

Proposal for A Panel
at the 12th EuroSEAS Conference, from 28 June to 1 July 2022

1. Title: Industrial Upgrading and Education Reform in Southeast Asia

2. Convener:

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3. Brief Description

Rapid industrialization and inflows of FDI have contributed to higher incomes and living standards in many Southeast Asian economies (such as Vietnam), but technological change and industrial upgrading are now presenting new challenges. Many of the region's economies have managed to attract foreign investors in labor-intensive manufacturing but increasing incomes and salary levels are undermining the competitive advantages related to cheap labor. To sustain economic growth, labor productivity growth must increase. This puts pressure on the education sector in the region, and in particular the vocational education system: there is already a shortage of vocational skills.

Vietnam is a case in point. During the past 35 years, the country has become one of the main success stories of economic development. Thanks to market-oriented economic reforms and inflows of FD), Viet Nam reached middle-income status in 2009, and medium-term growth projections remain optimistic, despite the costs of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to sustain its rapid development beyond the coming years, Viet Nam will need to upgrade its position in global value chains from just being a source of cheap labor to an active participant in higher value-added activities. Although Viet Nam has an abundant labor force, there is already an acute shortage of skilled and high-skilled workers. Equipping the workforce with the right skills – with focus on professional and vocational training – is a necessity for sustaining economic growth and modernizing the economy. Although some reforms in the educational system have been announced, implementation has been weak and the Vietnamese education system still lags behind international and regional standards. The challenges facing the Vietnamese education sector are not only addressed in the government's own analyses and reform plans, but also highlighted by many of Viet Nam's international development partners. The ADB, the WB, the OECD, and German GIZ, among others, have recently carried out assessments that underline the weaknesses and identify necessary reforms of the country's educational system in general and the vocational education in particular.

The objective of this Panel is to discuss the multifaceted issues of education reform in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. The papers presented by CBS and Nha Trang University are outputs from a current research project focusing on vocational education reform in Vietnam. An open call will be made for additional papers.

4. Organization of Panel for Single Session

Panel consists of a convener, 4 presenters, and a discussant.

Convener: Prof. Ari Kokko

Presenter 1: CBS / NTU?

Presenter 2: CBS / NTU?

Presenter 3: Will be selected by an open Call for Papers

Presenter 4: Will be selected by an open Call for Papers

Discussant: CBS / NTU?