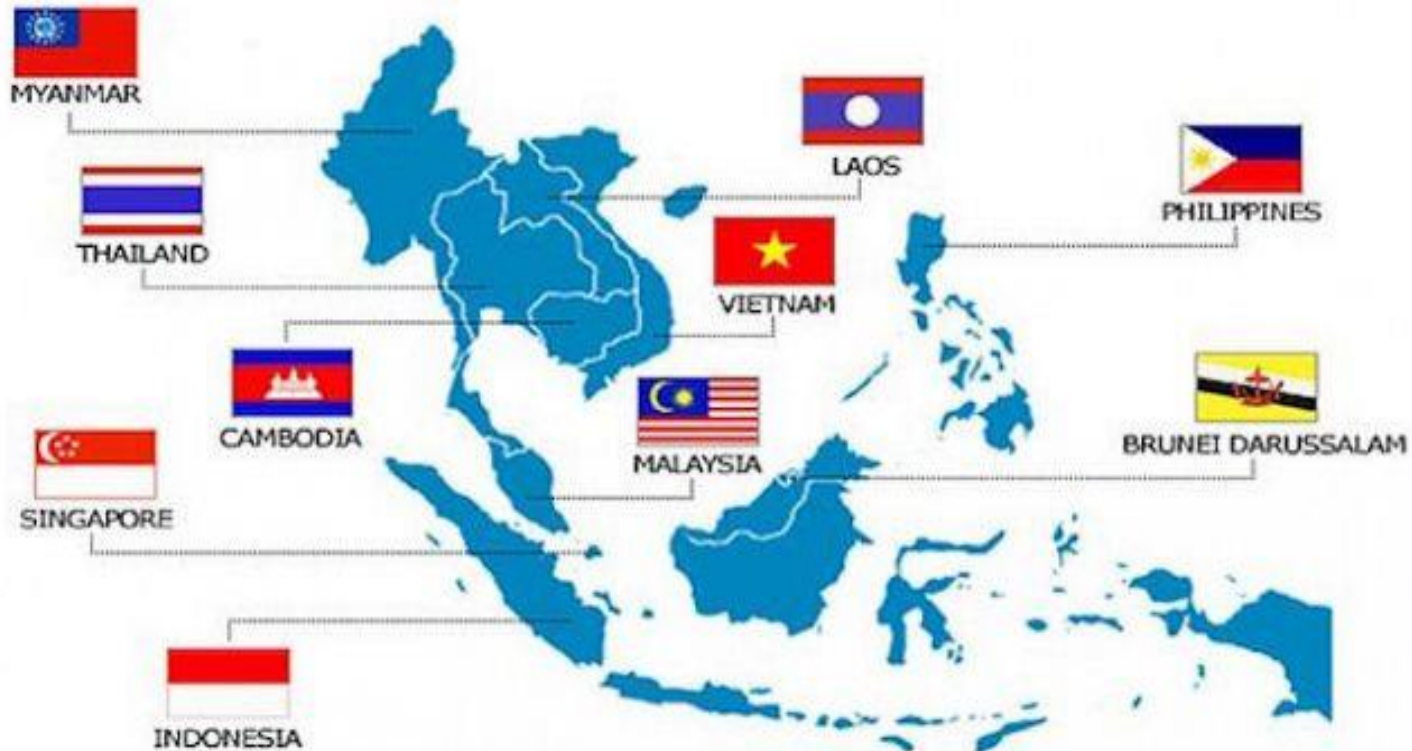Accra, Ghana
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# Quality Assurance
# Regionalisation/Harmonisation Trends

- Part of higher education 'Spaces' and 'Areas'
  - *Rationale:* Mutual recognition of degrees/mobility of students and professionals (internal labour markets), capacity building in QA systems/augmenting….. Predicated in a regional political framework*
  - *Tools:* Credits systems, transparent learning-outcome based approaches, qualifications frameworks, generic QA standards and principles, regional associations/organisations as implementers……
- Established/'politically agreed'/functional
  - EHEA
  - ASEAN
  - East African Community (recently declared HE Space)
- Aspirational
  - Africa (PAQAF) + subregions (SADC)
  - Central America (Central American Acceditation Agency/QF)

# The Example of ASEAN: Policy context

- ASEAN 2020 aspires to be a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN economic region in which there is free flow of goods, services, investment and skilled workers towards equitable economic development as well as reduced poverty, social and economic disparity

- Three pillars: ASEAN political security, ASEAN political community and ASEAN socio-economic community

  - Human resource development key = ASEAN Framework and Roadmap for Sustainability Education 2011-2015

*The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): formally established by the Bangkok Declaration in 1967*

Current population of 625 million

# Towards an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF)

– *"The Proposal on the Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in SEA: the Road towards a Common Space"*
  - Endorsed March 2008 by Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED):
– Need for a regional quality assurance framework:
  - capacity building of all stakeholders through cooperation; student mobility;
  - a regional credit system;
  - promotion of benefits of quality assurance
– AQAN established in 2008 = ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (QA authorities of 10 countries)
  - share good practices of quality assurance in higher education
  - collaborate on capacity building
  - facilitate the recognition of qualifications and cross-border mobility throughout the region
  - develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia
    - Housed in Malaysian Qualifications Agency

# AQAF

- Main purposes
  - benchmark and align QA systems for HE
  - facilitate regional recognition of degrees and qualifications
  - a common ground for understanding QA in the region
- Comprised of core statements – intends to serve as a reference point
- Developed by a task force of key stakeholders in the region
- Challenge lays in implementation, promotion and take-up
  - Diversity of ASEAN political bodies and actors
  - Primarily external funding driven
  - Role of the SHARE project (a bit like HAQAA)

# AQAF- Four Interconnected Quadrants

**AQAN** — ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

1. External Quality Assurance Agency

2. EQA Policies, Standards & Processes

3. Internal Quality Assurance

4. National Qualifications Framework

# AQAF: Examples of principles

- EQA
  - Example: "Standards must be made publicly available and applied consistently and with due regard for cultural diversity."
- IQA
  - Example: "Quality assurance is a participatory and cooperative process across all levels incorporating involvement of academic staff, students, and other stakeholders"
- External QA agencies
  - Example: "The EQAA has autonomous responsibility for its operations and its decision making processes and judgments are free from undue influences."
- National qualifications frameworks (*Different from ESG)
  - Example: "NQF facilitates the progressive nature of learning and training with the inclusion of recognition of prior learning"
- Chapter on referencing (how to make national systems relate)

# Diversity of QA Systems and Capacities in ASEAN

- "Higher Education Quality Assurance in the ASEAN region" (SHARE Project - 2016)
- Purposes of QA vary per country depending on economic development and context:
  - Advanced economies like Singapore focus on the promotion of research excellence;
  - 'Newcomers' like Lao PDR focus on tackling unequal access to HE for disadvantaged groups within the population.
- Categorisation of systems
  - Consolidated: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore
  - Developing: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam
  - Newcomer: Myanmar

# Diversity of systems in ASEAN

➢Some issues are shared

- (1) the overall expansion of (public) HE and the provision of an increasing number of universities;

- (2) the interest to strengthen international cooperation and collaboration within ASEAN region;

- (3) the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes.

# Implementing AQAF: the role of SHARE

- 'EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region'
- Four year EU investment to support ASEAN HE Harmonisation (2015-19)
  - Credit Transfer System
  - Mobility (scholarships intra-ASEAN and EU-ASEAN)
  - Quality Assurance capacity building
  - Implementation of the AQRF
  - Policy Dialogue
- EU consortium, in partnership with ASEAN governing structures, key organisations (AUN, AQAN…)….

# Differences between regional/continental QA harmonisation in Africa, ASEAN and Europe

- Who owns the key reference document and are there legal implications?
  - EHEA: Governments of 47 countries in the EHEA – formally endorsed, not legally binding. Developed by the E4
  - ASEAN: AQAN, who associated other stakeholders in the region and now is formally recognized by ASEAN as an institution
  - Africa: Adopted by the AUC?
- Who promotes its implementation?
  - Europe: ENQA (agencies), EQAR (register for agencies), EUA (institutions) – supported by EU project funding
  - ASEAN: AQAN, Malaysia…. International project funding and donors (Role of EU SHARE)
  - Africa: AfriQAN (on paper, but in practice?) – International project support and donors (EU- HAQAA), regional authorities (IUCEA…)  and ?????

- *Questions for discussion:*
- What can be learned from the ASEAN example regarding:
  – Processes (building the framework);
  – Ownership;
  – Implementation;
  – Capacity building for diverse systems in diverse regions?

# References

- Higher Education Quality Assurance in the ASEAN region (2016): http://share-asean.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NiedermeierPohlenz-Higher-Education-QA-in-the-ASEAN-Region-State-of-Play.pdf
- AQAF: http://share-asean.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/AQAF.pdf
- AQRF: