

Community and Convergence: Intellectual Property Rights in Light of the ASEAN Regional Integration

Jennifer E. Laygo

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As its 50-year evolution has shown, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) formula for the process of regional integration is somewhat unique. Serving as the blueprint for the work of ASEAN for the next 10 years, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 lays out the important role that intellectual property (IP) plays and will play in the achievement of both national and regional socio-economic development goals, particularly in enabling the ASEAN Member States (AMS) to move higher up in the technology ladder. It encourages transfer of technology, which thereby stimulates innovation and creativity.

However, one may not see a completely established and operating ASEAN patent, trademark, or copyright system comparable to the community systems of the European Union in the near future. Despite this, the current progress of cooperation initiatives indicate that the AMS may look forward to enhanced IP administration systems and stronger pursuit of developmental programs in the region, particularly as regards innovation.

In light of the renewed focus on IP rights in the global arena, the Author notes that substantive work has been undertaken by the AMS not only in harmonizing their IP regimes, but also in pushing for the innovation agenda as a means to secure ASEAN's global economic competitiveness. The Article then seeks to outline the progress of the regional integration initiatives relating to IP in ASEAN, as well as examine the challenges and issues that must be addressed by the AMS in order to achieve the goals under the AEC 2025.