The European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continue to deepen their relationship while working towards the establishment of a Strategic Partnership. This decision to upgrade relations was taken by the EU and ASEAN countries’ Foreign Ministers at the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 21 January 2019. EU-ASEAN (consisting of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) relations date back to 1977 when official “Dialogue Relations” began. In June 2015, the EU confirmed the adoption of a new strategy “The EU and ASEAN: a partnership with a strategic purpose”. In August 2017 during the EU-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the second EU-ASEAN Plan of Action (2018-2022) was agreed.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- The EU is ASEAN’s second largest trading partner
- In 2018, ASEAN exported over €140 bn to the EU and the EU €97 bn to ASEAN
- The EU has concluded negotiations for Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Singapore and with Vietnam and is negotiating FTAs with other ASEAN countries (Indonesia and the Philippines)
- In March 2017, the EU and ASEAN agreed to take new steps towards resuming talks for a region-to-region agreement

POLITICAL, SECURITY AND DEFENCE-RELATED COOPERATION

In July 2012, the EU acceded to ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. The EU and ASEAN work together to enhance crisis response and disaster management, including through EU support to the ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre).

In October 2015, the first EU-ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Human Rights took place, supported through the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI). A second edition of the Dialogue was held in the Philippines, in November 2017. The EU also organises with ASEAN High Level Dialogues on Maritime Security and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The EU has also co-chaired a number of initiatives in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) framework, including Meetings on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime and currently on Maritime Security.
The EU is a major development partner of ASEAN and the biggest donor to the ASEAN Secretariat, with over €200 million of grant funding in support of ASEAN regional integration for the period 2014-2020. This comes in addition to €2 billion of bilateral support to ASEAN Member States.

The €20 million Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) supports EU-ASEAN cooperation and experience sharing, engaging policy-makers, civil society and the private sector across many areas, including circular and digital economy, fisheries, clean energy or road transport.

The EU supports with ARISE Plus programme (€94 million) ASEAN economic and trade connectivity in the areas of trade facilitation, customs and transport, quality standards in food safety and pharmaceuticals, civil aviation, intellectual property rights, economic and trade statistics and integration monitoring.

The EU supports in ASEAN countries sustainable use of peatlands and haze mitigation (€20 million), biodiversity conservation and management of protected areas (€10 million) and strengthening disaster management capacities through support to the AHA Centre (€10 million). A new programme on environmentally sustainable and climate resilient cities is also under preparation.

The €10 million EU programme in support to higher education in the ASEAN region (SHARE) contributes to strengthening the quality, competitiveness and internationalization of ASEAN higher education institutions and promotes student mobility. The programme is providing around 500 scholarships to support student and academic exchanges.

**INTEGRATION, CONNECTIVITY AND SECTORAL COOPERATION**

**MOBILITY, EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

Since 2014 over 5,500 students and staff from ASEAN universities have received scholarships, while over 3,200 European students and staff have taken up work or study in ASEAN countries under the Erasmus+ programme.

ASEAN and the EU are currently negotiating a region-to-region Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (CATA).