

Concept Note

“Regional social dialogue for growth, employment and sound industrial relations in the services sector: Sharing experiences from ASEAN and the EU”

**Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), SR Vietnam
and
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Vietnam Office**

**in cooperation with
Vietnamese General Confederation of Labour (VGCL)
Vietnamese National Union of Postal and Telecom Workers (VNUPTW)
ASEAN Service Employees Trade Union Confederation (ASETUC)
ASEAN Secretariate (ASEC)**

1. Background

By the year 2015, a single market and production base will have been established among the member states of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), called the ASEAN Economic integration. An important part of this process will be the full implementation of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) that will have a direct impact on the development of the services industries in ASEAN.

Economic integration will definitely bring about the need to also harmonize industrial relations in order to make economic development and business needs compatible with human resource requirements, skills development and employment patterns. Not having the same sets of standards in all countries, but having comparable conditions that enable the mobility of labour in the service sector and promote industrial harmony and stability, higher productivity and at the same time social justice and social security to share the benefits of economic integration with all citizens of ASEAN. This corresponds to the ASEAN principle of shared responsibility.

The key strategy to achieve these goals is enhanced social dialogue, not only on the national level, but also among ASEAN governments as a group, regional employers' associations and recognized regional representative bodies of the workforce in ASEAN. This refers to social dialogue on general matters and in particular with respect to industrial relations as well as sectoral social dialogues on the level of the services sectors in ASEAN.

This has to be seen as a process to establish step by step a reliable structure and mechanism for this dialogue, shaped and framed by political decisions and agreements of the ASEAN governments in cooperation with the social partners. The “FRAMEWORK OF THE ASEAN WORK PROGRAMME ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS 2005-2010”, adopted by the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials in May 2005, is the cornerstone and starting point of this development. The objective of this ASEAN program is “...to enhance and strengthen the capacity of government, employers, and workers of ASEAN Member Countries in promoting partnerships in industrial relations, at policy and operational levels.

The European Union (EU) has embarked on the process of social dialogue on the European level already some time ago. It has a clearly defined basis in the EC Treaty of 1993 in Article 138 and 139 (bipartite and tripartite). Bipartite Dialogue between the European employers and workers organisations takes place cross-industry and on sectoral basis in 32 social dialogue committees according to Article 138 of the treaty. Tripartite social dialogue is focused on four different issues, namely macroeconomic, employment, social protection and training and education issues. In addition, since 1997 there is a Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment in relation to the EU Council Meeting.

2. Concept of Seminar

ASEAN and the EU have different historical, political and cultural backgrounds and different approaches to economic integration and blueprints from one bloc to the other are impossible. Still, sharing of knowledge and joint learning on growth, employment and social dialogue will benefit both regions. Therefore a seminar is suggested on “Regional social dialogue for growth, employment and sound industrial relations in the services sector: Sharing experiences from ASEAN and the EU”.

Objectives are

- 1. to give an overview on the system of industrial relations in the member states of ASEAN and the EU***
- 2. to describe the different stages of regional social dialogue in both regional blocs***
- 3. to develop recommendations for the enhancement of regional social dialogue in line with economic integration.***
- 4. to contribute to the discussion on common issues of interests, namely temporary and contract work and labor migration among social partners***

Suggested participants would come from

1. governments (Labour Officials),
2. employers associations and trade unions that have a regional coverage in the services sector in ASEAN
3. academics with appropriate knowledge on the issue

from the ASEAN as well as the European Union.

It is further proposed that the seminar will take place in Vietnam in the first half of 2010, possibly in cooperation with a meeting of the Senior Labour Officials (SLOM) . All further substantial and technical matters on this proposal, including funding modalities, will be discussed between the co-sponsors and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, whereby core funding will come from the Asia Regional Trade Union Program of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung:.