



In Focus: Comprehending ASEAN's Work on Standards and Conformance



Standards and conformance systems play an important role in the community. Conformance to standards helps to minimise health, safety and environmental risks; allows consumers to make informed decisions about purchasing products and services in accordance with their preferences and values; ensures compatibility; and facilitates international trade. Businesses use standards and conformance to provide assurance on product quality and compatibility, while governments use standards in regulation to protect the health and safety of consumers and protect the environment.

As ASEAN continues its journey towards realising its vision of an ASEAN Community, standards and conformance remain a key component in the production of tangible outcomes to characterise the region as a deeply integrated and highly cohesive economy capable of sustaining high economic growth. ASEAN through the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) has endeavoured to harmonise national standards with international standards and implement mutual recognition arrangements on conformity assessment to achieve its end-goal of "One Standard, One Test, Accepted Everywhere".

About the Bulletin

ASEAN for Business is a bulletin published by the Enterprise and Stakeholder Engagement Division of the ASEAN Secretariat.

This bimonthly bulletin provides quick updates on specific topics related to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) for businesses operating in the region.

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Profile of ACCSQ

The ASEAN Consultative Committee for Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) is the focal point for activities related to standards and conformance in the region. It is responsible for implementing the AEC Blueprint measures for standards and conformance, laying down the foundations (such as policies and strategies) for addressing technical barriers to trade (TBTs), and subsequently implementing these policies and strategies to help realise the single market and production base.

Working groups and committees under ACCSQ

The ACCSQ includes three (3) Working Groups, three (3) Sectoral Committees, and six (6) Product Working Groups (PWGs).

I. Working Group on Standards (WG 1)

The WG 1 is in charge of developing a mechanism for cooperation between standards bodies and regulatory agencies as well as in harmonising national standards to international standards. Furthermore, the WG 1 is also responsible for providing inputs and recommendations to ACCSQ on provisions for standards in ASEAN Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Harmonisation of standards in ASEAN
- Completing the study for Digital Trade standards as a new area for harmonisation

II. Working Group on Conformity Assessment (WG 2)

The WG 2 focuses on enhancing the capability of the accreditation and conformity assessment bodies in ASEAN Member Countries to achieve regional and/or international recognition as well as to facilitate the implementation of mutual recognition of test reports and certifications. Additionally, the WG 2 is also responsible for monitoring the certification bodies within ASEAN and assisting new member countries in accreditation and conformity assessment.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Development of National Accreditation-

Body (NAB) in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar

- Cooperation and collaboration among National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) in ASEAN

III. Working Group on Legal Metrology (WG 3)

The WG 3 has the responsibility to: (i) align legal metrology in the ASEAN and to ensure that the modernisation of legislation in legal metrology by ASEAN member countries will not result in the introduction of new technical barriers to trade; (ii) establish ASEAN cooperation in the area of legal metrology and to improve the national legal metrology systems through cooperation in technology, human resources, and management expertise; and (iii) hold discussions and promote ASEAN interest in legal metrology with other national, regional, and international organisations.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Harmonisation of Verification Procedures
- Development of Roadmap on Metrology

IV. Joint Sectoral Committee for ASEAN Sectoral MRA for Electrical and Electronic Equipment (JSC EEE)

The JSC EEE's key role is related to the ASEAN Sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Electrical and Electronic Equipment. (ASEAN EE MRA), namely: (i) undertake listing, suspension, removal, and verification of testing laboratories and/or certification bodies in accordance with the ASEAN EE MRA; (ii) provide a forum for the discussion of issues that may arise concerning the implementation of the ASEAN EE MRA; (iii) Review and propose amendments to the scope and coverage of the ASEAN EE MRA; and (iv) consider ways to enhance the operation of the ASEAN EE MRA, such as developing outreach program for capacity building.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Implementation of the ASEAN MRA on Electrical and Electronic Equipment
- Implementation of the ASEAN harmonised Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulatory Regime.

V. ASEAN Cosmetic Committee (ACC)

The main responsibility of ACC is to coordinate,

review, and monitor the implementation of the Agreement on ASEAN Harmonised Cosmetic Regulatory Scheme, including the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive and the Technical Requirements detailing the ingredients that cannot be used in cosmetics as well as the listings of permitted preservatives, UV absorbers and colourants. Additionally, the ACC is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the technical documents related to cosmetic testing methods.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Implementation of the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive

VI. Pharmaceutical Product Working Group (PPWG)

The PPWG's key focus is to prepare studies on the comparison of the existing pharmaceutical requirements and regulations implemented by each ASEAN Member State and harmonised procedures and regulatory system on pharmaceutical trade currently being implemented in other regions. Additionally, the PPWG is also responsible for developing harmonised technical procedures and requirements, including appropriate MRAs that are applicable to the ASEAN pharmaceutical industry, taking into account other regional and international developments on pharmaceuticals.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Implementation of ASEAN Common Technical Dossier and ASEAN Common Technical Requirements
- Implementation of MRA on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) Inspection for Manufacturers of Medicinal Products
- Implementation of MRA on Bioequivalence Study Reports on Generic Medicinal Products

VII. Prepared Foodstuff Product Working Group (PPFWG)

The PFPWG is responsible for undertaking an exchange of information as well as to review and analyse the comparability of standards, regulations, procedures, and mandatory requirements in ASEAN Member States related to prepared foodstuff. Related to the MRA on-

prepared foodstuff, the PFPWG has a role in identifying possible areas for harmonisation and developing, implementing and monitoring MRAs

2019 ongoing priority:

- Implementation of the ASEAN MRA on Food Hygiene
- Development of ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework

VIII. Automotive Product Working Group (APWG)

The APWG's main responsibility is to undertake an exchange of information as well as to review and analyse the comparative on standards, regulations, procedures, and mandatory requirements related to the automotive sector among ASEAN Member States. APWG's additional role is to identify areas and develop possible harmonisation and MRAs, with focus on the harmonization of ASEAN automotive safety and emission standards based on UNECE regulations.

2019 ongoing priority:

- Finalisation of the ASEAN MRA on Type Approval for Automotive Products
- Finalisation of the Guidance Document for the Implementation of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements on Type Approval for Automotive Products

IX. Traditional Medicines and Health Supplements Product Working Group (TMHSPWG)

The TMHSPWG's key roles are to: (i) exchange information on the existing regulatory framework and/or regime, including standard definition, terminologies, and technical infrastructure in ASEAN member countries; (ii) study the existing regulatory frameworks and/or regime of selected countries and internationally accepted technical guidelines; (iii) enhance the technical infrastructure including mutual confidence in testing and conformity assessment; and (iv) identify areas for possible harmonization and MRAs.

2019 ongoing priority:

- Finalisation of the ASEAN Agreement on Regulatory Framework for Traditional Medicines

- Finalisation of the ASEAN Agreement on Regulatory Framework for Health Supplements

X. ASEAN Medical Device Committee (AMDC)

The AMDC mainly handles the implementation and transposition of ASEAN Medical Device Directive into national legislation; formalisation of a post-marketing alert system for defective or unsafe medical devices; as well as exploring the feasibility of an abridged approval process for medical devices and harmonisation of technical and safety issues for the placement of medical devices into the ASEAN markets, taking into account the international information and guideline available.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Implementation of the ASEAN Medical Device Directive

XI. Rubber-Based Product Working Group (RBPWG)

The RBPWG's main scope of activities are: (i) to enhance cooperation in conformity assessment, development and implementation of standards and technical regulations for rubber based products and testing methods among ASEAN Member Countries; (ii) to strengthen and enhance networking and exchange of information among ASEAN Member Countries pertaining to standards, quality and regulations of rubber based products, with the view to facilitate cooperative undertakings in this area; and (iii) to identify standards for rubber-based products and testing methods for ASEAN to harmonize with international standards and quality.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Harmonisation of rubber-based standards

XII. Building and Construction Working Group (BCWG)

In assisting the ACCSQ, the BCWG plays a key role in: (i) identifying areas for possible harmonisation of standards, technical

requirements, including supporting relevant cross-cutting ACCSQ initiatives, such as smart cities initiatives; (ii) developing and implementing sectoral MRAs; and (iii) identifying the technical infrastructure, which includes conformity assessment, to support initiatives in building and construction sector.

2019 ongoing priorities:

- Finalisation of MRA on Building and Construction Materials

Engaging the working groups and committees

The information provided in the previous section is important for the private sector to obtain a good overview of the working groups and committees under the ACCSQ as well as their on-going priorities for 2019. Recommendations or proposals for collaborations to the working groups and committees should ideally be aligned with their respective priorities. This will ensure a more effective and productive public-private engagement.

In order to facilitate the engagement with the private sector, a formal request needs to be submitted to the co-chairs of the respective working groups and/or committees. Alternatively, the private sector can also coordinate with the regional industry associations¹ that have regular engagements with the working groups and committees to be included as part of their delegation. The next step will be to be mindful of their meeting schedules, which are held twice a year, the first is early in the year preceding the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting, and the second is usually held either in the 3rd or 4th quarter of the year.

ASEAN Secretariat stands ready to facilitate the engagement between the private sector and the working groups and committees. Stronger public-private engagement will result in the successful implementation of the AEC, since the private sector can assist the public sector in providing feedback from the ground level.

¹ ASEAN Food and Beverage Alliance (AFBA), ASEAN Automotive Federation (AAF), ASEAN Cosmetics Association (ACA), ASEAN Pharmaceutical Club (APC), ASEAN Pharmaceutical Research Industry Association (APRIA), ASEAN Alliance on Traditional Medicines Industries (AATMI), ASEAN Alliance on Health Supplements Associations (AAHSA), and ASEAN Furniture Industry Council (AFIC)

Recent Updates

The 51st ASEAN Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting and Related Meetings

[The 51st AEM Meeting and Related Meetings](#) were convened in Bangkok, Thailand on 6-10 September 2019. Throughout the meeting, the Ministers discussed the progress of the 13 priority economic deliverables for Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship, progress in the implementation of the AEC, on-going work on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), regional economic outlook and relevant global developments, RCEP negotiations, and also to held consultations with the ASEAN BAC, and other regional business councils through the consultation meetings with ASEAN Dialogue Partners.

Launching of Non-tariff measures (NTMs) database for ASEAN/East Asia

The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) handed-over the Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) Database to ASEAN on 10 September 2019 at the side-line of the 51st AEM Meeting and Related Meetings. ERIA, in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), collected and classified non-tariff measures (NTMs) in the ten ASEAN countries. The data collection covered all regulations from official documents including international conventions adopted by these countries. A total of 28,947 measures were classified, 6,699 regulations were coded and up to 11,347 product lines were covered. The database can be found [here](#).

ASEAN is one step closer towards a regional curriculum on entrepreneurship mentoring

As one of its Legacy Projects, ASEAN-BAC, together with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on MSMEs (ACCMSME) and with the support of the Government of Japan, just concluded a series of pilot runs of the ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN) project. Ten proposed modules were vetted and accepted with suggestions for additional topics or-

alignment to the local context.

Conference on "ASEAN MSMEs in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities"

On 5 September 2019, the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion of Thailand, in collaboration with the ASEAN BAC, the Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, hosted the [Conference on "ASEAN MSMEs in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities" in Bangkok](#). The Conference brought together policy makers, members of the private sector and representatives from key international organisations and think tanks to discuss the importance of financial inclusion, adoption of digital technologies and innovations as key drivers for enhancing MSMEs competitiveness in the era of digital economy.

The 37th ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting

[The 37th ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting \(AMEM\)](#) was held on 4 September 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. During the meeting, the Ministers discussed the issues of widening multilateral electricity trade in the ASEAN Power Grid, the potentials of cross-border interconnections to trade electricity from renewables in the region, and intensifying ASEAN energy reduction, among others.

Upcoming Events

3rd ASEAN Economic Community Dialogue with Private Sectors (3rd AEC Dialogue)

Jakarta,
3-4
October 2019

20th TELSOM and 19th TELMIN and Related Meetings with Dialogue Partners and ITU

Vientiane,
21-25
October 2019

Women CEOs Summit: Globalization 4.0 and Beyond: Shaping the Future of Women Enterprises

For info: <http://womenceosummit2019.awenasean.org>

Bangkok,
30-31
October 2019

18th ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Meeting

Bangkok,
31
October 2019

2nd ASEAN Inclusive Business Summit

Bangkok,
1
November 2019

35th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits

Bangkok,
2-4
November 2019

ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (ABIS) 2019 & ASEAN Business Award (ABA) Gala Night

Bangkok,
2-3
November 2019

48th ASEAN Senior Transport Officials Meeting (STOM), 25th ASEAN Transport Ministers (ATM) and related meetings

Ha Noi,
11-15
November 2019