



# Democracy Building in ASEAN: A Case for EU Subregional Engagement

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Layout by: Bulls Graphics

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## Abstract

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional intergovernmental organization founded in 1967, promotes peace and stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and social progress. It comprises 10 countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Burma (Myanmar) and Cambodia – which span a total area of 4.5 million square kilometers with a population of 560 million.

The 14th ASEAN Summit and its related summits was scheduled for 10–12 April 2009 in Pattaya, Thailand, but failed to take place due to violent protests against the host government. At the summit, foreign leaders were airlifted from the venue by helicopter as protestors stormed the building, and under such circumstances ASEAN's dialogue partners may be forgiven for refraining from an active discourse, at least until events are allowed to run their course. Yet, recent developments in the region are providing a window of opportunity for ASEAN's dialogue partners to help it promote democracy, raising the prospect for advancing human rights, while achieving peace, stability and sustainable prosperity. However, as democracy building in ASEAN is inherently at odds with its tenet of non-interference, this window of opportunity may be short-lived, thus necessitating a course for greater engagement rather than of suspension.

The European Union (EU) is one of the largest providers of international developmental assistance to ASEAN and has the most comprehensive partnership framework of all of ASEAN's development partners. The 30th anniversary of EU-ASEAN partnership was in 2007.

To further build upon its support, the EU should adopt a more encompassing approach on its developmental engagement in ASEAN. The EU's 2003 communiqué (European Commission, 2003) on how to enhance its partnership with ASEAN suggests the inclusion of a framework for bilateral agreements as a supplement to regional engagement. The 2003 communiqué noted the usefulness of flexibility in

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modernizing its agenda rather than ‘dogmatically asserting an exclusively regional or bilateral framework’. Yet the communiqué fails to recognize the existence of a third modality, that of the *sub-state*. Subregional cooperation, the hybrid of regional engagement and bilateralism, could add another useful framework to underpin the EU-ASEAN partnership.

## Summary of Recommendations

A successful EU subregional engagement policy would fine-tune the current partnership framework. The following five action platforms could aid the EU to formulate such a policy:

1. The EU must recognize that subregions represent a third modality for conducting its relations with ASEAN.
2. The EU should embark on a process to become a development partner to ASEAN’s subregions.
3. The strong partnership between the European Investment Bank and Asian Development Bank should be further strengthened. In tandem, the EU needs to adopt a more encompassing eligibility criterion for development assistance.
4. The EU must directly manage and implement key projects in subregions.
5. The EU should incorporate subregions into its new visibility strategy.

### 1. Aspirations for Democracy

ASEAN envisions itself to be the *ASEAN Community* by 2020, comprising economic, political-security and social-cultural community spheres. Promoting democracy and the respect for human rights is an objective of ASEAN’s Political and Security Community.

Engaging subregions provides a compelling means to achieve these goals. Subregions are a unique modality that provide added flexibility and at times even surpass the traditional engagement process offered by either the regional or bilateral routes.

The precise measures intended to achieve democracy building are outlined in the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action (ASCPA). The ASCPA indicates ASEAN member states will cooperate in political development, norms-setting, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace building, thereby ‘achieving peace, stability, *democracy* and prosperity in the region’ (ASEAN, 2003). This promise to build democracy is a significant development because it not only calls upon member states to forge impregnable bonds on a new unexplored front but also, for the first time, allows itself to receive assistance and support from likeminded partners.

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ASEAN's democratic states are still weak and in the process of consolidation. The EU should grasp this opportunity to immediately explore how to leverage ASEAN's intention for democratic progression and build upon its long-standing involvement in development assistance, initiatives and programmes, especially those that encompass democracy building and promote human rights in the region. This sense of urgency is best articulated by the developments in Sumatra, an island of Indonesia and part of the Indonesian-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle subregion. The 2005 Helsinki Agreement ended Aceh's 30-year separatist conflict, but progress is reliant on broad support as warned by former Finnish President and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Martti Ahtisaari (AFP, 2009). He cited a World Bank study showing countries that have emerged from civil war have a 50 per cent chance of relapsing into conflict after five years.

## 2. Socio-Political Realities of ASEAN and the Opportunity for Building Democracies

The admirable aspiration of democracy building by ASEAN member states should be viewed through coloured lenses, and tempered with a dose of ASEAN realism. Take for example the origins of promoting democracy as a goal. It evolved from a political process of bargaining and compromise driven by the obligation to accommodate demands by an ASEAN member (Indonesia) rather than as an aspiration from a collective regional agenda. Considerable hurdles remain before real progress on the democratic front can be achieved. For example, there is no agreement on how such an agenda would be pursued in reality and at present only normative rather than prescriptive measures are being proposed. But by far the greatest barrier would be to overcome the disparate nature of ASEAN politics, which includes military rule, Leninist states, a sultanate, and struggling democracies verging on authoritarianism.

As a result, there is an equally marked variance in the willingness and ability of individual member states to commit to democracy building. One of ASEAN's tenets is the principle of non-interference as the basis for peaceful intrastate relations. The Kuala Lumpur *Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Charter*, 12 December 2005, states 'the right of every state to lead its national existence free from the external interference, subversion or coercion and non-interference in the internal-affairs of one another',

This is at odds with the language of the ASPCA, where the pursuit of human rights, democratic ideals and conflict prevention and resolution demands direct intervention. The principle of non-interference also influences the processes that ASEAN operates on. As an intergovernmental association rather than a regional organization like the EU, its agreement and declarations are not legally binding. Thus, regional initiatives, programmes and projects are sometimes regional only by word, as actual implementation is at the behest of the respective individual member states, resulting in a varying rate of success for every regional undertaking. The 'at the border restriction' raises the likelihood of ASEAN's processes stagnating at the individual borders of member states, unless a supplementary, supporting mechanism underwrites the objective and goal. For instance, a scorecard system for economic initiatives was implemented in 2008 to keep

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track of completed initiatives by member states as part of the 'Blueprint', a plan to transform ASEAN into a single market by 2015. The scorecard lists each state's progress (or lack of) in meeting more than 2,000 measures.

Declarations of intent such as the formation of an ASEAN security community, and with it the requirement for ASEAN to become a democratic entity, directly challenge ASEAN to transcend its 'non-interference' principle. Both regional and global events underscore the impracticality of adhering strictly to this principle. This is especially so when actions under the guise of 'non-interference' morph themselves into insidious operational barriers affecting non-contentious issues such as economic opportunities and humanitarian aid. A clear example of the latter was when the Myanmar junta, recognizing its own limitations in handling a major disaster, still obstructed the international community, including its fellow member states, from providing lifesaving assistance to the victims of Cyclone Nargis. Nargis proved to be the deadliest in recent history. Making landfall on 2 May 2008, it caused catastrophic destruction and at least 22,500 fatalities with a further 41,000 people still missing,<sup>1</sup> and estimates on the final total of fatalities range up to 100,000. To save face, the junta allowed the ASEAN Secretariat to be a coordinator in distributing food and emergency supplies rather than allow relief agencies on Burmese soil.

Further, events such as the conflict between Thailand and Cambodia over the Preah Vihear Temple are testing the applicability of the ASPCA. The decades-long dispute flared up in 2008, and in July 2008 Cambodia tried to raise the issue for ASEAN to mediate. ASEAN, however, asked for continued bilateral negotiations. To date there is no resolution in sight, culminating in recent exchange of gunfire between the respective troops at the disputed site (Head, 2008).

### **3. Subregions: The New Modality**

ASEAN has been finding ways to circumvent the 'non-interference' principle and reduce the chasm between declared intentions and lack of implementation. In the area of capacity building and developmental aid, ASEAN is hoping the subregional framework modality will attract donors to be subregional development partners in pursuit of the ASPCA's altruistic goals.

ASEAN began to focus on its subregional frameworks in 2005 when it became apparent that progress made by the Greater Mekong subregion (GMS) states, such as Vietnam, were leapfrogging some of the older ASEAN member states. It has two active subregions, the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT). IMT-GT comprises the southern provinces of Thailand, the northern states of Malaysia and the island of Sumatra.

At the behest of ASEAN leaders, the Asian Development Bank was asked to replicate its GMS success on IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA. At the 2005 Summit, leaders acknowledged the importance of bridging the development gap between the original

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<sup>1</sup> Actual deaths may never be known as access was and continuous to be restricted. The Pacific Disaster Centre's updated report dated 7 May 2008 concluded as many as 50,000 people died and two to three million homeless, see e.g. <http://www.pdc.org/PDCNewsWebArticles/2008/Nargis/nargis.htm>

and newer member states, and specific recognition was made of the 'important contribution of subregional arrangements to ASEAN integration' (ASEAN, 2005). This is an important milestone in the progress of developmental assistance within ASEAN because it also recognizes that the 'rich' member states may also require assistance. That year, ASEAN welcomed the second BIMP-EAGA Summit, where the *BIMP-EAGA Roadmap to Development* was launched, and the inaugural IMT-GT Summit. Within two years, IMT-GT had also launched its own *Roadmap for Development 2007-2011: Building a Dynamic Future* (BIMP-EAGA, 2006).

Although democracy is not a stated goal for the subregional roadmaps, in ASEAN's book, it is an integral and interchangeable component of the four objectives of the ASPCA. Through Asian eyes, peace, stability and prosperity are prerequisites for democracy to flourish. The real significance of adopting the subregional roadmaps lay in the opportunity to overcome 'at the border restrictions' plaguing ASEAN regional initiatives. The fundamental premise in which the subregional frameworks are now anchored on is the 'Economic Corridor Concept' – 'trunk lines' from which development radiates to neighbouring areas through transport and economic links. As a concept, economic corridors are at once unique and alien to the ASEAN framework because they transcend national boundaries. By contrast, the 'common and equal benefits for all' principle among member states is a cornerstone requirement for all ASEAN regional initiatives. The strict adherence to this ASEAN requirement has often meant that dialogue partners had to take the bilateral route to administer aid or capacity-building assistance in instances where not all member states were eligible for the assistance. Thus as the ASEAN process stagnates at the border, development partners need to own their initiatives by being part of the decision-making and implementation processes.

The ability for development partners to be directly involved with multistate participation is the best chance to address key issues within the region. Since subregions are a collaboration of the original, established and economically prosperous ASEAN member states, success in either platform has a direct bearing on the ultimate success of the other. Hence, direct engagement at the subregional level will simultaneously reinforce development partners' efforts at the regional level while at the same time providing unique solutions not available elsewhere.

With common membership, an engagement policy would be relatively easy to implement. Furthermore, subregional engagement is complimentary to ASEAN policies and indeed actively encouraged since the 11th Summit declaration in December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur. There, the older member states (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore) pressed for the recognition of the fact 'there continues to exist significant pockets of under-development' (Lindberg, 2007) within these original member states that equally require assistance and deserve attention. In this regard, the original member states are in a bind. With limited resources, any regional-based aid is 'morally reserved' (Lindberg, 2007) for the newer member states and therefore any aid for the older, more prosperous states has to come, by default, by external parties. The newer member states are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, commonly referred to by the acronym CLMV.

That subregions are needy of attention is beyond question. IMT-GT for example, comprising the hinterlands of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, is a hotbed of unrest, a flash point for experimentation in fledgling democracies and is much poorer than

the capital cities. Thailand is hoping IMT-GT initiatives will rectify some of the long-standing economic imbalances in its troubled south. Indonesia's Sumatra, second fiddle to Java-centric policies, is earmarked under IMT-GT for attention to redress imbalances in infrastructure and economic opportunity. But it is the southern states of Malaysia that are raising eyebrows, with the local populace willing to experiment in alternative government for the first time. Even so, there is a sense of pragmatic restlessness among ASEAN's poor, that what little socio-political progress is made depends upon real economic progress at the community level.

#### 4. EU's Developmental Assistance in ASEAN and the Risk of Non-Engagement in Subregional Frameworks

The EU is one of the largest providers of international developmental assistance to ASEAN and has the most comprehensive partnership framework of all of ASEAN's development partners. The 30th anniversary of EU-ASEAN partnership was in 2007. Its partnership comprises a trade action plan, the *Trans-Regional EU-ASEAN Trade Initiative* (European Commission, 2007), and a cooperation plan, the *Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument* (European Commission, 2009). The EU engages ASEAN in a multitude of platforms, including the Asia-Europe Meeting and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Yet for all its comprehensiveness, a significant gap is clearly evident. Nowhere is there any analysis or even mention of ASEAN's subregional frameworks. This oversight could have been forgiven in the past, as subregions, in existence for more than 15 years, have been lacklustre in accomplishments. However, with BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT now experiencing resurgence, the time is ripe for ASEAN's major development partners to support subregional revitalization efforts, and by doing so underpin initiatives at the EU-ASEAN regional level.

Further, given ASEAN's willingness to now explore democracy building, it will also be an opportune time to redress the overemphasis in trade by supporting more democracy-related issues in the EU-ASEAN partnership. The subregional route will not only allow the EU to avail itself with the opportunity to reinforce ongoing ASEAN initiatives, but also open avenues to pursuing enduring democracy-building principles by reaching local communities and local governments beyond ASEAN capital cities.

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The EU's partnership framework with ASEAN is guided by two communiqués. The 2001 European Commission Communication (European Commission, 2001) on 'Europe and Asia, a Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships', since endorsed by the EU Council and

Parliament, unfortunately fails to recognize the sibling rivalry between member states. The Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) programme bridges the developmental gap between the six original ASEAN members and CLMV, with assistance from the former to the latter. IAI is subject to suspicion and jealousy by some donor member states and even between recipient states themselves, and these undercurrents often dictate the amount and direction where the limited resources are placed.

The more recent communication, 'A New Partnership with South Asia' (European Commission, 2003), goes a long way to rectify omissions in the earlier communiqué



and represents a valiant attempt at a coherent and plausible partnership framework. Of the six strategic priorities<sup>2</sup> there lies a danger that, given the propensity for ASEAN to pursue only the less contentious priorities of expanding economic interests, democratic programmes would be placed on the back burner. Hence, the EU has to simultaneously place a greater effort on those priorities that ASEAN would not voluntarily pursue, and to find alternative modalities to engage and to complement the traditional regional institutional framework. Comprehending the difficulties of ‘supporting regional stability and fighting terrorism’ can only be really appreciated if the EU rolls up its sleeves and get directly involved with local authorities just like Australia does in BIMP-EAGA (ASEAN, 2009). A ‘deeper Free Trade Agreement (FTA)’ calls for a behind-the-border access only provided by subregional frameworks. The subregions are the best platform to launch the EU’s ‘new visibility strategy’ and reach local communities.

Some of the recommendations also point out the need for subregional engagement. For example, in its call for continued developmental support to less prosperous countries, the EU recommends giving special attention to IAI by joining with ASEAN-6<sup>3</sup> to assist CLMV, which is more or less an ‘unofficial’ subregional framework by itself. Such ‘trilateral co-operation’ should also extend to other developmental partners and developmental institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and encompass BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT, ASEAN’s official subregions. Likewise, the recommendation for establishing ‘twinning’ arrangements, whereby the EU’s public institutions enter into partnerships with their Asian counterparts, fits naturally under the subregional framework.

However, a constant irritant to ASEAN is the ever-decreasing eligibility of ASEAN member states that qualify for the European Community’s developmental assistance. Given that the overriding mantra of the ‘New Partnership with South Asia’ (COM (2003) 399/4) is the *need for flexibility*, the EU has to acknowledge that ‘there are pockets of under-development’ (Lindberg, 2007) within member states. National boundaries are proving to be an inadequate definition for the purposes of qualifying for developmental assistance. For example, each member state of the IMT-GT has compelling and urgent reasons to see economic progress no longer restricted to their capitals but radiate quickly to the provincial areas most in need of change. In the long term, improving social and economic conditions for the IMT-GT area is crucial to dry up the potential for insurgency, for communities to feel confident to exercise their democratic options, and for border security in the strategic Malacca Straits. Within the national boundaries of ASEAN member states, conditions are not homogenous and intervention, especially developmental assistance, should be allocated at the sub-state level. Concerns of misappropriation could be alleviated if EU officials were directly involved with distributing aid to deserving recipients.

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<sup>2</sup> The six strategic priorities are (1) Supporting regional stability and the fight against terrorism, (2) Promoting human rights, democratic principles and good governance, (3) Mainstreaming justice and home affairs issues, (4) Injecting a new dynamism into regional trade and investment relations, (5) Continuing to support the development of less prosperous countries and (6) Intensifying dialogue and co-operation in specific sectors.

<sup>3</sup> ASEAN-6 refers to the ASEAN Member Countries of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Southern Thailand has seen a re-emergence of long-dormant Malay-Muslim anger against the central government. The internal security situation of the southernmost provinces has rapidly worsened and worries are arising that the country will become another hotspot of Islamist terrorism in the region. Crime rates in the south and in the Muslim-dominated provinces are significantly above the national average, whereas civil society participation is below. Cooperation between Thailand and neighbouring governments, especially with Malaysia, on issues of border security, border provinces development and religion is seen as critical. On this point, the IMT-GT roadmap is complementing intra-ASEAN security cooperation efforts by economic collaboration at federal, state and provincial levels and equally important, a platform for collaboration for the private sector. The IMT-GT roadmap also emphasizes infrastructure development in view of structural problems of economic development in the south, as any short-term actions may have some symbolic effect on the Thai population but will not improve economic conditions.

Sumatra faces a host of issues. The historical development of Indonesia was 'Java-centric'; most government revenues were spent on Java and much of the infrastructure development outside of Java was directly financed by estates and mining companies. Sumatra, the least developed of the member states, was earmarked for special attention under the IMT-GT roadmap to address economic imbalances made all the more urgent by a combination of deforestation, forest fires and developmental issues ensuing from the December 2004 tsunami. With successful elections now the norm in Indonesia, economic imbalances are the mainstay of Indonesia's outer islands' socio-economic ills. As with Thailand, the IMT-GT subregional framework complements weaknesses and plugs gaps in intra-ASEAN cooperation through economic collaboration engaging all levels of federal and local government and the private sector. As Indonesia and Malaysia have re-engaged on issues including counter-terrorism, Indonesian immigrant workers, smuggling, human trafficking and piracy along the porous Straits of Malacca, IMT-GT is providing a platform for supplementary engagement.<sup>4</sup> Heightened intelligence cooperation to anticipate rising cross-border crime due to the impact of the global economic crisis will be crucial.

The northern states of Malaysia are the land and sea lynchpins between its fellow IMT-GT member states. As the conduit between the two, it bridges and completes the classic growth triangle bringing economic links, geographical proximities, and close historical, cultural and linguistic ties. As with ASEAN, the federal governments of member states play a key role in implementing initiatives. However, the subregional framework is supplemented by parallel tracks enabling the involvement of many groups with responsibilities cutting across public and private institutions. On the whole, the IMT-GT private sector is expected to be the driver of the subregional cooperation activities, with the public sector providing the enabling policy and regulatory environment and necessary infrastructure support. Thus the watershed 12th Malaysian general election in 2008, where the incumbent ruling coalition lost its two-thirds majority and five of the 13 state legislatures, provides a test-case scenario to see if the subregional parallel tracks of local state government and the private sector can fill the vacuum left by a weakened

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<sup>4</sup> The IMT-GT roadmap has five strategic thrusts to (i) facilitate and promote intra- and inter-IMT-GT trade and investments, (ii) promote the growth of agriculture and agro-industry and tourism, (iii) strengthen infrastructure links and support, (iv) address cross-sectoral concerns and (v) strengthen institutional arrangements and mechanisms.

federal government and to continue implementing initiatives. This has implications for the wider ASEAN context as well, as more ASEAN states find themselves in similar positions and increasingly, uninterrupted economic progress is becoming a key determinant in the path of becoming full-fledged democracies.

## 5. Leveraging on Subregional Frameworks – How Should the EU Engage in Subregions?

Obviously there is a clear need to incorporate subregional engagement into the EU's arsenal when building a partnership with ASEAN, especially if the EU intends to directly lend support to ASEAN's efforts in democracy building. The respective subregional roadmaps (the documents guiding the development of ASEAN's subregions of BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT) are consistent with that of the strategic priorities of the 2003 Communication. Coupled with ASEAN's desire to begin its foray into democracy building, the EU has an opportunity to redress its economic slant in its partnership with ASEAN. As only subregional engagement provides for behind-the-border access, the subregional way appears to be a better conduit than the traditional regional route.

The time to act is now. Direct interventions to support critical developments, such as the post-conflict peace-building efforts for Aceh, require immediate support. Under the auspices of the IMT-GT framework comes with it the tacit multilateral blessings of subregional groups and by that account, ASEAN as well. Indeed, the roadmaps, the first significant attempt to outline a development plan for the subregions, coincide with the wider ASEAN effort to also define its path: economic goals under its ASEAN economic blueprint and its security and political aspirations under the ASCPA. The simultaneous emergence of clear and measurable mandates at both the regional and subregional level represents an ideal time for stakeholders and partners to also synchronize their intentions and to reinforce their mutual goals.

How should the EU engage with subregions? China and the Northern Territory of Australia use the subregional modality and count themselves as development partners to BIMP-EAGA. Australia is the first of ASEAN's main development partners to fully leverage the potential of subregional engagement via its East ASEAN Initiative (EAI), which may provide insights for such an engagement. EAI is a development programme between the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the ASEAN Secretariat to promote growth and security in the East ASEAN subregion of Southern Philippines and Eastern Indonesia. It consists of a suite of five projects: business development services; customs information exchange; maritime logistics; maritime security; and single window for investment facilitation and trade (ASEAN 2003).

## 6. Conclusions

The Australian experience shows that subregional engagement can adopt a flexible approach and be molded to fit a particular agenda, for example, to pursue democracy. Although ASEAN has embarked on the process of democracy building, this goal is

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counterintuitive to ASEAN's long-standing principle of 'non-interference'. Therefore, ASEAN will require the help of determined dialogue partners, such as the EU, to enable the vision espoused by the ASPCA to be achieved.

A successful EU subregional engagement policy would fine-tune the current partnership framework. The following five action platforms could aid the EU to formulate such a policy:

1. The EU must recognize that subregions represent a third modality for conducting its relations with ASEAN. Between the regional (ASEAN) and bilateral route is a multilayered universe incorporating a web of relationships ranging from the older ASEAN member states to CLMV in addition to the constituents that make up the subregions. Any intersection within this web can either reinforce or diminish EU objectives.
2. The EU should embark on a process to become a development partner to ASEAN's subregions. Australia (more specifically, the Northern Territory of Australia) and China are official developmental partners to BIMP-EAGA, which provides them with unprecedented access that is neither restricted by the regional modality nor insufficiently encompassing as with the bilateral route. Announcing the intention to become a developmental partner and to support the subregional roadmaps will immediately send a strong signal of the EU's commitment to ASEAN and allow for similar behind-the-border access.
3. Subregions are pockets of underdevelopment. The strong partnership between the European Investment Bank and Asian Development Bank should be intensified in order to replicate the cooperation in the latter's Greater Mekong subregion programme for BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT. In tandem, the EU needs to adopt a more encompassing eligibility criterion for development assistance. For example, redefining aid recipients to the sub-state level will provide flexibility, recognize that development is seldom uniform, and that intervention may be the only recourse to assist communities fenced in by development impediments beyond their control.
4. The EU must directly manage and implement key projects in subregions. To fully leverage on the access provided to local government and communities provided for by the subregional engagement, the EU should follow Australia's example in its East ASEAN Initiative. EAI allows Australia to conduct pilot projects in areas that it deems strategic, including maritime security and customs, providing valuable firsthand on-the-ground experience. Direct management provides greater oversight and instils accountability.
5. The EU should incorporate subregions into its new visibility strategy. The visibility strategy will be severely handicapped if it remains solely reliant on the regional process. Further, awareness of ASEAN itself remains low within the region. For an outreach programme to cast a wide and deep net with the flexibility of incorporating target niches, the EU needs to interact with local state/provincial governments and local communities.

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