

Foreword

The *Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India – Update* is released following the main report of the *Outlook*, to ensure that its data, projections and policy discussions remain up-to-date and relevant. The *Outlook* is a biannual publication on Asia's regional economic growth, development and regional integration processes. It focuses on the economic conditions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereafter "Lao PDR"), Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) and two large economies in the region, China and India.

Beginning with the first release of the *Outlook Update* in 2018, following the *Special Supplements* of the 2016 and 2017 editions, the *Outlook* has become a biannual publication. The first issue of the report will be released in the fall and its update released the following spring. This publication evolved from the *Southeast Asian Economic Outlook*.

The *Outlook* was initially proposed at an informal reflection group on Southeast Asia in 2008 as a follow-up of the Council Meeting at Ministerial level (MCM) in 2007 and was accepted by ministers/senior officials from ASEAN countries at the occasion of the 2nd OECD Southeast Asia Regional Forum in Bangkok in 2009. The *Outlook* project was officially launched in 2010 and each edition is regularly presented at the occasion of the ASEAN/East Asia Summit. It was included in the OECD's Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) at the Steering Group Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia in March 2015, with its role of providing a horizontal view of activities, identifying emerging trends in the region and providing a backbone for the different streams of the Programme confirmed at the 2015 MCM. The *Outlook* serves as a strategic foresight and policy dialogue tool for the SEARP. The *Outlook* consultation group (OCG) was established in 2014 with OECD Delegations and Asian embassies in Paris.

This edition of the *Update* comprises three main parts, each highlighting a particular dimension of recent economic developments in the region. The first chapter presents the regional economic monitor, depicting the economic outlook and macroeconomic challenges in the region. The second chapter focuses on policy priorities in response to COVID-19 in Emerging Asia. The pandemic demonstrated the importance of digitalisation. Looking forward, policy makers need to maximise the use of digital tools while at the same time ensuring cyber security. Emergency support measures in the tourism sector need to be supplemented with a more holistic longer-term strategy. Policies in the health sector are needed not only to curb the spread of the virus, but also to prepare healthcare systems for potential future outbreaks. Regional initiatives to deal with the pandemic and its effects are currently underway and need to be strengthened going forward. The topic of boosting education quality in the region is discussed in the third chapter, providing some policy recommendations drawing from PISA 2018, including: improved access to and better quality education, making learning time more productive, addressing gender differences as well as socio-economic divides among schools, creating a positive learning environment, and investing greater resources in the school system.

The OECD Development Centre is committed to working alongside governments of developing and emerging economies and regional actors to identify key areas of intervention in order to address these challenges. The Centre enjoys the full membership of three Southeast Asian countries, namely Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, as well as India and China. This project has also benefitted from the generous support of other Emerging Asian countries.

The OECD is committed to supporting Asian countries in their efforts to promote economic and social well-being through rigorous analysis, peer learning and the sharing of best practices.



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