An initiative of the University of Turin and the Torino World Affairs Institute

Concept

Changes in Myanmar over the past decade have encouraged renewed interest from governments and businesses all over the world, but especially in Europe. The democratic elections of 2015 have provided fresh impetus for political and economic engagement from across the European Union. Universities and think tanks have a special role to play in helping to ensure that knowledge of Myanmar is made available to the right people at the right time. The Myanmar Europe Research Network (MYern) will consolidate links between relevant Myanmar and European institutions to build joint capacity and lasting scholarly collaboration. The University of Turin and the Torino World Affairs Institute (T.wai) have volunteered to initiate MYern as a common resource for researchers in Europe and Myanmar who will benefit from engagement with this specialist hub.

Activities

MYern will draw its strength from regular interactions at events, through leading applications for new funding, and through high quality academic and policy publications.

The initiative will:

• Develop a series of regular research-focused events drawing on expertise from Myanmar, Europe, and beyond.
• Facilitate grant proposals and funding applications that will create opportunities for researchers in Myanmar and Europe. The emphasis in these bids will be finding new resources for early career researchers, and for Myanmar scholars who were previously excluded from international collaborative work.
• Emphasise the creation of high quality published outputs, including journal special issues, edited volumes, and other analytical products. In the first instance, the T.wai Myanmar series, and the upcoming Myanmar-focused edition of RISE, will help to launch the MYern initiative and also announce its intentions to broader networks of scholars, activists and policy-makers in Myanmar and Europe.
Initial implementation

The University of Turin and T.wai will serve as the secretariat and central hub for MYern. For the first two years (2017 and 2018) the annual meeting of MYern will be held in Turin. In future years the hope is that other institutions will share this responsibility. The ideal will be for Myanmar partners to host MYern meetings in Yangon, Mandalay or Naypyidaw in alternate years. Building MYern will require collegiality and collaboration, and a willingness to work quickly with what are, for now, modest financial resources.

Potential next steps

- Agree on the scope of membership for MYern and determine whether individual or institutional affiliation is the most prudent approach.
- Invite other individuals or institutions to consider partnership with MYern, with an emphasis on key partners from Myanmar.
- Examine the potential funding available to MYern and design a strategy for making the initiative financially viable in the short and medium terms.
- Decide on the theme for the next MYern event to be held in Turin at a date to be confirmed.