

EU-ASEAN Health Summit explores emerging trends in the healthcare industry

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The Summit brought together high-level officials from across Southeast Asia and Europe, as well as business leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, and academics



The [EU-ASEAN Business Council \(EU-ABC\)](#), the primary voice for European business interests in ASEAN, held its inaugural health summit on 15th September 2021 in Singapore. The ASEAN-EU Health Summit was organized in place of the EU-ABC's annual flagship Business Summit, given the unprecedented circumstances posed by the global health crisis.

The Summit's themed at "Health Solutions Post-Pandemic: Innovation, Inclusion & Immunisations in ASEAN and Beyond" deep-dived into emerging trends and transformative solutions in the healthcare industry, as part of efforts to refocus much-needed attention on our health and healthcare systems.

Against the backdrop of global pandemic recovery, the Health Summit critically looked at how countries, not just in ASEAN but across the globe, could implement strategies to ensure that economies and societies can remain resilient and endure future shocks.

Singapore's Minister for Health H.E. Ong Ye Kung said "Singapore has built up an "arsenal" of measures to address the pandemic like rolling out a national vaccination programme, widespread testing, and surveillance, and implementing a multi-tier system of medical care".

Meanwhile, European Commission's Director-General for Health and Food Safety H.E. Sandra Gallina said, "the level of health security globally is only as high as the weakest link; so coordination, solidarity, are needed to secure adequate resources and exchange knowledge to protect us all. The current political momentum provides a window of opportunity for the development of a legally binding international agreement, which would, among other things, address gaps in existing regulatory frameworks, and promote national and regional preparedness and response mechanisms".

Such a collaborative effort was echoed by Indonesia's Minister for Health H.E. Budi Gunadi Sadikin, who underscored the need to develop a global protocol for public health, social, and infection control measures, including one for the ASEAN region to support post-COVID-19 recovery. "This will ensure safe and standardised cross-border interconnectivity, be it according to one's vaccination status, testing results, or health status in general." Mr Budi added that there is a need for a global policy and instrument on pooling of resources that can be rapidly disbursed to countries in need, shall there be another emerging health crisis.

Further, Health Summit also discussed Southeast Asia's rapidly ageing demographic, which threatens to put pressure on the working age population and health systems.

Isabelle Deschamps, Head of Global Vaccines, Public Affairs at Sanofi provided insights on protecting vulnerable populations through vaccine regimens. "With the world's population, including ASEAN, transitioning to an aging society, vaccination is one of the most impactful and effective public health interventions. To protect against vaccine-preventable diseases, all economies must prioritize the funding of preventative care to include immunisation in addition to the self-care and health screening campaigns" she added.

The Summit also highlighted the importance of public-private partnership and collaboration in advancing solutions to boost overall well-being, particularly in leveraging digital tools in healthcare and improving public access to medicines.

Andrew Wong, Chief Health Officer at Prudential Corporation Asia said, "Consumer appetite towards the digitization of health is strong and continues to grow. A survey conducted by Prudential on Asians' attitude towards the use of digital health revealed that seven in 10 rely on technology to improve their personal health and wellbeing over the next three years. Making digital healthcare accessible to more people across Asia and Africa is an integral part of Prudential's purpose. This is brought to life by our Pulse by Prudential app which we have developed to prevent and postpone the onset of diseases so people can live well for longer."