

ASEAN'S LIBERALIZATION OF LEGAL SERVICES: THE SINGAPORE CASE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the liberalization of legal services in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ("ASEAN") within the framework of the ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN's free trade agreements. Although trade in legal services is important to ASEAN's goal as a "single market and production base," the article challenges the weaknesses of ASEAN's legal services liberalization. It then explores Singapore's experiment on the regulations of foreign law firms and foreign lawyers, which have become substantially liberalized in the past decade. The article argues that while Singapore may serve as a positive example, ASEAN countries should be cautious of the gap between Singapore's legal framework and the actual practice of foreign law firms. By analyzing the Singaporean concepts of Formal Law Alliances, Joint Law Ventures and Qualifying Foreign Law Practices, the article provides recommendations for ASEAN governments and legal communities for liberalization in the legal services sector.

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