

Academic collaboration in politically sensitive contexts – the case of Myanmar:

„EU Mobility Programme for Myanmar“ (EMPM)

EAIE conference Toulouse, 19 September 024



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Background Information on Myanmar

Two major crises:

- Covid pandemic lead to a two-year closure of the universities (2020 – 2022).
- February 2021: Military coup, end of a ten-year period of democratisation.
 - Aung San Suu Kyi and many members of the government in prison
 - Military (“Tatmadaw”) enforced its power by violence, arrests and murders
 - 3 Mio people have been displaced
 - Crises in all aspects of society, e.g. economy and education
 - International isolation



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Background Information on Myanmar

Resistance:

- Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM): Massive non-violent resistance among the population (especially civil servants)
- Formation of a National Unity Government (NUG) in exile
- Resistance in many ethnic states
- In response to increasing violence of the Tatmadaw → start of armed resistance: People's Defence Forces (PDFs) together with Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs)
- Civil war: Military government ("State Administration Council" / SAC) is increasingly losing control, particularly in the border regions
 - Military conscription law: men and women between can be drafted for two-year military service → new wave of refugees to neighbouring countries



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Effects on Higher Education

The crisis of (higher) education:

- CDM: Only about 10% of students (25.000) returned to universities after the reopening in May 2022; also, many teachers did not return
 - Many teachers did not return or were not allowed → decline of education quality
 - Until today refusal of students and teachers to return
 - International cooperation very difficult or impossible
- ➔ A whole generation of students without higher education qualifications



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How can we help?

EU Mobility Programme for Myanmar (EMPM):

- **Specific Objective:** Enhance options for online learning and degree mobility for students and young professionals, who are affected by recent interruptions of university education and employment in Myanmar
- **Funding:** EUR 4.7 million - EU grant funded project
- **Duration:** 48 months from January 2023 to December 2026
- **Consortium partners:**



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Overview EMPM

Key outputs

- Workable procedures for promotion, selection, nomination and mobilisation of beneficiaries in place.
- Increased access to virtual mobility and online studies at EU and ASEAN institutions for students, youth leaders and young professionals .
- Increased availability of mobility learning opportunities in ASEAN countries and in the EU for students, youth leaders and young professionals.





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Main Activities

DAAD

- ASEAN Physical Mobility
- Mobility Workshops
- Policy Dialogue


CAMPUS FRANCE

- Artistic Residence
- Short-Term Mobility to the EU
- Online Language Course


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- ASEAN Virtual Top-Up
- Virtual Microcredentials
- Virtual Internships





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Challenges

- Do not put anyone in danger (do no harm approach)!
- Political sensitivity, also among the different groups (NUG, PDFs, EAOs, CDM) which are not supporters of the military regime
- Lack of information (data scarcity)
- Working almost exclusively from outside of Myanmar
- Challenging communication, e.g. call for applications, etc.
- Increasing difficulty or delays in obtaining travel documents



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Nuffic: Virtual Study Opportunities





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Virtual Study Opportunities

Support of students:

Scholarships for Myanmar students whose studies were interrupted after 2019

Virtual Top-up Scholarship; opportunity to obtain a diploma in ASEAN

- Bachelor or master degree
- Several years
- Two batches (time restriction)
- 42 students
- 7 partner universities





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Virtual Study Opportunities

Support of students:

Scholarships for Myanmar students whose studies were interrupted after 2019

Virtual Global Opportunities; advance learning & skills

- Microcredits & internships
- Max 15 weeks per semester
- Two batches started, four batches to come
- 58 awardees
- 14 university and business partners





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Virtual Study Opportunities

Building a network of host universities and business:

- Desk research & acquiring support from Ministries of Education
- 55 European universities could not participate
- Virtual Top-up Scholarship
 - Network of 7 supportive universities from Indonesia, Cambodia and the Philippines
- Virtual Global Opportunities
 - Network of 14 university and business partners from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.





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Virtual Study Opportunities

Challenges:

- Working in a volatile environment
 - Conflict & climate change require flexibility
 - Internet access & functionality is a requirement for online learning
 - Access to proper documentation (transcripts etc)
- Prior learning only partially recognized
- Preference for physical mobility since conscription law
- Disbursement of funds; working with WU
- High tuition fees for online learning
- Prior learning only partially recognized
- Decreasing amount of online learning opportunities, especially in Europe, at universities willing to support Myanmar students





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DAAD: Physical Mobility to ASEAN





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Physical Mobility to ASEAN

Support of students:

- Scholarships for top-up degrees for Myanmar students whose studies have been interrupted
- Host universities in ASEAN
- Three batches with 83 students
- Important selection criteria: Chance of a degree until the end of 2026
- Students from inside and outside of Myanmar





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Physical Mobility to ASEAN

Challenges:

- How to reach out to the students? → Using informal channels and existing networks (e.g. alumni networks); mouth to mouth dissemination; NUG-MOE
- Documents of prior learning
- Passport for students
- Can students risk to leave the country?
- Students outside of Myanmar (most of them in Thailand): Refugees, often without passport and documents, very little money
 - How to get them into the programme?
- No scholarships for military personnel
 - background screening of selected scholarship holders





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Physical Mobility to ASEAN

Network of host universities:

- Network of 17 supportive universities from Indonesia (4), Thailand (4), Vietnam (3), Malaysia (2), Cambodia (1), Philippines (1), Brunei (1)
 - High degree of flexibility
 - English taught study programmes
 - Recognition of prior learning
 - No or lower tuition fees
- Networking workshop in Bangkok





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Physical Mobility to ASEAN





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Thank you and hand over to
Campus France: Physical Mobility to EU



Physical mobility to the EU, supported by a network of university partners



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Physical mobility to the EU

- To give students / young people the opportunity to gain some experience in Europe, where possible. Not a large mobility programme in terms of numbers, but important for the individual beneficiaries.
- There are two types of physical mobility to Europe available through the project:
 - Artistic residencies
 - Short-term mobility for students



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Physical mobility to the EU: Artistic Residencies

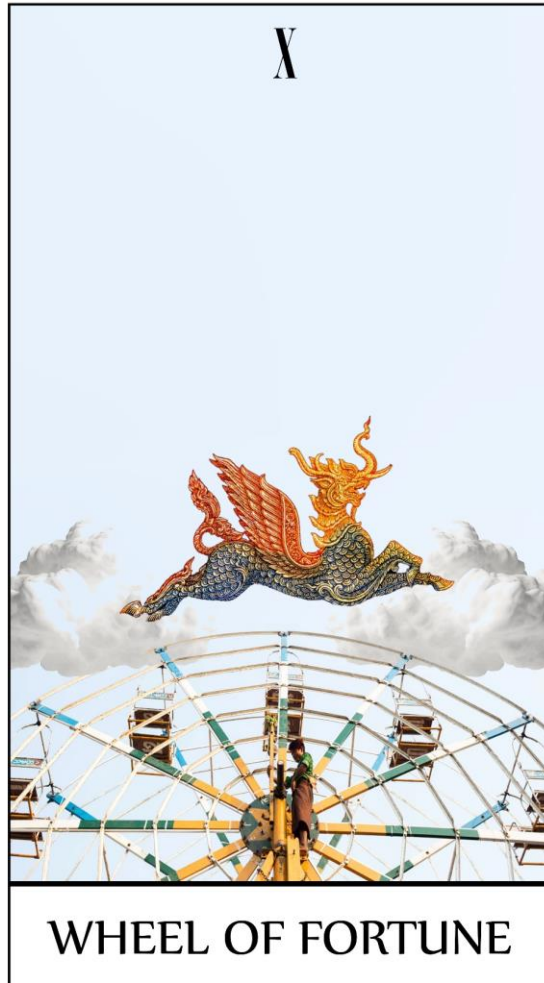
- **Overview:** 6 months (monthly scholarship, return ticket, insurance, online English classes)
- **Selection process:** very limited public promotion of the programme / application through a secure channel / screening of applicants
- **Identification of host art schools in France**
- **Assistance with visa procedures and logistics**





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Physical mobility to the EU Artistic Residencies



« I am more than grateful to be a part of this EMPM program, being able to learn new cultures and art approach, if there are any similar programs again in the future, I will be suggesting everyone to apply for this wonderful opportunity.» Hanreality





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"Hope" is an ink illustration that portrays the daily life of the Burmese people, capturing their resilience and strength during challenging times. Through this piece, I aimed to convey a sense of optimism and perseverance, reflecting the spirit of my homeland.

Physical mobility to the EU Artistic Residencies

« Before coming to France, I was unsure of my ability to succeed in this residency. I had been working in isolation in Myanmar, and the idea of sharing my work in a new environment was intimidating. However, observing the students' fearless approach to creation in France inspired me to be more open and experimental in my own work. I realized that I had been limiting myself by worrying too much about how others would perceive my art. This experience has taught me the importance of creating freely and embracing the uncertainty that comes with artistic expression. »

Khin May Moe





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Physical mobility to the EU Artistic Residencies

- **Lessons learnt:**

- various cooperation partners needed, in country and for administrative support (French Institute in Myanmar, consulates), close relationship with host art schools experienced in hosting these types of beneficiaries (support when arriving in France and during the residency).

- flexibility/adaptability required – almost a tailored programme for each beneficiary

- **Challenges:**

- the local context: communication about the project and selection, screening of artists, visa process and arrival in Europe, political sensitivity



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Physical mobility to the EU: Short-term mobility

- **Overview:** 6 months (monthly scholarship, return ticket, insurance, online English classes)
- **Objective:** give the opportunity to EMPM students to experience studying at a European HEI for a semester
- **Establishment of a network of European HEIs** (12 HEIs, of 6 countries)



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Physical mobility to the EU: Short-term mobility

- **Selection process:** online application, open only to first batch of EMPM scholarship holders studying in an ASEAN country
- **Important:** cooperation between ASEAN (host) university and the European host university to ensure the student will be able to finalise his/her degree on time and that credits earned in Europe are transferred to the ASEAN university
- 8 students in Europe in the current semester, 1 or 2 students next semester



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Physical mobility to the EU: Short-term mobility

- **Lessons learnt:**

- strong cooperation with partners needed, thanks to a large network in Europe, and strong cooperation with ASEAN HEIs
- flexibility/adaptability required

- **Challenges:**

- matching of students with European universities, the academic level may be very different among the students; the ASEAN host university may not accept the credit transfer; political context; administrative challenges (visa to other European countries than France => strong communication with European HEIs before to explain possible obstacles)



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- Do no harm & security
- Work with dedicated partners
- Develop processes in context
- Cautious external communication
- As much flexibility as possible

Conclusions



Thank you!



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