

Concept Note: ASEAN Regional Employers Workshop
“Managing Labour Mobility for Inclusion, Innovation and Business Competitiveness”
9-10 May 2016, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Background

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was launched in December 2015 to create a common manufacturing base and promote free flow of products, services, and labour across borders without tariffs or non-tariff barriers. The ASEAN market already presents advantages to investors, including readily available natural resources, comparatively low labour cost and young working population, among others. AEC will further enhance the region’s leverage as it will present a one-stop corridor pass to a bigger, more diverse but well interlinked market. One of the main advantages of doing business in AEC will lie in the aforementioned free flow of labour. Labour migration in the region has been steadily increasing over the last 10-15 years. Going forward, companies will only face even more need to manage diversity among its workforce. This applies to workforce of all professional and social backgrounds, disaggregated by skill level, skin colour, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, and age. Such free flow, however, requires standardized business-related legal and regulatory frameworks. It also calls for compliance to clear, long-term, and consistent industry standards and practices across all ten ASEAN Member States.

Managing workforce diversity, particularly in the context of labour migration, is an essential tool for improving business competitiveness. It allows all workers to access decent work opportunities, to be treated equally or fairly, and subsequently obtain better livelihoods, while companies see improvement in their bottom lines. It goes beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR) and adhering to the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Conventions, such as those on Equal Remuneration (No.100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (No. 111), and relevant national laws and regulations to avert negative media coverage or potential prosecution. In effect, systematic integration by providing social protection and career development leads to a sense of inclusion/belonging. This in turn increases workers’ engagement, resulting in higher labour productivity. Depending on the skill levels, it also encourages migrant workers to share respective experiences, know-hows and ideas, thus creating synergy. As ASEAN companies continue to grow, innovation will be key in determining business performances, and ultimately profit levels. And this all begins with a top-down corporate strategy of institutionalizing integration in both management and operation, across all functional areas.

The International Labour Organization’s ASEAN TRIANGLE Project (ATP), launched in April 2012 with the funding of the Government of Canada, strives to increase labour rights protection, labour mobility, and decent work opportunities for women and men migrant workers in the ASEAN Region. For this purpose ATP also provides assistance for capacity building of institutions such as the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE). As an employers’ component of ATP’s Action Plan to fully engage employers’ organizations on labour migration processes in ASEAN, ACE adopted an employers’ policy framework for sustainable labour migration in ASEAN in 2013. The framework prioritizes five fundamental areas for business and policy decision makers. For the first four areas, regional workshops have taken place and background papers and policy position papers developed.

- The Role of Employers’ Organizations in Matching Skills and Increasing Mobility across the ASEAN Region, 6 November 2013, Bali, Indonesia;
- Increasing Productivity through Enhancing the Safety and Health of Migrant Workers, 29-30 April 2014, Bangkok, Thailand;
- The Role of the Recruitment Sector in Facilitating More Effective AESAN Intraregional Labour Mobility, 6-7 November 2014, Bangkok, Thailand;

- Businesses' Perspective on Addressing Forced Labour in AESAN Migration – Reputational Risks and Practical Responses, 31 March – 1 April 2015, Bangkok, Thailand; and
- Managing Diversity and Workplace Integration in the ASEAN Countries, 2016

Meeting Objective

The fifth regional technical meeting on 'Managing Labour Mobility for Inclusion, Innovation and Business Competitiveness' will aim to provide a platform for constructive dialogues among ASEAN employers to:

- Discuss strengths and weaknesses of current practices and potential future opportunities and challenges in managing migrant workers diversity and integration at workplace;
- Showcase and share good business practice models and lessons learned;
- Discuss possible regulatory frameworks and corporate strategies that need to be adopted/improved/implemented by multi-stakeholders, including national/regional governments and employer organizations such as ACE.

Expected Outcome

- Increased awareness on the positive correlation between diversity & inclusion, productivity, and business competitiveness;
- Increased employers' support and initiative to institutionalize management of diversity and workplace integration as part of corporate development strategy;
- An ACE policy position paper presenting possible policy options and recommendations to improve labour mobility in the ASEAN market, in terms enhanced businesses' management of migrant workers' diversity and integration at workplace.

Date and Venue

The 1.5 day-meeting will take place **on 9-10 May 2015, Prince D'Angkor Hotel & Spa, Siem Reap, Cambodia.**

Participants

There will be approximately 28 - 30 participants, including:

- Two participants per each employers' organization from the ten ASEAN Member States (20): National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brunei Darussalam; Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA); Employers' Association of Indonesia (APINDO); Laos National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI); Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF); Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI); Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP); Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF); Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT); Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)
- Academia, international experts, and industry experts (3-4);
- ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and ATP specialists (3-4).

Financial and Logistical Support

The meeting will be supported by ILO's ASEAN TRIANGLE Project (ATP), funded by the Government of Canada.