

THE EXPLOREASEAN DELEGATION PRESENTS

# WHAT LIES BEHIND THE POTENTIAL OF ASEAN?


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© As an investor, one may put into question the balance between opportunity and threats. But, although the current level of development varies extremely from country to country, the ASEAN states all have something in common, that is, huge potential as manufacturing and trade hubs or consumer markets. After the onsite seminar, some of the explorers have shared their initial findings about different fields revealing what lies behind ASEAN and its potential.

Due to liberalization, growth in trade flow development is visible within Southeast Asia itself. Trade in ASEAN and mainly with Indonesia and Singapore is growing while other markets are expanding simultaneously. Taking Singapore as an example, "Although Switzerland is a leader in commodity trading, Singapore is overhauling with the help of global trading programs and diverse tax regulations and has a geostrategic advantage through its location surrounded by its Asian neighbor countries such as China and other ASEAN member states", adds Ermin Milanovic a delegation member of exploreASEAN focusing on international trade in Singapore.

When it comes to education, the individual ASEAN governments recognize that it is crucial to provide labor with the necessary skills and business know-how in order to better operate in a global economy. According to the World Bank, further development of low and middle income education in ASEAN would result in an increase in competitiveness and productivity and would allow the provision of a highly skilled workforce and research skills for innovation and development. So far, the vocational education and training (VET) in Vietnam is attended by a relatively small number of young people as graduating from a traditional university is still considered more valuable. "Unfortunately, these circumstances hinder the development of these institutions, which in turn leads to an unsatisfactory outcome. Upon graduation, students lack the practical skills and experience required by companies operating in the manufacturing business. Therefore, more and more companies have established own on-the-job training programs, which are aimed to improve employees' skills and abilities and, in a further step, allow them to fulfil the quality standards set by their employers", points out Vivian Eido, an explorer doing research on vocational education and training in Vietnam.

According to Martina Deplazes, there are significant differences between the Vietnamese and Swiss vocational education systems. For instance, the number of vocational colleges in Vietnam is limited, despite the fact that they are only established to serve specific industry fields. Whereas the vocational pathway in Switzerland is quite well-established and highly recognized by both the public and private sector.



Martina, Fabienne, Timo talking to the director of the Puspipstek National Research Center of Indonesia. Photo: MN

"People living in the countryside do not have the same educational opportunities", says Martina.

As reported by the ASEAN Secretariat, healthcare improvements have been made a major priority among the ASEAN countries. This is shown in the rising level of investment in the health care sector. However, the most remarkable progress is seen in the countries Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, where the health care systems may be compared to those in Europe.

For Nicole Stuber, there have been several reforms in which the Vietnamese government has put in place to ensure everyone living in Vietnam has healthcare insurance. However, in such a diverse country, it is hard to establish a general standard. "As a result of the fast-growing economy, the needs of the population are changing accordingly", adds Nicole who currently investigates the healthcare system in Viet Nam.

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Vivian and a local student from Indonesia exchanging knowledge. Photo: UV