

# Skills development in South East Asia. Employers' organisations take the lead

*DECP supports ACE to turn policy papers into concrete action*

## Introduction

*As the ASEAN region continues to develop as a major player in the world economy, it must ensure that its workforces from across its ten member countries have the necessary skills to face the future. A report on "Skills Development in Asia 2015" highlights the emerging skills mismatch which will not be self-correcting. Governments need to urgently put policies and investment in place to transform education and training to meet the future challenges in both hard and soft skills.*

*Employers across the ASEAN region have a very important role to play and it is in this context that the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE) has stepped up to the challenge and is committed to playing its role in addressing the many aspects of skills development.*

*It is true that governments, academia and trade unions each have an important role to play but employers organisations can do a lot themselves.*



## Skills mismatch

The world is changing rapidly. A report on skills development in Asia, published in 2015 <sup>1</sup> indicates that '..... the combination of key global shifts and trends as well as Asia's rapid rise up the technical ladder have broken the prior alignment between supply of skills and demand of skills ..... leading to mismatch'. And: '...the emerging skills mismatch will not be self-correcting'. The researchers conclude: '.....governments in Asia need to urgently prioritize policies and investments to transform education and training to better meet current and future needs for a broad array of hard and soft skills. However, doing so successfully will not be easy, and there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution.

## Workshop on skills development

That is why the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE) is paying a lot of attention to the issue of skills development. It is true that

governments, academe and trade unions are all part of policy changes and putting them in place. But employers' organisations can do a lot themselves, together with the sectors and companies they represent, in order to achieve promising results on the short term. In close cooperation with DECP (Dutch employers' Cooperation Programme), ACE organised an interactive two-day workshop on skills development last December.



This workshop took place in Bangkok, and 23 officers and staff members of the employers' organisations of 10 Southeast Asian countries participated. Skills mismatch problems were

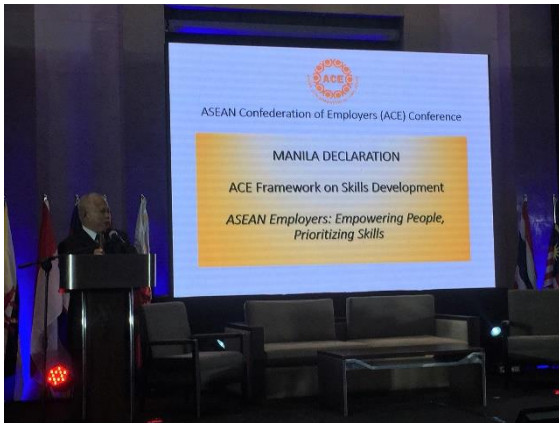
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<sup>1</sup> Challenges and opportunities for skills development in Asia. Asian Development Bank, Manila, 2015

identified and analysed by unfolding causes. The participants worked out the rough outlines of concrete action plans with which they helped each other by exchanging knowledge, experiences and ideas.

### Conference and agreement

As a follow up on this workshop ECOP, the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines, and chairman of ACE, organised a conference on the theme 'Empowering people, prioritizing skills'. This conference took place on Friday, April 20 in Manila, and more than 250 people attended, partly representing employers' organisations and governments of the ten ACE member countries.



The International Labour Organisation and DECP supported this conference. One of the

conclusions was that employers' organisations have to take responsibility with respect to skills development. They therefore signed an agreement which is known as the Manila declaration. Employers' organisations united in the ASEAN Confederation of Employers confirm that they will give priority to the issue of skills development and develop concrete actions in the field of advocacy and lobbying, promoting public-private partnerships and modernizing existing educational structures.

### Follow up

DECP will extend country specific support to its partner organisations within ACE and encourage the process of exchanging ideas and experiences in order to accelerate developments in the field of skills development. The idea is to put into concrete action what is written on paper.



April, 2018