ASEAN and WTO Accession

Business readiness, barriers, and Just Transition opportunities

Accession creates opportunity. Benefits are not automatic. Risks are more certain.

Opportunity
- Access to regional markets
- Increased investment and FDI flows
- Integration into value chains

Risk
- Local firms left behind
- Imports outcompete domestic businesses

Challenges
- Hydrocarbon transition is urgent
- Private sector readiness is low
- Structural barriers constrain growth

Reality check - Most businesses are not ready yet

33%	39%	17%
Workforce Prepared	**Slightly Competitive**	**Fully Compliant**
Only one-third consider workforce ready for ASEAN integration	Rate themselves only slightly competitive regionally	With international trade and labour standards

These constraints reflect systemic issues in finance, skills, market access

What will change for you

Competition will increase immediately

- Cheaper imports
- Higher standards required
- More demanding customers

What happens if you do nothing

- Lose market share to imports
- Miss export opportunities
- Struggle to attract investment
- Remain stuck in low-value activities

Key sectors with growth potential

- Agriculture and agro-processing
- Tourism and hospitality
- Light manufacturing
- Digital economy

What successful firms will do

- Upgrade quality and standards
- Target export markets
- Build partnerships
- Invest in skills

What businesses need most

01

Access to Finance

MSME access, reduce collateral barriers

02

Skills

Workforce development aligned with ASEAN standards and regional needs

03

Regulatory reform

Simplify licensing and compliance

04

Information

Clear guidance on ASEAN economic policies, market trends and trade opportunities

05

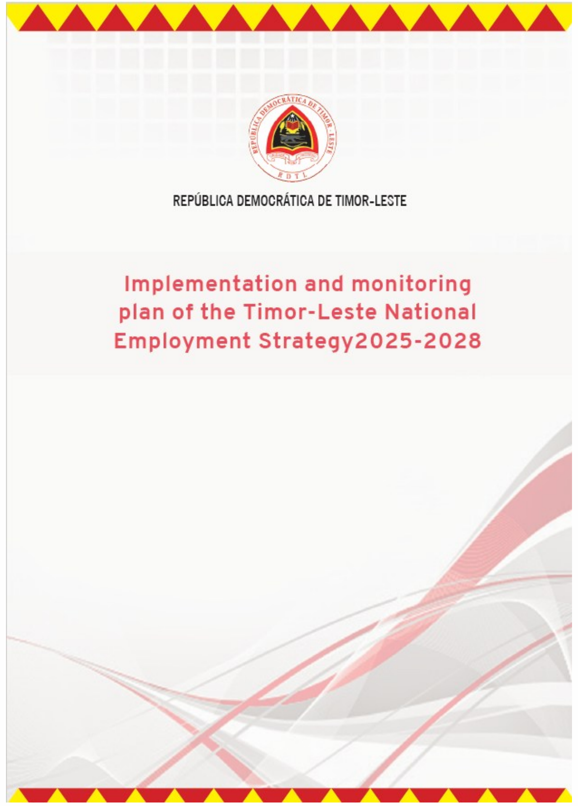
Infrastructure

Digital readiness and connectivity improvements

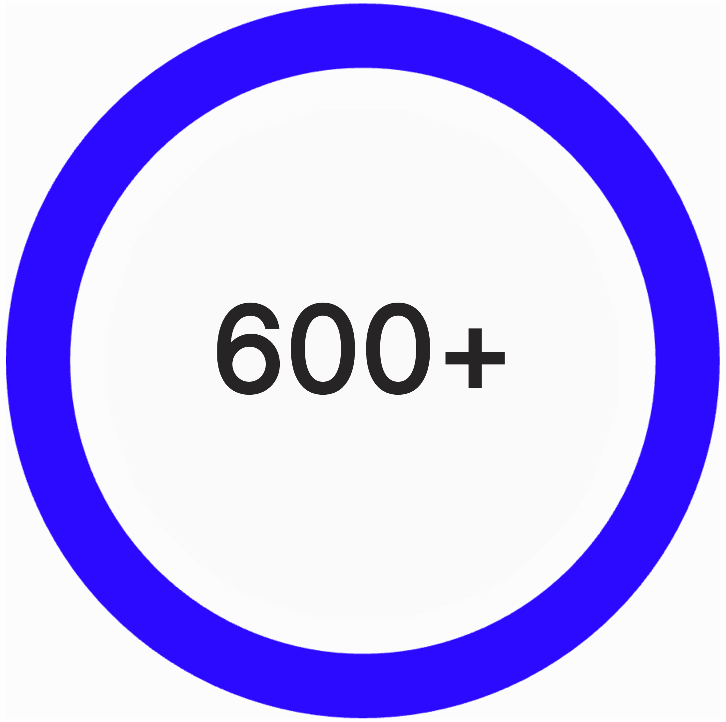
Gap between legal framework and practical implementation capacity risks deterring responsible foreign investment

Skills are the bottleneck

- Workforce not aligned with ASEAN needs
- Language barriers (English/Portuguese)
- Limited technical skills

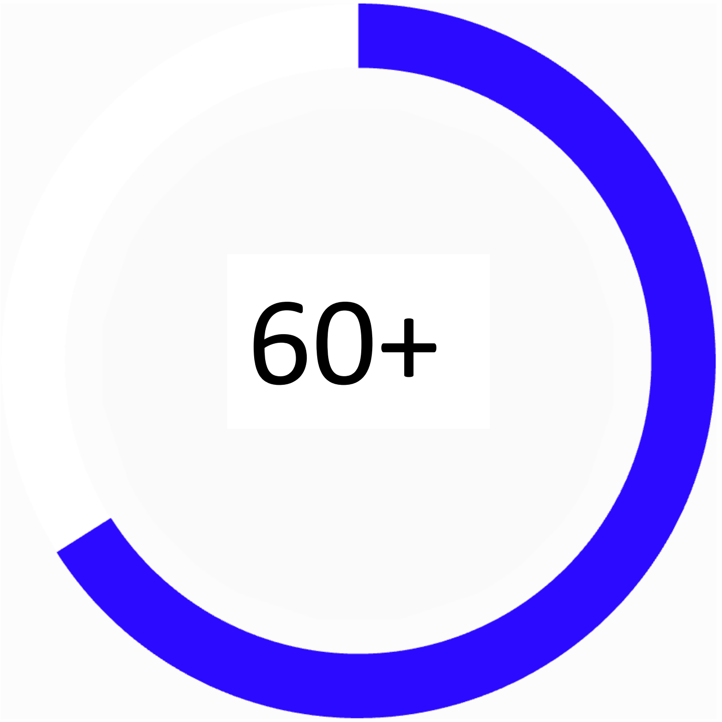


The institutional challenge



Annual Meetings

ASEAN official meetings per year requiring participation



Economic Agreements

ASEAN agreements requiring compliance upon accession

Government and Private Sector must prioritize short and medium-term goals, making difficult decisions on resource allocation.

The role of EBMO

Organizar para Desenvolver
CCI-TL

Representation

Voice of private sector in ASEAN and WTO fora

Coordination

Bridge between government and business community

Services

Guidance, information, and training for members

> *"Strong representation of business interests in government policy discussions is essential. We hope CCI-TL continues to advocate for a more enabling business climate."*

What support is needed by members

- Export readiness training
- Market intelligence
- Business matchmaking
- ASEAN information services

ASEAN is not a guarantee of growth — it is a test of competitiveness

Four strategic priorities to maximize benefits of ASEAN and WTO membership

Key Recommendations

Strengthen the private sector

- Dedicated private sector development partnerships
- Tailored information, advisory and training services for members
- Focus on support for innovation and entrepreneurship, access to finance, export readiness and compliance with domestic, destination market, and ASEAN standards and procedures

Key Recommendations

Improve the business environment

- Public-private coordination mechanism on ASEAN/WTO
- Strategic investment in the institutional development and capacity-building of sectoral associations
- Align DWCP and UNSDCF with ASEAN & WTO membership objectives
- Evidence-based national economic planning and with realistic goals
- Strengthen investment promotion efforts
- Digitalization and decentralization of government services
- Private sector development coordination mechanism

Key Recommendations

Develop skills ecosystem

- National Labour Administration Strengthening Plan
- Permanent tripartite labour policy forum
- Regular bipartite platforms at national and sectoral level
- Improved institutional independence and governance
- Training and certification programs for inspectors, arbitrators, and social security officers
- Invest in English and Portuguese language competencies
- Modernize labour administration through digitalization

Key Recommendations

Build institutional capacity

- Development of an ASEAN & WTO Strategic Engagement Plan
- Establish a dedicated ASEAN and International Affairs Unit within Chamber
- Strengthen sectoral representation and organizing
- Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to promote policy coherence between trade, labour, education, infrastructure, and investment agencies
- Build technical and regulatory expertise among regulators and key institutions