

SEACOOP SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR 2012 AND BEYOND

December 2011

A STRATEGIC COOPERATION OF MUTUAL INTEREST

Europe and Southeast Asia are two key players in today's global economy who have much in common. Their populations are nearly identical in terms of size, they have both moved towards regional economic integration, and they share many of the same values. It is therefore quite logical that, for over 30 years, the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have enjoyed an increasingly positive and fruitful dialogue.

The signing in 1980 of a Cooperation Agreement laid the foundation for cooperation between the two regions to promote trade, investment and business. In recent years, efforts have been made by both sides to further strengthen the relationship. In July 2003 the European Commission adopted a Communication on a "New Partnership with Southeast Asia", setting out a comprehensive strategy for future EU relations, both regional and bilateral, a strategy that was later endorsed by the European Council in 2004.

The Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Partnership of 15 March 2007 (released with a joint Plan of Action) recognises the importance of Southeast Asia as a region, and calls for the deepening of the level of cooperation, including science and technology, between the EU and ASEAN. On November 22, 2007, in Singapore, on the occasion of the first-ever EU-ASEAN Summit, a Joint Declaration was signed, endorsing in particular the Plan of Action.

The EU is, for ASEAN, the first export region (113 billion USD in 2008) and the third import region after China and Japan (89 billion USD in 2008). The EU is also the first source of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow to ASEAN (13 billion USD in 2008). End of 2009, the launch of free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations between the EU and individual ASEAN countries, starting with Singapore, was announced.

At a time when science and technology (S&T), information and communication technologies (ICT), and international cooperation are considered by all modern economies to be key drivers in achieving sustainable development, prosperity, and economic growth, cooperation on ICT research between Europe and Southeast Asia can only support the strengthening of relations between the two regions.

The EU and Southeast Asia have indeed entered into a new phase of S&T cooperation in ICT, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. This new phase will build upon what has been achieved thus far, should be more balanced and of mutual benefit, and should focus on a set of well defined strategic cooperation priorities.

The European research priorities in ICT are clearly defined through the FP7 ICT Work Programme. The Southeast Asian priorities, at the regional level, are not yet defined through a comparable work programme. However, the way is already paved through the work of many ASEAN instances. In particular the work of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST), at its Ministerial level (AMMST) and at the one of its sub-Committees (namely the Sub-Committee on Micro-Electronics and Information Technology, SCMIT) has to be taken into consideration.

In this context, one of the main reference documents on the Southeast Asian side when identifying possible strategic areas of mutual interest with Europe in ICT research is the ASEAN Plan of action on Science and Technology (APAST) for 2007-2011 prepared under the aegis of ASEAN COST. The ASEAN ICT Master Plan for 2015, developed under the aegis of the ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting (TELMIN) and through its instances TELSOM and ATRC, has also to be considered in such an exercise even if it does not target ICT research but addresses the overall framework, infrastructures and regulatory issues.

AN INITIATIVE LAUNCHED IN 2004

SEACOOOP is an initiative, launched in the context introduced in the previous paragraph, aiming at strengthening cooperation on ICT research between Europe and the countries that are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. One of the main expected outputs of SEACOOOP activities is logically a strengthened development of concrete cooperation projects in ICT research, namely under FP7.

The initiative is supported since 2004 by the European Commission (Directorate General Information Society and Media) through its Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP6 and FP7), and by the ASEAN Secretariat since 2008.

Among SEACOOOP activities to achieve its objectives:

- Identification and analysis of ICT policy and research priorities, at bilateral and regional levels, and provision of recommendations for future cooperation initiatives,
- Organization of cooperation events in Europe and in Southeast Asia synchronised whenever possible with policy dialogue meetings,
- Development of synergies with dialogues and activities launched under EU-funded programmes, at the initiative of EU Member States and Associated States, and at the ASEAN level,
- Development of promotion, dissemination and awareness-raising activities.



SEACOOOP is coordinated by Sigma Orionis, an organisation based in France and devoted to supporting collaborative research in ICT and global ICT developments. It includes, on the Southeast Asian side, organisations playing a key role in ICT policy and research in each of the ten ASEAN countries:



- The Advanced Science and Technology Institute (ASTI), Philippines
- The Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT), Indonesia
- The Institute for Infocomm Research (A*STAR/I2R), Singapore
- The Multimedia Development Corporation (MDEC), Malaysia
- The National Authority for Science and Technology (NAST), Lao PDR
- The National Council for S&T Policy (NCSTP), Vietnam
- The National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA/NECTEC), Thailand
- The National ICT Development Authority (NiDA), Cambodia
- The University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD), Brunei Darussalam
- The University of Computer Studies, Yangon (UCSY), Myanmar

On the European side, the project involves, through a Project Advisory Committee, over 20 leading constituencies, companies, research institutes and academia, including the main European Technology Platforms in the ICT area, and key European initiatives in Southeast Asia.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

By the end of 2011, SEACOOOP is very proud to report significant achievements:

- over 30 cooperation events have been organized since 2004 in Europe and in Southeast Asia (including 6 thematic “SEACOOOP cooperation forums” over the period 2010-2011), in order to contribute connecting research organizations from both regions and to provide them with key opportunities to initiate or strengthen R&D links,
- a “Mapping of cooperation priorities in ICT research between Europe and Southeast Asia”, including a set of recommendations to the European Commission and to the ASEAN Secretariat, has been prepared and released in its successive versions (the last one, the draft final version, is dated June 2011),
- close synergies have developed with the main initiatives, programmes and projects focusing on EU-ASEAN S&T cooperation,
- intense promotion, dissemination, awareness-raising, impact creation and other support activities have been conducted, among them:
 - the promotion, training, and support to the establishment of FP7 ICT NCPs (National Contact Points) in Southeast Asia, which is a condition for a stronger and more sustainable development of cooperation in ICT research under FP7: to date, 6 SEACOOOP Southeast Asian partners (representing Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) have already appointed such NCPs while the other ASEAN countries are considering appointing NCPs in the future,
 - the creation of a project and research incubator in Singapore end of 2010, offering European and Southeast Asian organizations a place where they can meet, network, work together and ultimately trial their joint developments, thus a place facilitating the emergence and development of ICT research projects between the two regions,
 - the participation of the SEACOOOP partnership to major external events and the development of a web site offering research organizations from both regions with substantial background

- information and connections tools (including a LinkedIn community counting around 250 members),
- the operations of a helpdesk, run by the whole SEACOOOP partnership, providing information and guidance to European and Southeast Asian organizations determined to propose cooperation projects under FP7, and thus contributing to an increasing number of successful proposals.

Perspectives for the future appear as very promising since:

- The overall cooperation framework and political context, as detailed above, are propitious,
- A number of research organizations from both regions are aware of the high cooperation potential and determined to turn it into profit.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Beyond the achievements listed above, SEACOOOP has also created, over the years, a strong momentum and valuable assets:

- There is now a fully operational network, composed of a key national ICT stakeholder in each Southeast Asian country and of a European organization, Sigma Orionis, connected to the main European ICT stakeholders, who can efficiently cope with cooperation issues between Europe and Southeast Asia in ICT research, and this in close liaison with the Authorities from both regions,
- There is a virtual community of over 250 research organizations from Europe and Southeast Asia (developing from the SEACOOOP LinkedIn community and who can rely on the SEACOOOP project and research incubator) who are ready to develop concrete cooperation projects,
- The visibility of the SEACOOOP initiative is very high: the SEACOOOP web site and partnership are seen as the reference entry point by more and more research organizations from both regions active or interested in cooperation in ICT research.

In this context and considering the promising perspectives for the future, it is important that the momentum and assets of SEACOOOP can be maintained and further developed, even if the present financial support from the European Commission comes to an end by the end of 2011.

The SEACOOOP partnership has been indeed recurrently facing this situation: the need to bridge the gap between two periods when the European Commission can bring its financial support to the initiative.

Therefore, the SEACOOOP partnership has decided the following as a sustainability plan for 2012 (until a new financial support can be brought by the European Commission):

- The SEACOOOP partnership remains active after the end of 2011,
- The SEACOOOP web site and the SEACOOOP virtual research community will be further developed after the end of 2011,
- The core activities of the SEACOOOP partnership will remain the same: striving for the development of concrete research projects of mutual interest and supporting the organizations from both regions willing to develop such projects,
- Efforts will be made to reduce travel costs (web-based quarterly meetings, and physical meetings only when necessitated by concrete cooperation projects), each SEACOOOP partner being invited to find some resources at its country level in this transition period.