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## Existing Regional Architectures in Asia

- **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

(10 member states – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand & Vietnam)

- **The ASEAN Plus Three cooperation (APT)**

(ASEAN members + China, Japan, and South Korea)

- **East Asia Summit (EAS)**

(ASEAN + 3 + India, Australia and New Zealand)

- **South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**

(8 member states – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan)

- **Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)**

(30 members – from Asia and Middle East)

- Other Sub-regional frameworks primarily for economic development cooperation, eg GMS, BIMSTEC



## State of Play & Characteristics of Regional Cooperation and Integration in East Asia

Patchworks of regional cooperation -

- No overarching vision or clear blueprint on content and model of regional cooperation
- Many different initiatives comprising various bilateral and sub-regional arrangements

Networked regionalism –

- Open and flexible frameworks
- Multitude of actors and agents (including non-state actors)
- Informality and flexibility



## Current Regional Bodies and Initiatives on Higher Education Cooperation in ASEAN / Asia-Pacific

- ***Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL)*** – founded in 1956 as a non-governmental organisation to provide a forum for the discussion of academic development and general university development.
- ***Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO)*** – founded in 1965 as a chartered international organisation whose purpose is to promote cooperation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region
- ***ASEAN University Network (AUN)*** – founded in 1995 to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among universities in ASEAN by promoting collaborative studies and research programmes.

## Current Regional Bodies and Initiatives on Higher Education Cooperation in ASEAN / Asia-Pacific – cont.

- ***The Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP)*** – established in 1995 by representatives of universities from the AP region with the objective to foster regional cooperation among universities and contribute to the development of national systems of higher education, human resource development, economic and social development.
- ***University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP)*** – a voluntary association of government & non-government representatives of the higher education sector aim at achieving enhanced international understanding through the mobility of university students and staff.
- ***Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)*** – a network established in 2003 by universities to enhance the quality of higher education in Asia and the Pacific region through strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the cooperation between them.



## Realities of Regional Integration and Impact on Regional Higher Education Collaboration

- The level of integration within the field of higher education in ASEAN and the EU are reflections of their respective levels of regionalisation and regionalism.
- ASEAN often compared to the EU but in reality, EU is in a class of its own. ASEAN is still essentially an inter-governmental organisation. The first 25 years of ASEAN was never about integration – ASEAN was a forum for confidence-building, managing differences and potential conflicts. However ASEAN also has to respond to a post-Cold War era, rise of China, etc. Broad geopolitical and geoeconomic forces and trends underpin the ASEAN's shift to a higher gear of regional cooperation.



## Realities of Regional Integration and Impact on Regional Higher Education Collaboration – cont.

- 1992 – In ASEAN Summit in Singapore, leaders agreed to the establishment of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) by 2005. It was also during this period that the seed for the establishment of ASEAN Universities Network (AUN) was planted.
- 2003 – Bali Concord II, a more ambitious goal by ASEAN to create an ASEAN Community comprising of three pillars – an ASEAN Economic Community, an ASEAN Political & Security Community and an ASEAN Sociocultural Community - by 2020
- Because of the goal of “economic integration”, regional cooperation in education has taken on some added urgency.



## Realities of Regional Integration and Impact on Regional Higher Education Collaboration – cont.

- 2004 – Mandates for setting priorities for education are anchored in the Vientiane Action Programme for accomplishing ASEAN Community
- 2005 – During the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit, leaders agreed that ASEAN Education ministers meeting should be institutionalised as a regular ASEAN meeting.
- 2006 – 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting held.
- 2009 – 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN + 3 Higher Education Policy Dialogue organised by AUN took place ( as a result of decision taken in 2007)
- 2009 – At 4<sup>th</sup> ASED, called to explore regional education cooperation with other EAS countries



## Realities of Regional Integration and Impact on Regional Higher Education Collaboration – cont.

- Goal and deadline of achieving an ASEAN Economic Community moved from 2020 to 2015
- ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint – free movement of skilled labour and professionals – an integral link between education and economic goals.
- ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements on medical practitioners / dental practitioners / accountancy services
- The idea of an ASEAN Education Fund (with contributions from non-ASEAN countries) for supporting higher education development in the region.

## Some Concluding Thoughts

- Benefits for creating a common higher education space in Southeast Asia is clear – but realities of diversity and differences in the structures and performance of the various higher education systems (instructional practices, linguistic differences, curriculum incomparability, etc) make the task exceedingly difficult. Another major problem – bureaucratic inertia
- Developments in the EU have inspired Southeast Asia, single market, harmonising higher education systems – but unwillingness in Southeast Asia to rethink norms and invest in institutions and hence same linguistic jargon but very different substance.
- Looking beyond ASEAN – APT and EAS
- Bottom-up initiatives may over-shadow top-down approach