



ASEAN Economic Integration: Time for a Post- Pandemic Reset?



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Introduction

- The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) presents its annual policy paper on trade facilitation in ASEAN to provide frank and open feedback to the ASEAN Economic Ministers on the state of play on ASEAN Economic Integration from the perception of European businesses that operate in ASEAN.

“Moving forward, ASEAN needs to accelerate the pace of implementation. The delays in the rolling out of key initiatives need to be better addressed, and getting the business sector feedback is crucial in ensuring that the AEC is delivering on the businesses expectations.”

p.13, Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Secretariat

- Against this backdrop, the EU-ABC perceives the following as hampering progress on economic integration:
 - Lack of commitment or inability to deliver on the promises enshrined in both the 2015 and 2025 ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprints;
 - Targets set by ASEAN are regularly missed, in particular commitments to tackle non-tariff barriers to trade are hampered by ineffective processes and tools;
 - Existing trade facilitative agreements, such as the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), remain to be fully implemented or adhered to;
 - The region is adding new ideas and programmes, such as in digital transformation, but continues to fail to deliver on existing ones.
- A consequence of ASEAN’s lack of progress in these areas is that most multinationals (as well as regional SMEs) treat ASEAN as ten individual markets, and consequently focus on one or a few markets that are of most importance or interest to them and do not address the region as a whole.¹
- An even more significant consequence is that a sustainable recovery from the pandemic hangs in the balance. There is Broad private sector agreement on that point²
- The EU-ABC therefore has the following requests of the leaders of ASEAN and for Ministers of Trade, Commerce and Finance: **please revitalise and accelerate work on the AEC; please instruct Officials in the region to move ahead more rapidly on the AEC agenda; please give them support and deadlines to achieve measurable key goals that are publicly and independently reported on.** Without such leadership, it is likely that the ASEAN vision will remain unfulfilled and the recovery from COVID-19 will not reach its full potential.³

¹ In the EU-ABC’s EU-ASEAN Business Sentiment Survey 2020, only 16% of respondents said they had a regional strategy, down from 24% in 2018. Only 2% of respondents said that work on the AEC was progressing fast enough, down from 8% in 2018.

² See *A Pathway towards Recovery and Hope* (commonly known as *Pathway 225*) published by the ASEAN Business Advisory Council with the help and support of the Joint Business Councils on 28 July 2020. See: <http://aseanbac.com.my/2020/10/15/a-pathway-to-recovery-and-hope-in-asean/>

³ In a sister paper to this one, the EU-ABC has laid out some recommendations for tackling some key areas, especially on removal of Non-Tariff Barriers to trade, and easing the flow of goods across the region. The recommendations from that paper are set out in annex 2 to this paper.

- In making this request, we acknowledge that some notable progress has been made in the following areas:
 - The ASEAN Single Window (ASW) is now fully operational across all 10 ASEAN Member States, through which the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement electronic Certificate of Origin (ATIGA e-Form D) and potentially, the ASEAN Customs Declaration Document (ACDD) can be exchanged;
 - The ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS), developed with the support of the EU funded ARISE+ project, is live and operational for all of the land connected ASEAN members states except for Myanmar (though we note there are some teething issues with this project);
 - A single Self-Certification Programme for Certificates of Origin (CoO) is now live and operational for inter-ASEAN movements of goods under ATIGA.

AEC 2025 Blueprint – 5 Years In

- ASEAN remains a region of huge opportunity. In normal times the GDP growth rates are the envy of the developed world; the rates of urbanisation and growth of consuming classes are phenomenal.
- ASEAN has the world's 3rd largest, and increasingly well-educated and very tech-savvy workforce.
- We at the Council often cite these facts to demonstrate the potential of the region both to companies looking to expand their global footprint, and to leaders in Europe whom we seek to persuade to take ASEAN more seriously.
- ASEAN has for years been setting goals to increase economic integration. But progress has been slow, and key ambitions of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint which was meant to drive economic integration, remain unfulfilled.
- The aim of doubling intra-ASEAN trade by 2025 will not be realised.
- The dream of creating a “single market and production base” remains elusive.
- Slow progress on key areas of economic integration risks squandering the opportunity that the AEC envisaged.
- Leadership, greater urgency and some improvements in the institutional architecture are critical to reset momentum and meet the goals enshrined in both the 2015 and 2025 AEC Blueprints.
- Tackling areas such as non-tariff barriers to trade and bringing new energy to existing trade facilitative agreements, such as the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), are essential to put ASEAN back on track in the aftermath of COVID-19.

“Looking ahead, this may prompt more lead firms to re-shore or nearshore critical parts and equipment in the short- and medium-term. This will have important consequences for value chain linked FDI in the [ASEAN] economies as well as more broadly for the [ASEAN] SMEs which are both highly integrated into and dependent on value chain networks. **Enhanced regional integration through both RCEP and the ASEAN Economic Community will therefore become even more important** as it may present alternative and new opportunities for firms to strengthen their competitiveness in global and regional value chains.”

p.19 Asia-Pacific Trade & Investment Trends 2020/2021 – UNESCAP (Emphasis added)

- As the information in Annex 1 to this paper makes clear, ASEAN’s trade and FDI flows were flat at best even before the ongoing pandemic, and COVID-19 has only made the need for faster action on regional economic integration more pressing.
- ASEAN recently released its Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025⁴ which the EU-ABC supports. The MTR noted that “[g]ood progress [has been] made, [but] more needs to be done”, and that “moving forward, efforts must be intensified in high-impact economic integration initiatives, focussing on quality rather than quantity of initiatives and accelerating the pace of implementation”.

Figure 1: Implementation Status of the AEC Blueprint 2025⁵



- A strengthened and accelerated approach to work on the AEC is needed across all of its key characteristics. In none of the areas under the AEC has work been fully completed. This is particularly true for the key and most high-profile area of Characteristic A “Highly Integrated and Cohesive Economy”.
- Whilst there has been excellent progress on creating a virtually tariff free environment for intra-ASEAN movement of goods, trade facilitation work has not been undertaken with the same level of enthusiasm by the ASEAN Member States.
 - Customs procedures are still cited by many as being overly complicated and bureaucratic.
 - Work on eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade (despite being promised in ATIGA, the AEC Blueprint 2015 and the AEC Blueprint 2025) remains slow.
 - Whilst there has been good progress on Trade in Services with the development of the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement, implementation of it remains some way off.
 - On FDI, many countries in the region maintain negative investment lists and policies that are not always welcoming, or which overtly favour domestic operators.
 - Financial integration and inclusion, including sustainable finance where a regional approach would significantly help to crowd in new finance sources to help with the development of infrastructure and programmes to tackle climate change, needs to be progressed.
 - Mobility of skilled labour still faces significant barriers with many countries in the region now tightening up on allowing foreign labour into their markets.

⁴ See: <https://asean.org/launched-asean-mid-term-review-aec-blueprint-2025/>

⁵ From the Mid Term Review of the AEC, p.1

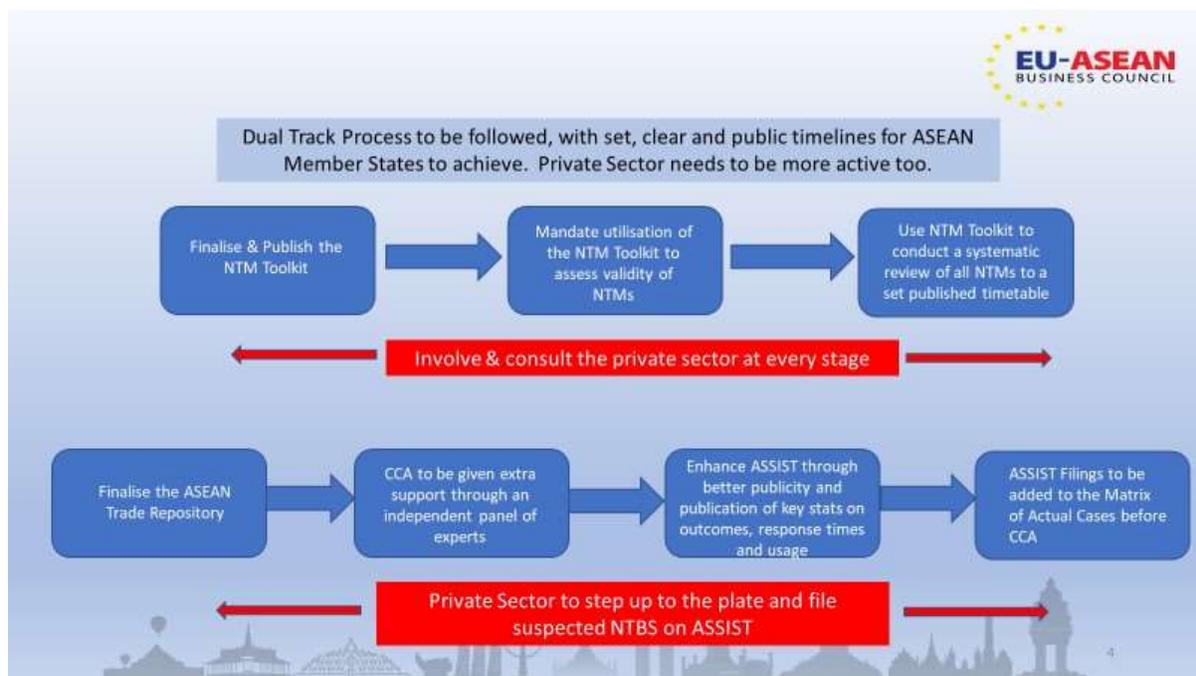
Where Next? Some Key Focus Areas

Given that the Mid Term Review of the AEC itself hardly gives a glowing account of the work to date, and that trade and investment in ASEAN was slowing even before the pandemic, the real question is: **Does ASEAN have the will and the means to do better in making demonstrable progress, which would encourage more investment and boost both extra- and intra-ASEAN trade?**

There are some key areas on which Ministers and Leaders should focus and give clear instructions. They are not all encompassing. While there is much more in both the 2015 and 2025 AEC Blueprints as well as in the ACRF, we have set out three clear proposals below that we believe would help enhance the standing of the AEC and demonstrate meaningful progress. In Annex 2 to this paper have set out some details on areas where we think progress should be prioritised. These are summarised below.

Proposal 1: Non-Tariff Barriers

To help meet Brunei's Number 1 Priority Economic Deliverable, we suggest a dual track process to help streamline NTMs and tackle NTBs. This can be summarised as⁶:



Proposal 2: Instituting an Informed Compliance Framework in ASEAN

- EU-ABC proposes for the institution of an “Informed Compliance Framework” in ASEAN to increase understanding, predictability and certainty for the trading community when dealing with customs authorities.
- An informed compliance framework ensures that:
 - Guidance is provided where legislation and regulation invariably leave gaps and room for interpretation;

⁶ Note: CCA = Coordinating Committee for ATIGA; ASSIST = ASEAN Solutions for Services Investments and Trade; NTM = Non-Tariff Measures; NTB = Non-Tariff Barrier.

- Better guidance is provided on issues of principle, but not on specific cases which may be too detailed or confidential; and,
 - Guidance is published for e.g. based on issued rulings, resolved ASSIST queries, and other cases from around the region on all issues relating to trade facilitation
- Examples of such an approach can be found in the UK (Public Notices), US (Informed Compliance) and WCO (Advisory Opinions, Commentaries, Case Studies etc).
 - For ASEAN this can include guidance on HS Classification, valuation, rule of origin calculation and certification procedures etc.

Proposal 3: ASEAN Low Value Shipment Programme

- EU-ABC had proposed in 2018 that ASEAN institutes simplified customs procedures for low value shipments. This proposal is revenue neutral, but proposes to simplify customs procedures for e.g. through reduced data elements, consolidated clearances etc. for such shipments so as to reduce processing costs and simplify processes for SMEs.
- The 7th ASEAN Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting noted that “We are pleased with....(iii) the on-going work by the ASEAN Feasibility Study Group to study the implementation of Simplified Customs Procedures for Low Value Shipments on a pathfinder basis”⁷
- Given the criticality for trade, the AEM may wish to consider the feasibility of instituting such procedures for low value shipments across ASEAN and instructing the speeding up of work by the ASEAN Feasibility Study Group.

The Ask

Given that the Mid Term Review of the AEC made it clear that faster action was needed on the implementation of the AEC, and also the need for economic recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic across the region, the ask of ASEAN Leaders, Ministers of Trade/Commerce and Finance is a simple one.

There needs to be clear and unambiguous instruction to officials to accelerate work on all areas of the AEC, and in particular those areas listed above where businesses would be able to deliver tangible progress quickly toward a recovery in jobs, trade, and investment. **The various ASEAN sectoral bodies and working groups need to be instructed to meet more regularly, and to publish timelines for the completion of work which Ministers should then hold them to.** These instructions should be set out clearly in Statements from meetings of the AEM and the ASEAN Summit.

⁷ ASEAN Finance Ministers & Central Bank Governors Joint Statement at 7th AFMGM, 30th March 2021

Annex 1: ASEAN Trade & Investment: in Trouble?

In common with much of the rest of the world, ASEAN has suffered significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the tragic loss of human lives, the pandemic wrought havoc to the region's economy particularly during the first half of 2020, when much of the region went into domestic lockdowns and international travel was curtailed as the individual ASEAN member states implemented policies aimed at curbing the spread of the virus. The end results were falls in GDP for most of the ASEAN member states, disruption to trade and a further diminishing of FDI flows to the region.

After years of significant and commendable economic growth (according to the OECD average growth in 2019 was 4.7%⁸), 2020 saw a contraction across the region of around 3.4%.⁹ Whilst many observers expect a bounce back in 2021, the size and extent of any recovery will depend much on further waves of COVID-19 infections, vaccination regimes across the region and moves by ASEAN governments to reopen their economies. The OECD is predicting that an average GDP growth rate for ASEAN of 5.1% for 2021, with Vietnam and Malaysia predicted to show the greatest gains (though the recent re-imposition of the Movement Control Order in Malaysia and the declaration of State of Emergency will likely have impacts on Malaysia's growth rates for the year.)¹⁰

Table 1: GDP Growth Rates in ASEAN

Source: OECD 2021: Economic Outlook for SE Asia, India & China

ASEAN Member State	2019	2020	2021
Brunei Darussalam	3.9%	1.8%	3.1%
Cambodia	7.1%	-2.9%	5.4%
Indonesia	5.0%	-2.4%	4.0%
Lao PDR	5.5%	0.6%	5.0%
Malaysia	4.3%	-5.2%	7.0%
Myanmar*	6.8%	1.7%	5.0%
Philippines	6.0%	-9.0%	5.9%
Thailand	2.4%	-6.4%	4.5%
Singapore	0.7%	-5.5%	5.0%
Vietnam	7.0%	2.6%	7.0%
ASEAN Average	4.7%	-3.4%	5.1%

*Myanmar prediction was made before the military coup of 1st February 2021, an outcome that is likely to depress economic recovery as significant international economic sanctions are imposed.

ASEAN was slow to react as a collective to the pandemic, with national measures being brought to the fore and closures to all but the most essential international travel being rapidly put in place. This was understandable in the early stages of the pandemic as the countries of the region were seeking to insulate themselves from the virus, and to concentrate on domestic containment:

⁸ See OECD (2021), *Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India 2021: Reallocating Resources for Digitalisation*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/711629f8-en> Table 1, p.20

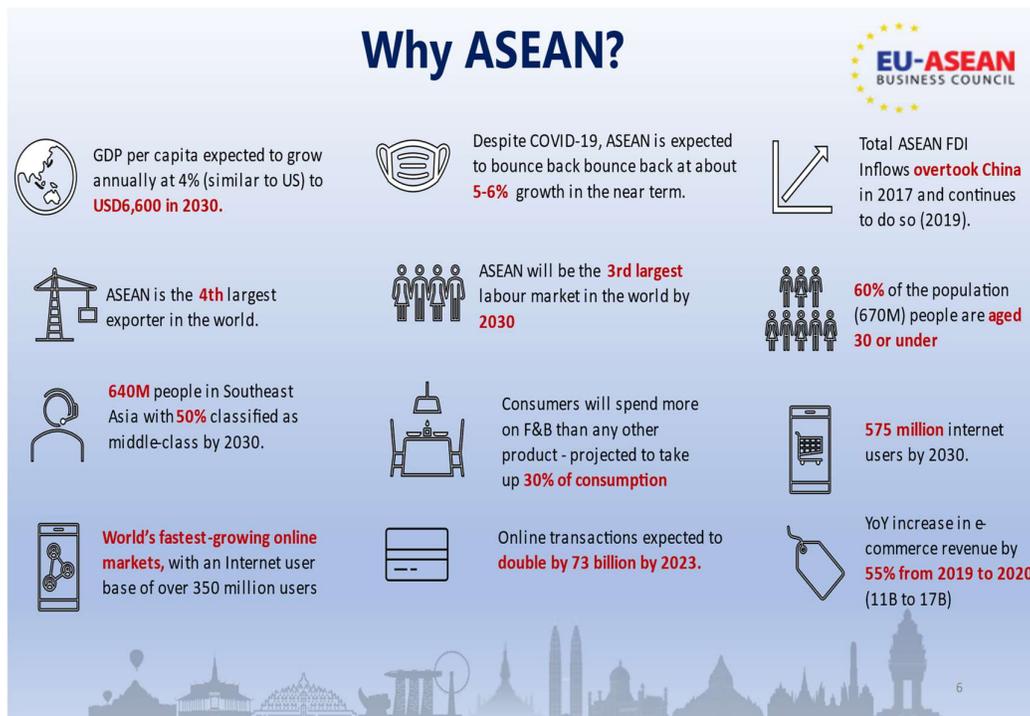
⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

for the main part most of them were successful in stemming community transmissions in their domestic populations. Lockdowns have been an essential part of Government policies to protect citizens' health and minimise the economic impact of the pandemic. However, they are not a sustainable long-term solution. Similarly, travel restrictions have helped to slow the spread of Covid in the region, but ASEAN needs to have a roadmap for easing restrictions and returning to open borders, particularly if an ASEAN collective approach to reopening travel and putting in place co-ordinated testing regimes could be put in place; this was envisaged under the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), which was published after the ASEAN Summit in November 2020.

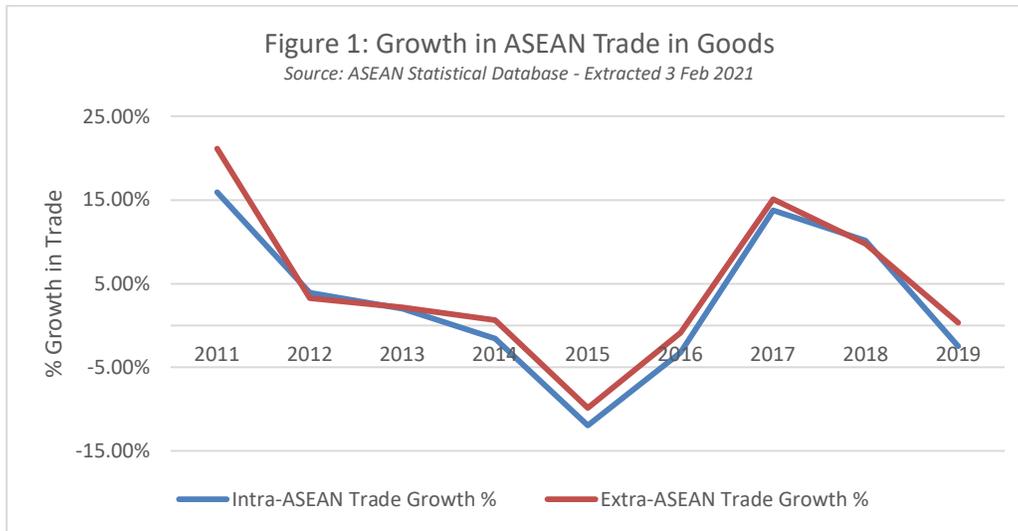
The ASEAN Opportunity: About To Be Missed?

ASEAN remains a region of huge opportunity. But the window to make the most of that prospect will not remain open forever and the member states of ASEAN now run the very real risk of squandering that opportunity and denying their citizens the benefits of economic development that had been promised to them. Inaction, and either an unwillingness or inability to deliver on the promises enshrined in both the 2015 and 2025 AEC Blueprints, is hampering progress on the economic integration initiative. Targets are regularly missed, promises of tackling areas such as non-tariff barriers to trade ignored, existing trade facilitative agreements, such as the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), remain to be fully implemented or adhered to. The region continues to develop new ideas and programmes, such as in digital transformation, but also continues to fail to deliver on existing ones.



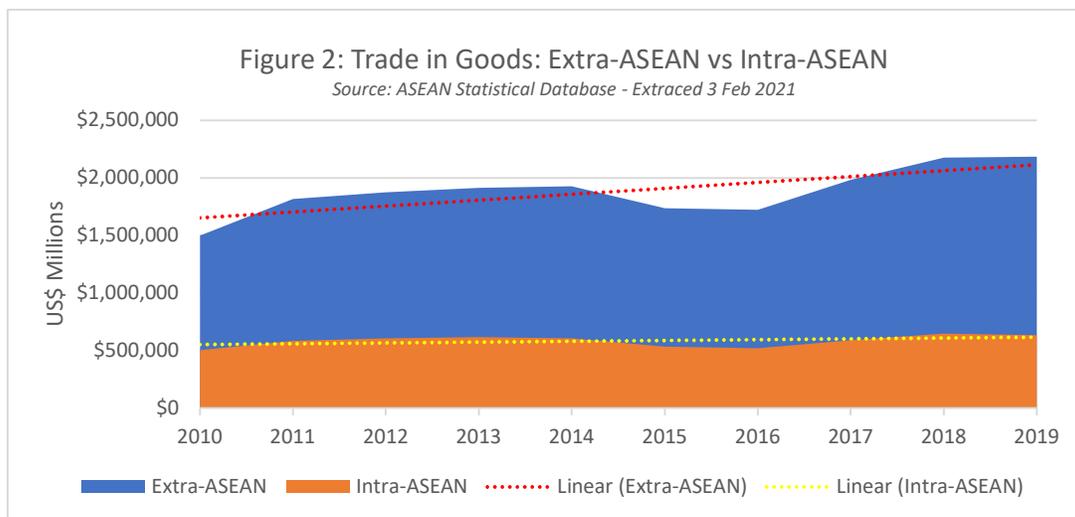
The ACRF noted that 2020 was a particularly bad year for ASEAN for trade and for foreign direct investment. The document reported that “by the end of the first semester 2020, based on preliminary data, ASEAN’s trade fell by 12.4% and FDI inflows by 32.9% compared with the previous year”¹¹. However, the harsh truth is that ASEAN trade was, at best, stagnating even before the COVID-19 pandemic, and FDI from traditionally strong partners such as the EU, Japan and China was also slipping.

¹¹ See p.8, paragraph 6 of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework at <https://asean.org/asean-comprehensive-recovery-framework-implementation-plan/>



As Figure 1 above shows, Intra-ASEAN trade in 2019 fell by 2.5% from 2018 levels and ASEAN’s trade with the rest of world was effectively flat, registering a growth rate of just 0.35%. Total ASEAN Trade in Goods was down by 0.3%. Additionally, despite the laudable objective set in 2017 of doubling Intra-ASEAN Trade by 2025, ASEAN has seen a step backwards and Intra-ASEAN Trade remains stubbornly low as a percentage of total ASEAN trade at just 22.5%, its lowest level over the last decade (it was 25.1% in 2010).

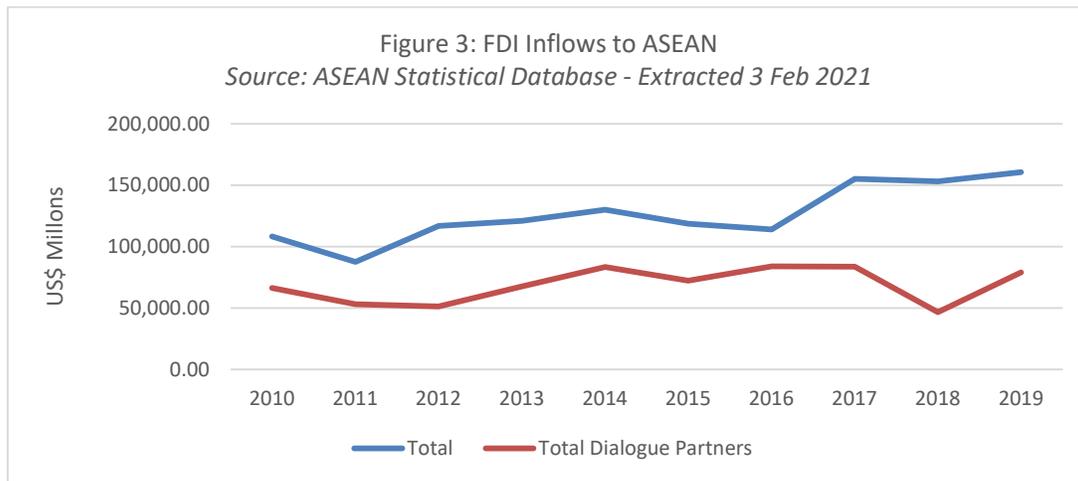
As Figure 2 demonstrates, trade is essentially flat. If the AEC was functioning as envisaged, and the ambition of a “single market and production base” was truly being realised, ASEAN’s trade, both intra- and extra-, would be growing faster, and intra-ASEAN trade, as a percentage of total trade, would be on the rise not falling.



ASEAN has also had a tendency in recent years to champion its achievements on attracting FDI to the region. It is true that the numbers, when the headline figures are taken at face value, are very good and indeed ASEAN has overtaken China as a destination for FDI. However, when examined more closely the picture is not as rosy as the Governments of the region would like to think. Indeed, ASEAN has itself recognised a concern on FDI flows. In the ASEAN Key Figures 2020 publication, it stated “However, COVID-19 pandemic is expected to significantly affect

investment, which was already on a muted trend in recent years”.¹² That same report goes on to predict a decline of up to 40% in FDI in 2020, citing data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

As can be seen from Figure 3 below, FDI from ASEAN’s dialogue partners¹³ is effectively flat with the bounce back in 2019 due to a correction on abnormally low (negative) FDI from the United States in 2018. Second, the rise in total FDI is mainly due to exceptionally large amounts of money from an “unspecified country” (around US\$42bn according the ASEAN Statistical Database), which the ASEAN Statistical Year Book 2019 puts down to repatriation of funds from overseas Filipinos to the Philippines.¹⁴ Third, the vast majority of FDI inflows to the region actually land in Singapore first before moving to other points both within and outside ASEAN (Singapore is a significant source of FDI for China).¹⁵ Hence FDI flows from Singapore to other ASEAN member states are being counted in the intra-ASEAN FDI numbers – in effect a double count of some money and therefore inflating the overall ASEAN total.¹⁶



These numbers show in stark terms that despite the undoubted opportunity that ASEAN has to be a significant global trade and investment player, it now runs the risk of missing that opportunity by not meeting its own goals and objectives set out in the various AEC Blueprints and associated documents. The ambitious goals of economic integration are regularly put aside. The COVID-19 pandemic should, if anything, spur the region into even greater action and higher ambitions on economic integration, to collectively mitigate against the worst impacts of the pandemic and to accelerate recovery from it: it has not done so.

Whilst the ACRF was a commendable effort to chart a collective path out of the economic and social costs of COVID-19, and to build upon previous ASEAN-wide initiatives, a renewed momentum is needed in implementing it to prevent the same fate as other frameworks, blueprints and agreements in the region: remaining unfulfilled through a combination of complacency, national interests, and bureaucratic inertia. ASEAN cannot afford to be seen to fail again on a regional economic initiative.

¹² See: p.56 of ASEAN Key Figures 2020 published by the ASEAN Secretariat at https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ASEAN_Key_Figures_2020.pdf

¹³ The EU, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Russia, United States, Canada and India

¹⁴ See ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2019, Table 7.2, P.128

¹⁵ The ASEAN Investment Report 2019 noted that “more than 80 per cent of FDI from the EU went to or through Singapore”, see section 1.2.2, p.22, of ASEAN Investment Report 2019 – FDI in Services: Focus on Health Care, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, October 2019

¹⁶ The ASEAN Investment Report 2019 notes that “intra-ASEAN investment is inflated by investments originating outside of the region channelled through Singapore” – See ASEAN Investment Report 2019 – FDI in Services: Focus on Health Care, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, October 2019, Section 1.3, p.31

Annex 2: Recommendations from EU-ABC Trade Facilitation Paper 2021

Area	Recommendation
Non-Tariff Barriers	<p>ASEAN Trade Repository:</p> <p>The ASEAN Trade Repository (https://atr.asean.org) is significantly behind schedule. For the ATR to be truly useful to businesses operating across ASEAN, it is essential that all measures are loaded to the system as soon as possible. We strongly recommend that all ASEAN Member States recommit to this process and agree to complete the full population of all its measures by the end of 2021. We also recommend creating a published list of progress updates by the member states monthly against such a renewed commitment.</p>
	<p>Introduce and Implement an NTM Toolkit by End 2021:</p> <p>The development of an NTM Toolkit is a good start. However, for it to make a real difference in the assessment of NTMs and elimination of NTBs it is essential that the “Tool Kit” is actually used and used in a transparent way.</p>
	<p>Systematic Review of NTMs:</p> <p>Our view is that there is no substitute for a wholesale and systematic review of each and every NTM in ASEAN. ASEAN Member States should undertake that review in consultation with the private sector, justify the need for every measure, and then commit to eliminating all measures that are clearly NTBs. A clearly defined and unambiguous deadline for this should be set, and the NTM Toolkit should be the instrument used for the assessment.</p>
	<p>Panel of Experts to Assist Coordination Committee on ATIGA:</p> <p>CCA needs support to speed up its deliberations. The panel of independent trade experts should have the mandate and authority to help with the assessment and evaluation of the cases before CCA to enable members of the committee to focus on the key issues better, remove bias from the reviews, and provide authoritative and clear guidance over what is, and what is not, an NTB. The recommendations of the Panel should be a key consideration in the final decision to remove an NTB or not.</p>
	<p>Enhance ASSIST:</p> <p>The ASSIST portal (ASEAN Solutions for Services, Investments and Trade - see https://assist.asean.org) has been specifically designed to allow companies, trade associations or law firms registered in ASEAN, to file complaints relating to measures and seek clarifications or modifications to those measures from the ASEAN Member State concerned. It has rarely been used due to combinations of poor knowledge of its existence through to companies not using it for fear of retribution from the ASEAN Member State being complained against. Measures need to be taken to promote increased use of ASSIST. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN Member States should do much more to encourage businesses in their countries to utilise the tool. • Concerns and resolutions about potential Non-Tariff Barriers raised through ASSIST should also be brought to the attention of CCA and added to the Matrix of Actual Cases and subjected to a systemic and comprehensive review on NTMS at the ASEAN level. • There should be “response standards” set for ASEAN Member States where a complaint is submitted. This should include strict time limits for ASEAN Member States to respond to filings, structure and content of the responses from Member States etc. • There should be a transparent escalation process. Where responses have fallen short, these should be escalated to the regional level and be subjected to an ASEAN wide review and decision. Where cases continue to be unresolved, these should be escalated to the Ministerial level.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on filings and responses should be publicised – listing the number of complaints filed, against whom, response time information, and whether the response was accepted by the complainant. • Responses, where accepted, should be made binding on the ASEAN Member State with their compliance to be verified by CCA and information on the compliance publicised. At the very least, the underlying principles of the responses, as accepted, should be published and be used by authorities and importers around the region as strong guidance; and, where appropriate enshrined into relevant national legislation.
	<p>Private Sector to Raise its Game:</p> <p>The private sector, through Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations and Business Councils, needs to step up the plate and use the existing ASEAN mechanisms, particularly ASSIST, and raise awareness of actual NTBs in the region. There is no point continuing to complain about the existence of NTBs unless companies are prepared to actually identify them and use existing platforms to detail their concerns about them and offer practical solutions for their removal. This is essential.</p>
	<p>Standard and Conformance Issues:</p> <p>One of the key areas for driving increased economic integration across the region, leading eventually to a truly seamless single market and production base, is the harmonisation of standards in ASEAN. Work has been ongoing under the auspices of the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ), with various working groups across different sectors looking either to put in place mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) or to truly unify domestic legislation across each ASEAN member state to achieve real regulatory alignment around accepted international norms. This is one of the most important workstreams that ASEAN has under the AEC. The working groups under ACCSQ only tend to meet twice a year. The EU-ABC suggests that work in this area should be sped up, and that the private sector should have a greater role to play in each of the working groups. We urge Ministers to give the ACCSQ and its various working groups clear timetables to complete work on harmonising standards across all major sectors and to increase the pace of work as well as to ensure its enforcement to benefit trade and investment across the region.</p>
<p>Movement of Goods Issues</p>	<p>Informed Compliance:</p> <p>Publish more and better guidance on an ASEAN-Wide database or portal to enable exporters and importers, as well as customs officers, to have full visibility and help them ensure compliance with customs and cross border trade regulatory requirements. The Decisions, Advisory Opinions, Commentaries or Case Studies that the WCO's TCCV issues are good examples for this. Published guidance can be suitably redacted to remove any commercially sensitive information</p> <p>ASEAN Low Value Shipment Programme:</p> <p>Accelerate work on the pathfinder programme, with trials to run before the end of 2021. The Work Group under CPTFWG to be instructed to meet more frequently to ensure this deadline can be met.</p>

About the EU-ASEAN Business Council

The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) is the primary voice for European business within the ASEAN region. It is formally recognised by the European Commission and accredited under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter as an entity associated with ASEAN.

Independent of both bodies, the Council has been established to help promote the interests of European businesses operating within ASEAN and to advocate for changes in policies and regulations which would help promote trade and investment between Europe and the ASEAN region. As such, the Council works on a sectorial and cross-industry basis to help improve the investment and trading conditions for European businesses in the ASEAN region through influencing policy and decision makers throughout the region and in the EU, as well as acting as a platform for the exchange of information and ideas amongst its members and regional players within the ASEAN region.

The EU-ABC conducts its activities through a series of advocacy groups focused on particular industry sectors and cross-industry issues. These groups, usually chaired by a multi-national corporation, draw on the views of the entire membership of the EU-ABC as well as the relevant committees from our European Chamber of Commerce membership, allowing the EU-ABC to reflect the views and concerns of European business in general. Groups cover, amongst other areas, Insurance, Automotive, Agri-Food & FMCG, IPR & Illicit Trade, Market Access & Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade, Customs & Trade Facilitation and Pharmaceuticals.

Executive Board

The EU-ABC is overseen by an elected Executive Board consisting of corporate leaders representing a range of important industry sectors and representatives of the European Chambers of Commerce in South East Asia.

Membership

The EU-ABC's membership consists of large European Multi-National Corporations and the nine European Chambers of Commerce from around South East Asia. As such, the EU-ABC represents a diverse range of European industries cutting across almost every commercial sphere from car manufacturing through to financial services and including Fast Moving Consumer Goods and high-end electronics and communications. Our members all have a common interest in enhancing trade, commerce and investment between Europe and ASEAN.



To find out more about the benefits of Membership and how to join the EU-ASEAN Business Council please either visit www.eu-asean.eu or write to info@eu-asean.eu.



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