



Consultation/Validation Workshop on the Implementation of Mutual Recognition of Skills in ASEAN countries

24 – 25 September 2014
Jakarta, Indonesia

Concept Note

Background and Justification

Since the adoption of the ASEAN Vision in the 2nd ASEAN Summit in 1997, the leaders of ASEAN countries have decided to transform ASEAN into a stable, prosperous, and highly competitive region with equitable economic development including reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities. Further at the 12th ASEAN Summit in January 2007, the ASEAN Leaders affirmed their strong commitment to accelerate the establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015 and signed the Cebu Declaration. The ASEAN Leaders therefore, agreed to hasten the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and transform ASEAN into a region with free movement of goods, services, investments, skilled labor and freer flow of capital.

As a first step towards realizing the blue print, ASEAN has been implementing the recommendations of the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on ASEAN Economic Integration contained in the Bali Concord II, in which “**facilitating movement of business persons, skilled labor and talents**” is reiterated as a critical priority under the pillar of “a single market and production base with free flow of goods, services, investment and skilled labor, and freer flow of capital by 2020”. To facilitate the mobility of skilled labor, the ASEAN member states will:

1. Facilitate the issuance of visas and employment passes for ASEAN professions and skills labor who are engaged in cross-border trade and investment related activities;
2. Facilitate the free flow of services (by 2015) by working towards harmonization and standardization, with a view to facilitate their movement within the region;
3. Enhance cooperation among ASEAN University Network (AUN) members to increase mobility for both students and staff within the region;

4. Develop core competencies and qualifications for job/occupational and trainers skills required in the priority services sectors (by 2009); and in other services sectors (from 2010-15); and
5. Strengthen the research capabilities of each ASEAN member countries in terms of promoting skills, job placements, and developing labor market information networks among ASEAN member States.

To implement these actions, the development of the “*mutually recognized skills framework*” became very critical. The mutual recognition on skills can smooth out the path in the negotiation between nations and thus facilitating the freer movement and employment of qualified and certified personnel. Essentially, the mutual recognition of skills is the major instrument for skilled labor mobility in ASEAN. It remains undisputed that the existence of a common ground on the process of mutual recognition of skills and cross recognition of activities would directly benefit a range of stakeholders. The importance of mutual recognized skills frameworks has been indicated in ASEAN Leaders Statement on Human Recourses and Skills for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth in 2010.

“Develop national skills frameworks in ASEAN member States through sharing of experiences and best practices as an important strategy to strengthen HRD and management and to enable member States to raise their respective levels of skills standards, as an incremental approach towards an ASEAN skills recognition framework”.

In the process, the AEC will address the development divide and accelerate integration of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam (CLMV) through the Initiative for ASEAN integration and other regional initiatives.

In the area of mutual recognition of skills, the ILO has been providing technical assistance and advisory services in various forms, some significant ones include: the development of Regional Model Competency Standards (RMCS) which has been utilized as benchmark for national skills standards development in the region (continually supported by the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme); and consultation meetings and capacity building activities conducted to push forward the mutual recognition mechanisms on skills in the Greater Mekong Sub-regional (GMS) countries in collaboration with the ADB.

In 2013, ILO commissioned a report called the *Assessment of the Readiness of ASEAN Member States for Implementation of the Commitment to the Free Flow of Skilled Labour within the ASEAN Economic Community from 2015* and organized a validation and action planning workshop with ASEAN SLOM and Skills focal points to confirm the findings of the report and move ahead with identifying priority skills sectors for mutual recognition; it was followed by an ASEAN Employers’ regional meeting in October to present the identified skills sectors to the employers.

In light of the approaching deadline of the AEC 2015, the ILO is well positioned to continue with activities in 2014, of which this workshop is an important component, to help the ASEAN

member states accelerate the process towards the achievement of mutual recognition of skills. To this, the workshop will take stock of the key outputs from previous activities in which some sectors and occupations were identified and proposed as priorities by the governments, and have them validated by employers' organizations and workers organizations; upon the validation of the occupations/sectors, the workshop will also facilitate tripartite action planning with all the participating member countries to develop further action plans on the identification of specific skills that will lead to the formation of mutual recognition mechanism between member countries to achieve the AEC goal of the free flow of skilled labor.

Objective

Against the above mentioned backdrop, the objective of the workshop is

1) to validate the proposed sectors and occupations for skills mutual recognition through consultation with tripartite partners including the governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations of all ASEAN member countries; and

2) to develop action plans through tripartite discussion to identify specific skills in the validated sectors and occupations for further mutual recognition.

Participants

This workshop programme will be held in a tripartite manner. It will be joined by senior labor officials and skills focal points who are familiar or responsible for national level training policy systems and standards as it relates to the AEC roadmap on the free flow of skilled labor and the shift towards a mutual recognition of skills in ASEAN.

Representatives and experts in skills and/or economic integrations of employers' organizations and workers' organizations from all ASEAN member states and at regional level will also be key participants.

Approach

It is important to reiterate that the existence of a common ground on the process of mutual recognition of skills and cross recognition of activities would directly benefit a range of stakeholders. Therefore, the success of this initiative would be highly dependent upon the collaboration and collective reception of all stakeholders involved in the MRS process. Based on such principle, this workshop programme is designed to provide a platform on which all the stakeholders will be engaged in the dialogue about putting in place a series of coordinated actions at the national level to implement integrated sustainable strategies for mutual recognition of skills.

To do so, the workshop will consist of several main sessions, in the forms of presentations, Q&A, discussions, and group work focusing on the following:

1. Review of the outputs from the action planning workshop with ASEAN SLOM and Skills focal points in 2013 to understand the proposed priority skills sectors and occupations in each ASEAN member country;
2. Consultation and discussion with representatives from employers' organizations and workers' organizations to validate the proposed skills sectors and occupations for mutual recognition;
3. Inter-country discussion joined by governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations to identify specific skills in the validated sectors and their implications for further mutual recognition; and
4. Collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat to ensure synergies and complementation with the programmes and activities of the overall of the free movement of skilled labour in ASEAN.

Expected Outputs

- Validated and agreed priority skills sectors among governments, employers organizations and workers' organizations for further mutual recognition; and
- Action plans on the identification of specific skills in the priority sectors for mutual recognition among ASEAN member countries.