Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the second edition of the EURAXESS Links ASEAN quarterly newsletter.

Last month, EURAXESS Links ASEAN welcomed over 300 researchers at our annual flagship event on researcher mobility opportunities in Europe. Representatives of leading European research and funding agencies had travelled to Hanoi and Bangkok to meet with the research community in ASEAN. We hope the event will pave the way for many more research mobility experiences! You can now download the presentation slides on our website.

One of the many opportunities open to ASEAN-based researchers for a research stint in Europe are the prestigious grants offered by the European Research Council, or ERC. In our Briefings section we explain the ERC and its grants to you.

Mobility for education and training stands are the core of the Erasmus+ programme. By 2020, the programme aims to provide support to 2 million higher education students, 650,000 vocational training students and apprentices, and fund more than 500,000 youth exchanges or volunteering abroad. Our In Focus section zooms in on this programme in an interview with Brian Holmes, Director of the European Commission Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA).

EURAXESS Links ASEAN is working hard on the preparations of the ‘European Research Day’ – our traveling science communication workshop series. Find out more on what we have in store in our section Hot topics.

We hope you enjoy reading our newsletter, and welcome your feedback.

Your EURAXESS Links ASEAN team
1 Briefings: The European Research Council (ERC)

It is all about excellence!

The ERC funds ground-breaking frontier research projects across all fields of science to facilitate and encourage world-class research in Europe. Support is given to individual outstanding Principal Investigators (and their teams, where applicable) on the basis of scientific excellence.

ERC grants are open to excellent researchers of any age, any nationality and at any place of work. The research must be carried out in a public or private research organisation in one of the EU Member States or Associated Countries. However, ERC grantees can keep their affiliation with their respective home institute outside Europe. Team members can be based outside Europe. ERC grantees also have the option of moving within Europe with the grant.

Recognition and independence

The ERC offers selective and generous grants, independence, recognition and visibility. The ERC’s ‘bottom-up’ approach allows successful candidates to work on a topic of their own choice, with a team of their own choice. Grantees gain true financial autonomy for 5 years. The ERC is a global quality label recognised by the international research community. ERC Grantees not only attract top team members, both from Europe and the world, but also succeed in attracting additional funding.

Since its creation in 2007, the ERC has awarded research grants worth nearly 11 billion euros to more than 6,000 scientists and scholars from all over the world, both early-career and senior, carrying out their ambitious research projects in all scientific disciplines. Of these, five are ASEAN national working in prestigious institutions across Europe. An estimated 300 ASEAN researchers work as team members on ERC-funded research projects. The ERC encourages more top ASEAN researchers to join the ranks of ERC grant holders.

Which Grants are available?

There are 3 main types of ERC grants:

- **Starting Grant** (StG) for researchers 2-7 years after award of PhD.
- **Consolidator Grant** (CoG) for researchers 7-12 years after award of PhD.
- Advanced Grant (AdG) for established research leaders.

Additionally, ERC grant holders can apply for top-up funding (Proof of Concept Grant; PoC) to explore the innovation potential of their research results.

### Indicative Call Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls</th>
<th>Expected call date</th>
<th>Deadline(s)</th>
<th>Budget € million (estimated grants)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Grant ERC-2016-AdG</td>
<td>24 May 2016</td>
<td>1 Sep 2016</td>
<td>540 (235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Grant ERC-2017-StG</td>
<td>19 Jul 2016</td>
<td>18 Oct 2016</td>
<td>605 (415)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidator Grant ERC-2017-CoG</td>
<td>20 Oct 2016</td>
<td>9 Feb 2016</td>
<td>575 (320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Grant ERC-2017-AdG</td>
<td>16 May 2017</td>
<td>31 Aug 2017</td>
<td>570 (245)</td>
</tr>
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**Where do I find more information?**

Official webpage of the [European Research Council](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess).

[ERC Funding Opportunities Explained](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess) – Presentation by Dr Martin Penny, ERC Executive Agency

Information for Applicants

[ERC Work Programme 2016](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess)

Interview with Dr Martin Penny, ERC Executive Agency on Youtube

View the ERC’s [step-by-step video](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess) – An introduction to the application process, including tips & tricks for the interview

For personalised assistance please contact your nearest [EURAXESS Links](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess) representative.
Interview with ERC President Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon

Prof Bourguignon, what does the ERC have to offer researchers outside Europe? Does the international researcher need to be based in Europe to be an ERC grantee?

First and foremost, the ERC grants are appealing because researchers are totally free to propose topics they find the most challenging and to organise their support the way they find the most appropriate. The funding is substantial, both in terms of grant amount – up to 2.5 million euros – and in terms of length – up to five years. They are open to researchers working in all research disciplines. What's more, the grants are very flexible and give researchers tremendous autonomy to pursue their scientific ideas. By now the "prestige" of the ERC label of excellence makes the grants coveted by scientists. ERC grantees I meet often underline that the application process is very simple and user-friendly and that red tape is kept to a minimum. We want scientists to focus on what they are best at – doing science!

Researchers of any nationality, regardless of their current place of work, can apply for ERC funding, provided that they have a contractual relation with an institution based in Europe and are ready to spend at least 50% of their working time there. This means that – after being awarded an ERC grant – they can keep the affiliation with their research organisation in their country of origin, if they so wish, for the rest of the time. Several ERC grantees who moved to Europe have testified that leaving their country does not mean leaving their networks behind or burning bridges. There are also other incentives for international researchers to apply for ERC funding, such as additional funds to cover start-up costs for those moving to Europe, amounting to up to 1 million euros extra. What is also worth noting is that team members taking part in an ERC-funded project can be based in non-EU countries as long as it is justifiable and well explained in the candidate's application.

How important is it to the ERC to engage researchers working outside Europe in its funding schemes?

It is part of the ERC’s mission to attract the best scientists from outside Europe. Top research is an intrinsically international endeavour. We know that bright minds exchange ideas across borders and continents, so we should let them collaborate freely to progress and to make ground-breaking discoveries. The ERC encourages such "brain circulation" and ultimately also aims to make Europe a prime location for top talent globally.
Does the ERC give priority to younger researchers? If so, how is this done?

Yes, the ERC is serious about early-career researchers. Two-thirds of the overall ERC budget go to the most promising young minds. They should be empowered early in their careers and be given maximum scientific freedom. Top scientists with as little as two years of experience after their PhD are already eligible to apply for ERC grants.

Let me also point out that, on average, each ERC grant holder employs around six team members, of which many are post docs and PhD students. In this way, the ERC also supports a new generation of researchers. An estimate shows that around 300 of these team members are nationals of ASEAN countries, mainly from Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Is it possible for researchers who do not hold an ERC grant to be associated with an ERC grantee’s team?

Yes, the ERC wants to encourage its grantees to engage even more with fellow scientists in the global research community and motivate international talent to take part in ERC-funded projects in Europe, in particular young researchers. As said, we believe in “brain circulation”. To inspire such global scientific exchange, the ERC has already a number of agreements (so called “implementing arrangements”) in place with renowned research funding agencies outside Europe to provide opportunities for early-career scientists to temporarily join research teams run by ERC grant holders. In 2012, the ERC launched the first of such initiatives with the US National Science Foundation (NSF). By now, agencies in another six countries on four continents have signed such agreements, namely South Korea, Argentina, Japan, China, South Africa and Mexico. And there are more countries lined up, so stay tuned!

Before we close this interview, do you have any tips for potential ERC grant applicants?

Plan it well in advance. Competition is tough, so take the time to carve out the best possible application. You also need to show in your proposal that your research project will push the frontiers of knowledge, and that it is not just incremental research. Before applying, ask yourself “what is it that is innovative about my project?”. I would also advise applicants to try to speak to ERC grantees in the same field of research who can share their experience and provide advice. Lastly, the researcher needs to apply with a host institution in Europe, so it is crucial to establish contacts and find one early on before applying for ERC funding.

Thank you Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon!
2 IN FOCUS: Erasmus+

With a budget of 14.7 billion euros for the period 2014-2020, Erasmus+ aims to support actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport.

The programme gives opportunities to students, trainees, staff and volunteers to spend a period abroad to increase their skills and employability. It supports also organisations to work in transnational partnership, to modernise and improve their education systems. Erasmus+ includes a strong international dimension (i.e. cooperation with non-EU countries) notably in the field of higher education and youth, which opens the programme to institutional cooperation and mobility of young people and staff worldwide. The Sport action supports grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

EURAXESS met with Brian Holmes, Director of the European Commission Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA) to find out more about this programme.

Mr Holmes, which benefits, do you think, does a mobility experience bring to a researcher’s career?

Mobility is a booster for career development. The results of the 2015 Erasmus Mundus Graduate Impact Survey show for instance that Erasmus Mundus graduates have higher employment rates than other graduates. At the time of the survey two-thirds of graduates had found a job, and of those almost 60% had found their job within less than two months from graduation.

Similarly, the Erasmus Impact Study shows that Erasmus students have a 23% lower unemployment rate five years after graduation; their risk of long-term unemployment is half or less when compared to non-mobile students. Almost two thirds of employers think that international experience is important for recruitment, compared to 37% in 2006. Furthermore, young people who have been mobile during their studies have a greater chance of having a management position ten years after graduation compared to non-mobile students.

What does Erasmus+ have to offer to students and Higher Education Institutions outside Europe, for example here in ASEAN?

Erasmus+ offers a large array of possibilities to engage in cross-border learning and exchange. A core element of the programme is indeed its international dimension, which aims to support the development and modernisation of higher education, to enhance the expertise of university staff, and improve the skills and
employability of students in third countries, while enhancing the attractiveness of EU higher education.

Erasmus+ continues to support excellent students through joint Master degrees, which are offered by consortia of EU and non-EU universities. A minimum of 75% of EMJMD scholarships are earmarked for candidates from non-EU countries – Partner Countries. Additional scholarships are also offered for one or more specific regions of Partner Countries of the world and financed by different EU external funding instruments.

Within credit mobility, the Erasmus+ programme is now open also to non-EU universities, students and staff.

Capacity building supports joint projects based on multilateral partnerships to fund curriculum development and modernisation, joint or double degrees, improving university governance and creating better links between higher education and the world of work.

The Jean Monnet action promotes excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide. It focuses on mutual understanding and is set to provide important elements of critical knowledge about regional integration processes.

In your opinion, what could be done to further enhance the mobility of international students between Europe and other parts of the world?

The tertiary student population has grown exponentially in recent years. Overall, the number of higher education students in the world is expected to reach 400 million in 2030, particularly in the developing and emerging economies, such as Asia and Latin America. Europe has been an attractive destination for students and scholars worldwide; however, more and more countries are expanding and raising the quality of their higher education. Competition for the best students, researchers and staff is therefore intensifying. Higher education institutions must invest to increase their attractiveness and actively promote international mobility of students and staff, by providing innovative curricula together with excellence in teaching and research opportunities. In this, Erasmus+ and in particular the actions covering the international dimension can strongly contribute to creating the right conditions to further enhance students and staff mobility.

A number of limiting factors have also been exposed, with academic recognition on qualifications topping the list.

Looking at the European landscape, recognition of qualifications from universities of different countries remains a priority for Europe. The Bologna Process and transparency tools such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) have helped EU national higher education systems to support the transparency and
recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences, making it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe. Yet the process is far from being completed, and internationalisation has now taken a global dimension.

The EU is therefore committed to support initiatives that will facilitate transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications, as well as the transfer of credits, foster quality assurance, support skills management and guidance.

Thank you Mr Holmes!

Erasmus+ Joint Master Degrees and Joint Doctorates

Erasmus+ Joint master degrees (JMD) and Joint Doctorates (JD) are offered by international consortia of higher education institutions.

A JMD corresponds to a high-level integrated international study programme of 60, 90 or 120 ECTS (corresponding to one or two years of studies). Students at master’s level can apply for these degrees which take place in at least two of the programme countries represented in the consortium. 121 different consortia are proposing JMDs. Between approximately 13 and 20 student scholarship holders and 4 invited scholars/guest lecturers can take part in each programme annually. In addition to the student scholarship holders, self-funded students can enrol.

JDs are doctoral-level training and research programmes and offer fellowships covering up to three years of doctoral activities. 29 consortia are proposing JDs in various fields.

Joint Master Degrees: further information here, list of the consortia here

Joint Doctorates: further information and list of consortia here

Where can I find out more?

Official website of Erasmus Mundus+

Website of the Erasmus Mundus Association (EMA) and the EMA Southeast Asia Chapter

For personalised assistance please contact your nearest EURAXESS Links representative.
Erasmus Mundus Association Southeast Asia Chapter

To date, over 15 000 international students have already taken part in the Erasmus Mundus programme. Almost 9000 of them are members of the Erasmus Mundus Association (EMA). In 2008, the Southeast Asia Chapter of the Association was set up to unite EMA members from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The chapter aims to strengthen regional cooperation between members from different countries and to increase mutual collaboration. Under the leadership of its current President Dr Shiella C. Balbutin the chapter initiated projects and activities with positive social and environmental impact towards EMA and its stakeholders. EURAXESS Links ASEAN met with Shiella as she is about to hand over the reign to a new chapter president and to embark on the next chapter in her career as a researcher.

Hi Shiella. You have been at the helm of the SEA Chapter of the EMA for the past two years. How has the chapter changed in that time?

We are a relatively young chapter and we had a slow start. When I became President, I made it the mission of the chapter board to ensure that all countries in the ASEAN including East Timor will have representation; luckily we got Cambodia and Myanmar on board, although there is still a lot to be done for Brunei and Laos. Through the country representatives, we were able to establish closer ties with members in the respective countries which also allowed us to get more members involved in our activities.

We organized a very successful chapter meeting and networking event in Bangkok in 2014 and this further sparked the enthusiasm to work together as a chapter. We became more active on social media (Facebook) and this has been a big help in reaching out to more members and to prospective students.

What are you taking with you from this experience for your future career?

The best thing about this experience is that my interpersonal and intercultural communication skills have immensely improved. My network happily expanded, I gained a lot of friends and it has given me more opportunities to travel and explore new places. It is a great honour and privilege to represent EMA. It gives me so much joy and pride to have done a successful “tour of duty” as chapter president the past two years.

Looking at your achievements as chapter President, what are you most proud of?

If you are an alumnus of the Erasmus Mundus / Erasmus+ programme and based in Southeast Asia, do contact the chapter to find out how you can get involved.

EURAXESS LINKS ASEAN
I am very proud of two things; Firstly, our recognition as Most Active Chapter in 2015 – this is proof that we have accomplished our goals as a chapter and that we have engaged our members actively. Secondly, my EMA Star Award – although this is a personal award, I share this with my fellows in the chapter; if not for their inspiration and support, I would not have been successful in my endeavours.

Do you have any advice for your successor?

I think the best advice is to always remember that the reason for holding the position is service. Sure, it has its perks, but it also has its challenges. As for me, I did it out of my deep gratitude to the Erasmus Mundus scholarship programme which has given me so many opportunities for personal and professional growth. Serving EMA is my way of giving back and of paying it forward.

What are your future plans?

For now, the immediate plan is to pursue PhD studies and continue to support EMA activities. I am also an active member of the EMA Communications Team and so I will be quite busy doing work for that group.

About Shiella

Shiella C. Balbutin from the Philippines is a graduate of the European Master of Arts in Media, Communication and Cultural Studies (CoMundus) from the University of Aarhus in Denmark and Institute of Education, University of London in the United Kingdom from 2005-2007. Previously, Shiella was the Vice President of the Erasmus Mundus Association-South East Asian Chapter, a position which she ably served from 2012-2014. She is also actively involved with the Communications Team of EMA as the Coordinator of the Field Reporter Initiative. As VP, she represented the SEA Chapter in the GAs in 2012 and 2013. She has been teaching Development Communication courses at the undergraduate level since 1997. Aside from teaching, Shiella is currently the Chair of the Development Communication Department, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan in Cagayan de Oro City. She was also recently appointed as Head of the Center of Communication for Development at the same university. She is also an alumna of the Radio Nederland Training Centre (RNTC – The Netherlands), where she is an Honorary Ambassador; and the International Summer School (ISS – University of Oslo, Norway).
3 Hot Topic: Science Communication

For scientists to be successful, conducting cutting-edge research is not enough anymore. Today, researchers have to be able to communicate their sciences effectively to a variety of audiences in order to convince potential funders, secure jobs, identify research collaborators or simply to teach and educate others. In other words, to be a successful researcher, one must also be an effective communicator.

EURAXESS Links ASEAN Science Communication Training

When researchers communicate more effectively, science thrives. Science is increasingly interdisciplinary and the ability to communicate more effectively across disciplines fosters collaboration and innovation. Being able to communicate the relevance and impact of one’s ideas and discoveries can enhance a scientist’s ability to secure funding or to find a job. It allows researchers to write better and more comprehensible research papers. It also allows them to be better teachers and mentors for next-generation researchers.

EURAXESS Links ASEAN is committed to supporting the research community in ASEAN in honing their science communication skills in order to boost their career opportunities. In 2015, EURAXESS Links ASEAN launched a science communication workshop series with stops in three ASEAN countries. Over 200 researchers benefited from the hands-on training sessions held in Bangkok, Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur by our trainer, communication specialist Dr Sanna Fowler of EPFL in Lausanne, Switzerland. The participants learned tools and strategies how to best define and present their research to various audiences.

Traveling Science Communication Workshop in November 2016

This November, the science communication workshop will return to ASEAN under the banner ’European Research Day’ with stops planned in Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. Once again, we will focus on hands-on training on effective science communication for mobility grant application. Each workshop will be limited to 50 participants only. The dates, programme details and participation requirements will be announced on the EURAXESS Links ASEAN channels shortly. To ensure you remain informed, do send us an email at asean@euraxess.net to join our mailing list.
The 5 minute interview: Dr Olivier Küttel

We asked Dr Olivier Küttel, Head of Public Affairs at EPFL in Switzerland and an experienced science communicator for some advice on how to communicate effectively.

Dr Küttel, why should researchers care about their communication skills?

Research is not just about excellent lab work. Research is done in socio-economic context and mainly based on competitive funding through different types of funding organisations like governments, foundations, trusts to name a few. Hence researchers need to present and pitch their proposals for acceptance in front of peers and explain their research activity to the society. Communication skills are an essential part of competences researchers need, to successfully acquire grants and get public acceptance.

In your experience, what are the most common communication mistakes scientists make?

By far the most common mistake made by scientists is to be too complicated in their communication style, be it when writing a proposal or during oral presentations. Working for years on a very narrow and specific topic can blur the wider context.

Scientists often get interviewed – what are your top 3 tips to ensure the researcher gets his or her message across?

1. Be simple, straightforward and clear in your messages.
2. Do not get lost in details which might be scientifically correct but not crucial to get your main message across.
3. Adapt the scientific level of your explanations to the audience you are speaking to.

Thank you Dr Küttel

About Olivier

Olivier Küttel studied physics and mathematics and got a PhD in plasma physics from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. After a Post-Doc in Montreal, Canada, he worked many years in the field of nanotechnology and surface science at the University of Fribourg. From 1999 to 2000 he served as a patent expert for the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property. In fall 2000 he joined the newly created Swiss information network for European research and innovation programmes Euresearch as its first director. Since August 2012 he is the head and delegate to the President for European Public Affairs at EPFL. He was involved in different expert groups and evaluation committees mandated by the European Commission.
Catching up with the EURAXESS Science Slam Winners ASEAN

In 2013, the EURAXESS Links network launched the cornerstone event of its science communication activities, the EURAXESS Science Slam. Science slams are hugely popular with the research communities in many countries across the globe, most notably in Germany. During a science slam, performers get just 10 minutes to present their scientific work to a live audience. The task at hand is to be engaging, clear and persuasive. Imagine having to convince your old aunt or uncle of the benefits of your research on say, nanotechnology. No easy feat! Nonetheless, the global EURAXESS Science Slam quickly proved to be a great hit with young researchers in the six EURAXESS Links locations and has seen participation from hundreds of aspiring scientists in ASEAN, Brazil, China, India, Japan and North America. The winners of each competition were invited on a trip to Europe to meet and network with leading scientists in their respective field. For many of them the competition has opened doors to exciting and rewarding career developments.

EURAXESS Links ASEAN caught up with our three past winners to see where their career path has taken them since their winning performances.

The winner of the very first EURAXESS Science Slam ASEAN was Dr Phanramphoei N. Frantz, a researcher at Thailand’s National Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC). Jibby set the bar high with her winning performance – a rap, no less, about her research work on the development of a pork vaccine.

Hi Jibby! You became the very first EURAXESS Science Slam Winner ASEAN in 2013 with a slam about a pork vaccine. How far have you come with this project?

First of all it got me to Brussels, Belgium to attend the meeting as my winning prize. Then I had a chance to visit several labs at Institut Pasteur with the help of EURAXESS. The visit allowed me to apply for a Franco-Thai Fellowship and gave me the opportunity to spend my five months in 2014 at Institut Pasteur being a part of the team assigned to dengue vaccine development. During my fellowship, I spotted the yeast-RNP platform and took the initiative to develop this platform.
into the first collaboration project between Institut Pasteur and BIOTEC Thailand on which I spent then more months in 2015 developing it further into an MSCA proposal. Moreover, my advisor, Dr. Frederic Tangy, is now holds a seat on the international advisory board of BIOTEC. This solidified the collaboration between the two institutes. To sum it up, ‘Pigs Don’t Cry’ initiated an international relationship and collaboration of the two countries and science organisations.

Which project are you working on at the moment?

I am currently working on making a yeast-based vaccine candidate against PEDV, acronym PIGYVAX, which is funded by MSCA H2020 fellowship. By the way, my advisor came up with the acronym and I really love it.

You left Thailand for Paris shortly after winning the slam. How did this trip help you with your research career?

The visit allowed me to apply for the Franco-Thai Fellowship and got me to spend five months in 2014 at Institut Pasteur being a part of the team for dengue vaccine development. And that was the start of PIGYVAX.

We hear that you have secured one of the highly prestigious Marie Curie Fellowships. Congratulations! What are your hopes for this next part of your journey as a researcher?

I would love to see the PIGYVAX implicated in the field but with only two years time so I hope to get the proof of concept that the yeast-RNP is effective in protecting piglets from PEDV infection. My second hope would be to get a lot of hits and views, as much as Justin Bieber, on the upcoming YouTube VDO for ‘Pigs Don’t Cry-Part 2 à Paris’. Please stay tuned!

Is there any career advice for researchers you wish you had known earlier?

First things first, I wish I had known about EURAXESS sooner. I’m not trying to butter up EURAXESS, it’s just the truth. They have all the information on European funding opportunities for both short-term and long-term which is extremely useful for scientists. They are the one-stop shop for all fellowship opportunities.

Next, I wish I kept up with the deadlines of each funding call so I could have enough time to prepare my best proposal. It is easy to disappear in the lab and lose track of time.

But most importantly, don’t be shy. Networking is extremely important. Ask questions. Ask for information. Ask for help. Communication is key!
About Jibby

Dr Phanramphoei (Jibby) Namprachan Frantz AKA Dr. Jibby received her PhD from Wayne State University, School of Medicine in microbial pathogenesis with the support of a Thai Government Scholarship. After receiving her PhD, she returned to Thailand to work as a research scientist at BIOTEC (www.biotec.or.th/en/) in the area of virology and vaccine development. In 2011, Dr. Jibby received a grant for a Thailand Research Fund (TRF) grant to study the pathogenesis of the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV). Dr. Jibby was a part of the team which was the first group to succeed in creating an infectious cDNA clone of PEDV. She was chosen to present her work in developing the RGs of PEDV at the first ASEAN EURAXESS Science Slam competition in Singapore in 2013, and won the first prize in the competition with her rap video, ‘Pigs Don’t Cry!’. With the support of EURAXESS, she established a research connection with Institut Pasteur in Paris. In 2014, Dr. Jibby began work there with the funding of a Franco-Thai Fellowship to develop a dengue vaccine and subsequently creating the first collaboration between Institut Pasteur and BIOTEC to develop a vaccine against PEDV. Earlier this year Dr. Jibby was successful in her application for a MSCA Individual Fellowship on the pig vaccine project.

Bhamini Bhujun, a doctoral candidate at Nottingham University Malaysia Campus working on the subject of supercapacitors, was the second winner of the ASEAN-wide science communication competition. She beat the all-male competition with a sterling performance.

Hi Bhamini! Your winning science slam explained your research on supercapacitors. Are you still working on this research project?

I am really passionate about my research since supercapacitors have the potential of bringing fascinating change to the energy storage field. As opposed to batteries that take a considerable amount of time to charge and don’t retain the charge for a long period, supercapacitors have the ability to charge in the space of seconds and retain charge for a substantially longer time. I am still working on this research project by exploring new materials for supercapacitors.

You also won the Malaysian FameLab – is science communication a possible career path for you?

Science communication is interesting since I get to introduce and explain my research to people who are not experts in the field. After the EURAXESS Science Slam, I won the 3-Minute Thesis 2015 on the UK Level. I have also been documenting my research and conference presentations on my YouTube

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channel. I would possibly consider science communication as a future career path.

As the winner of the EURAXESS Science Slam in 2014 you travelled to Europe. How did you use this trip for your career development?

Visiting the CNRS institute in France was an incredible experience since I got the opportunity to meet outstanding researchers working in the field of supercapacitors. There was an interesting exchange of knowledge as well as collaboration on a journal paper.

What is next on the agenda for you?

Doing a PHD in the field of supercapacitors was challenging and enriching. I want to acquire some experience in the industry world before joining the academic sector as a lecturer and researcher.

Do you have any career advice for young researchers in Malaysia?

The number of people pursuing research in Malaysia has increased considerably over the last few years. Research doesn't have significant impact if it is locked in a drawer. The key is to publish and communicate research to a wider audience in order to get criticism and feedback. Also since a large amount of time and resources will be invested in the research, researchers should be passionate about their chosen field.

About Bhamini

Bhamini Bhujun is originally from the small island of Mauritius where she did her Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering. In 2012, she joined the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus for a Masters’ degree in Electronics and Computer Science following which she was awarded the Dean’s scholarship for a PHD. Her field of research involves supercapacitors and energy storage systems. Bhamini has expressed an increasing interest in publishing her research and science communication. Winning the EURAXESS Science Slam 2014 has opened several doors for her. She has had the incredible opportunity of visiting prestigious research institutions in Europe where she has collaborated on a journal article. Bhamini also has her own YouTube channel where she posts videos about her research as well as her conference presentations. During her free time, Bhamini enjoys reading.
In 2015, a young linguist from Hanoi University in Vietnam became the 3rd EURAXESS Science Slam Winner ASEAN. Tran Thi Ngoc Diep impressed audience and judges with a musical introduction to her research in applied linguistics. This was the first time that a social scientist was crowned winner of the competition.

Hi Diep! We still remember your winning performance at the Science Slam ASEAN finale in Bangkok last year. Do you still sing?

Oh yes, I still do. I’m not a singer by training, just somebody who loves to sing, but I can’t imagine my life without singing. Singing to me is more than just a hobby, it’s a therapy. It really helps lifting my mood whenever I feel stressed with life and work. Just the other day I had a very interesting conversation with other Ph.D students in my School, the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. We had just a random talk and found out that many of us can sing and play instruments and someone suggested that we should perhaps start a music band. It started as a joke, but everyone turned out to like the idea. Isn’t that a cool way to spice up our Ph.D lives?

What has happened to your research career since we last saw you?

Well, important things have happened to me and my research career since the last time we met. Two months after that unforgettable finale night in Bangkok, I returned to New Zealand to start my Ph.D life. I am still at the very early stage of research, the stage at which ideas are beginning to take shape. Over the past three months and with the support from my supervisors, I have come to identify the direction that my research will be geared towards. If everything goes well as planned, I will submit my official research proposal by the end of November this year. Fingers crossed!!

What do you find most fascinating about your research in linguistics?

I guess what made linguistics research so fascinating to me is the fact that they give me the chance to explore the beauty and mystery of languages. I found myself happily struggling to find out about the relationship between things as intangible as thoughts AND things as tangible as writing or as audible as sounds. My current research, however, shifts away from pure linguistics and focuses more on applied linguistics. But that doesn’t make me any less interested. Language teaching and language testing, the core of my research, are apparently issues that have attracted global attention for years. And it’s always good to have faith that the outcomes of my Ph.D research will be helpful, at least for Vietnam.

What are your plans after finishing up your PhD?

Wow, I don’t usually make plans that far ahead! 😊 I won’t finish my Ph.D for another 3 years and 9 months. One of the options is returning to Hanoi University
and go on with teaching and researching. But honestly, I also want to wait and see what life has to offer me then. I’m not saying that I will no longer be interested in giving lectures and doing research. I have been and always will be. I make plans but I also want to think of life as a place with open doors. The Euraxess Science Slam last year was clearly a door that I unexpectedly unlocked. And look what was behind that door: A fantastic opportunity to travel, an amazing chance to meet brilliant researchers from different parts of the world and a whole new level of self-confidence. In other words, my dream is behind that door. So, I’ll make plans but at the same time expect the unexpected.

About Diep

My name is Tran Thi Ngoc Diep, from Vietnam. I am currently attending Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand in an effort to obtain my Ph.D in Applied Linguistics. Before the start of my Ph.D life, I had been a lecturer of the English Department, Hanoi University, Vietnam for 8 years. As a lecturer, my responsibilities included teaching phonetics and contrastive linguistics to third/fourth-year English majors, writing textbooks, doing research and supervising thesis students. Besides my job as an academic, I also worked as an interpreter for UN organizations based in Vietnam and hosted the series of “English for kids” on Vietnamese National Television. My efforts throughout the years have been recognised with a few awards that I have always reverenced. I won the first prize in the “Essay Writing Contest” co-organized by the Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training and the US Embassy in celebration of the 10th year of the two countries’ diplomatic relation in 2005. My awards also include the third prize in the “New Zealand – New Horizon” competition 2014. The most recent achievement is the one when I was named the winner of 2015 EURAXESS Science Slam competition for young researchers in ASEAN.

Do you have any career advice to young researchers in Vietnam?

I have a few words of advice which I hope they will find helpful. From the perspective of a language teacher and a researcher, I sincerely advise younger researchers to give due attention to learning foreign languages among which English is the key. Don’t let the language barrier stop you from any chance to reach out, to see and learn from the world. Don’t let it be the only thing that comes between you and your success.

As a fellow researcher, I will tell them what my supervisors have been telling me every time they see me. Take good care of your health and try as hard as possible...
to get a good balance between research and your personal/social life! I know it’s easier said than done. But if you take it seriously from the beginning, you’ll find your way to balance. I myself go to yoga and dance classes every week. I get together with friends at the weekend. And … (as you might expect) I sing every day. Don’t get too carried away with research and don’t forget that you still have your personal life to take care of.

4 In Case You Missed IT…

Over 300 researchers attend 3rd instalment of annual EURAXESS ASEAN Mobility platform

The annual EURAXESS Links ASEAN mobility workshop took place in Hanoi, Vietnam and Bangkok, Thailand on 11 and 13 May 2016. Over 300 researchers from more than 40 research institutions across ASEAN had followed the invitation of EURAXESS Links ASEAN to engage with representatives of leading European research and funding agencies and to take the first steps towards mutually beneficial research mobility experiences and collaborations. The presentation slides are available for download here.

EURAXESS Members in Focus: The Netherlands

41 European countries are part of the EURAXESS network. In June, we published a feature on EURAXESS member The Netherlands zooming in on the country’s research landscape and policy, peaks of excellence and the opportunities for international research talent to collaborate with Dutch partners. The country file can be accessed here.

Marie Curie Fellows meet in Hanoi for 2nd regional meeting

ASEAN-based recipients of the Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions Fellowship met in Hanoi to discuss plans for the creation of a regional chapter of the Marie Curie Alumni Association. The fellows from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines are eager to spread the word about the career development opportunities for ASEAN-based researchers that are offered under the MSCA programme.

If you are a Marie Curie Fellow based in ASEAN and would like to get involved please email us at asean@euraxess.net