PRESS RELEASE
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SHARE Regional Conference on Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance 2018
Preparing for the Future: The Role of ASEAN (Higher) Education Frameworks in a Disruptive World

Bangkok, 29 October 2018 – The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), the European Union (EU) to Thailand and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED) jointly hosted the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) Regional Conference on Qualifications Frameworks (QF) and Quality Assurance (QA).

"Preparing for the Future: The Role of ASEAN (Higher) Education Frameworks in a Disruptive World" convened policy makers, university leaders, higher education managers and students to reflect on current developments and challenges in the ASEAN higher education landscape. The role of Qualifications and Quality Assurance Frameworks as useful tools in supporting higher education systems amidst the challenges posed by Industry 4.0 was also discussed. The conference aims at capitalising on SHARE's project achievements in the fields of QF and QA, particularly in fostering the sustainability of the project outcomes, identifying major topics that will shape the future of higher education in ASEAN.

Mr. Giuseppe Busini, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission, Delegation of the European Union to Thailand highlighted the role of SHARE on Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance by saying that "the support for further implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks and the orientation of national QA systems towards shared regional principles has been provided in the past 4 years of SHARE implementation through seminars, workshops, and other capacity building formats. One example is the operationalisation of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework that has been and will be further supported across ASEAN."

According to Mr Thomas Zettler, SHARE Programme Director for German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), "SHARE is committed to support ASEAN in further promoting effective regional integration of higher education, and thereby contribute to national and regional competitiveness and development. Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance can be useful tools to guide Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their education systems through these developments. With the AQRF[1] and AQAF[2] in place, the discussion in ASEAN can shift to the role(s) these frameworks can play in practice."

"Regional Frameworks on Quality Assurance and Qualifications have been promoted by SHARE to date. As such, the Ministry of Education through Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) is delighted to co-organise this conference with SHARE along with the ASEAN Secretariat, European Union, SEAMEO RIHED and is looking forward to seeing various ministries, university leaders, industries, and student involving in the discussions and building stronger intra-regional networking and exchange knowledge on the future of ASEAN higher education frameworks.", said Dr Sophon Napathorn, Vice Minister of Education, Thailand.

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[1] ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
[2] ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework

In line with the Vice Minister of Education, Thailand, the Programme Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED), Phunyanuch Pattanotai noted that "the pivotal objectives of the conference therefore are exchanging views on and summarising the project achievements; providing a platform to discuss the sustainability of the project outcomes; mapping future priorities, offering stakeholders the opportunity to shape the things to come."

The conference welcomed together 200 participants, among them are higher education policymakers from ministries and universities as well as experts on QF and QA, Students from both Europe and Southeast Asia also attended.   The conference is structured in three parts: (1) Taking stock of achievements in SHARE Result Area 2: How do stakeholders perceive the conducted activities? What is the impact of the capacity building that took place? (2) Discussing the current state of the AQRF and AQAF, while connecting the frameworks to the debate on the current challenges ASEAN higher education faces. (3) Planning for the future: Which topics need further attention and how can these be addressed, either within SHARE or other initiatives?

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Background Information:

About SHARE

ASEAN and EU have jointly designed SHARE to support the ASEAN Higher Education Space, to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance the quality and competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students, and thereby contribute to an ASEAN Community beyond 2015. On this journey, SHARE provides ASEAN with relevant experience and expertise from the European Higher Education Area.

A consortium of British Council (lead), Campus France, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Nuffic, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European University Association (EUA) are working with ASEAN counterparts to implement SHARE from 2015 to 2019. There are three main components (so-called Result Areas) during the implementation of SHARE (1) Policy Dialogue, (2) Qualifications Frameworks (QFs) and Quality Assurance (QA), (3) Credit-Transfer and Mobility.

Result Area 2 aims at strengthening and disseminating the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) with a focus on higher education. Within the frame of bi-regional dialogue and mutual exchange, the European partners share their experiences and good practices from the Bologna Process and build on the work already underway across the ASEAN region, especially on the achievements by the AQRF Committee and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN).

SHARE's work in the field of Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance

SHARE's activities in Result Area 2 cover background research and policy advice, regional and national stakeholder dialogue and capacity development. In order to widen the body of available knowledge on the state of the art of ASEAN higher education, SHARE published a series of studies focusing on Qualifications Frameworks, Quality Assurance, Credit Transfer Systems and Degree Structures. These analyses investigate current regional developments and provide recommendations to policy makers at both, regional and national level. Furthermore, deriving from this research, outcome-based education has been identified as the unifying factor for the advancement of both quality assurance and qualifications frameworks including credit transfer systems and degree structures across ASEAN partner countries.

Results of the studies as well as contributions by two ASEAN-European Expert Working Groups shaped the conceptual design of SHARE's activities in Result Area 2 and helped to meet the demands of ASEAN beneficiaries. This fed into a series of national dissemination workshops aimed at raising awareness for the regional frameworks and implications at national level.

To date, eleven national dissemination workshops in eight ASEAN Member States (AMS) have been conducted successfully in close collaboration with the relevant national authorities. These workshops addressing experts, policy makers, university leadership as well as representatives from the labour market reached nearly 1,000 stakeholders and more than 500 institutions in the ASEAN region. In order to sustain the work at national level and to set the foundation for dissemination activities in the future, a regional 'Peer-Multiplier-Training' was conducted in June 2018 with the ambition to create a pool of SHARE higher education and quality assurance reform "champions".

SEAMEO RIHED

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) is a regional intergovernmental organization established in 1965 among the 11 governments of Southeast Asian countries to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region.

The mission of SEAMEO is to enhance regional understanding, cooperation and unity of purpose among Member Countries for a better quality of life through the establishment of networks and partnerships, the provision of fora among policy makers and experts, and the promotion of sustainable human resource development.

The SEAMEO Secretariat is located in Bangkok, Thailand, and there are currently 24 Regional Centres responsible for training, research and development and information dissemination in various fields of specialisation. SEAMEO RIHED is the SEAMEO Regional Centre specialising in higher education and development.

Originally conceived and founded in Singapore as the Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (RIHED) in 1959 jointly by UNESCO and the International Association of Universities (IAU) in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, RIHED was reorganised in 1993 and established in Bangkok, Thailand, as a Regional Centre of SEAMEO. The Centre is hosted by the Government of Thailand and located on the 5th floor of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), Thailand.

SEAMEO RIHED's mission is to advance cooperation, alignment and the development of higher education systems in the Southeast Asian region by creating policy platforms, engaging in policy-driven research and broadening space for information dissemination.

Next year, SEAMEO RIHED will be celebrating its 60th Anniversary since the establishment of the Centre.