Support to the Strategic Plan for the Establishment of the ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS)

Background

The role of statistics in the process of regional integration has been growing in recent years. Most sub-regional organisations include statistical bodies, usually composed of the statistical offices of member countries, leading statistical harmonisation and developing common frameworks for statistical production and processes to support policymaking. Furthermore, some sub-regional organisations have started or are about to start the design of a Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS), targeted at facilitating the achievement and development of the regional statistical systems.

However, in spite of the growing demand for statistical data, statistics in sub-regions still suffer from a lack of appropriate awareness and understanding of policymakers, especially at top management levels, of the implications of an effective regional statistical system and the importance to invest in statistics. Such a situation is reflected, for example, in the lack of technical capacity and human resources in the statistics units within the secretariat, which significantly limits the process of collecting and validating statistical data from the member countries, as well as the regular production and dissemination of aggregate data. Another example is the low commitment in implementing the guidelines of harmonisation of statistics and common frameworks for data exchange between member countries and the secretariat of the sub-regional organisations.

The ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee has developed and has been implementing its strategic plan and multi-year action plan (MYP) through the implementation of its Annual Work Plans (AWP). A mechanism has also been adopted in the form of Rules of Procedure that guides the formulation of the AWP and MYP. However, successful implementation of the ACSS Work Plans at the national level requires greater awareness and support from the respective line ministries and policymakers to ensure that regional needs and concerns are reflected in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). Stronger support from the respective bodies at the regional level and an established consultation mechanism between the ACSS Committee and stakeholders at the ASEAN bodies are important to ensure that users’ needs are best accounted and that the Statistics Unit of the Secretariat can play a greater role as with the establishment of the ACSS and in meeting the increasing demand for statistics.

In light of the above-described situation, Eurostat and PARIS21 are supporting the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) community in advocating for the sustainability of its RSDS: the Strategic Plan for the Establishment of the ASEAN Community Statistical System.

Objectives

Advocacy will be targeted at key users of statistics, whose role in the decision-making process is influential. The main areas that will be covered are:

- The ACSS, its missions and enabling mechanisms;
- The benefits of an effective regional statistical system;
- The implications of a sustainable Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS);
- The importance of aligning the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) with the RSDS;
• The urgency of strengthening ASEANstats to ensure an effective process of regional data production and dissemination;
• The urgency of the commitment to implement the harmonisation guidelines;
• The urgency of the commitment to exchange statistical data according to the agreed framework and format.

Outputs

• Better appreciation of the role and missions of the ACSS;
• Better appreciation of the importance of harmonisation of statistics and data sharing;
• Recommendation on the requirements for regional content in the NSDS;
• Recommendation on the strengthening of the Statistics Unit of the Secretariat.

Activities

The objectives will be achieved by organising a sub-regional workshop. This two-day event will take place in Jakarta, 28-29 November 2012 back-to-back with the Final Conference of the EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building (EASCAB) Programme that will be held on 27 November 2012. A list of recommendations on concrete actions to support the sustainability of the RSDS will be produced at the end of the workshop.

Participants

Participants will include officials from the concerned line ministries, representatives of the concerned ASEAN Bodies, representatives of the ACSS Committee and National Statistical System, ASEAN Secretariat Management, and international organisations and other stakeholders.