

## REGIONAL COOPERATION

Asia's importance for the EU is incontestable, and accordingly, the EU follows a forward-looking policy of engagement with Asia, both in the region and globally. In 1994, the European Commission published 'Towards a New Asia Strategy', a policy document underlining Asia's importance for Europe and calling for a balanced and comprehensive approach towards the region. As a follow-up, '[Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership](#)' was adopted in 2001. Its core objective is to strengthen the EU's presence in Asia, raising it to a level commensurate with the growing global weight of an enlarged EU. The strategy focuses on six key dimensions: strengthening EU engagement with Asia in political and security fields, expanding two-way trade and investment, reducing poverty and promoting the spread of democracy, good governance and the rule of law. In turn, the EU hopes to build global partnerships with key Asian partners and promote mutual awareness and understanding.

EU regional cooperation consists of Asia-wide regional programmes and [the Association of South East Asian Nations](#) (ASEAN) regional integration cooperation, managed by [the EU Delegation to Jakarta](#).

### 1. EU programmes for regional cooperation

EU programmes for regional co-operation complement national assistance programmes. They tackle challenges with a regional dimension and promote interstate co-operation on issues of mutual interest. Development cooperation with Asia covers 19 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

Vietnam is an active participant in several EU-funded programmes supporting regional cooperation in South-East Asia.

- **Higher education exchange programmes** strengthen ties between EU and ASEAN Member States. The Erasmus+ programme funds exchanges of students and academics and promotes post-graduate research.
- Energy and climate change programmes aim to promote sustainable production in ASEAN, protect biodiversity and encourage international cooperation with the EU on this global issue.
- **Sustainable forestry programmes** like FLEGT aim at improving sustainable forest governance. [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/environment/flegt\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/environment/flegt_en.htm)
- [The SWITCH Asia Programme](#) responds to the need for cleaner and more energy efficient industry. It targets small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for their key role in development. While SMEs provide employment, they are also high contributors to air and water pollution with difficulty transitioning to environmentally friendly methods. There are three on-going Switch projects implemented in Vietnam.
- **Regional health hazard programme** assists ASEAN Member States to cooperate in the fight against highly pathogenic diseases through its Regional Cooperation programme on Highly Pathogenic and Emerging and re-emerging Diseases.
- [ECHO](#) and Uprooted People programmes deliver humanitarian support by assisting displaced persons and refugees in the region and by helping countries respond to disasters.

## **2. ASEAN Regional Integration Cooperation**

The EU and ASEAN share a commitment to regional integration as a means of fostering regional stability, building prosperity, and addressing global challenges. The EU fully supports ASEAN's renewed efforts to build closer relationships amongst its Member States.

The EU is seeking to increase dialogue with ASEAN, as well as pursuing closer coordination on regional and international issues. The [Nuremberg Declaration](#) and the joint Plan of Action aim to enhance this longstanding partnership by pursuing closer cooperation on political, security, economic, socio-cultural and development issues, as well as in the field of energy security and climate change/environment.

EU and ASEAN are crucial commercial partners, with €181.4 billion in goods trading in 2012. The EU is ASEAN's second largest trading partner worldwide and ASEAN ranks third in the list of the EU's trading partners.

The government of Vietnam participates actively in the ASEAN policy dialogues and is keen to follow regional issues aligned to the national agenda. Vietnamese government officials benefit from regional institutional support provided by EU-funded projects.

### **Current EU-ASEAN cooperation initiatives**

In the current budget cycle (2014-2020), the EU will support the ASEAN integration and the Secretariat with € 170 million, more than double the amount under the previous cycle (close to € 70 million, 2007-2013). The new programme will focus on enhancing connectivity, trade, addressing disaster management, climate change and promoting dialogue across the board.

The **cooperation agenda for 2014-2020** was agreed at the [21st EU-ASEAN Joint Cooperation Committee \(JCC\) Meeting](#) and focuses on three focal sectors:

#### **1. Connectivity: sustainable and inclusive economic integration (€85 million / 50%)**

- A key goal of the connectivity envelope is to improve connectivity between the ASEAN member states through sustainable, inclusive economic integration and trade. Special attention is paid to countries that joined ASEAN the latest – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.
- The cooperation agenda foresees enhanced dialogue and interactions on trade-related regulatory and policy frameworks, intellectual property, standards, customs and transport, civil aviation, and more ([ARISE Plus](#)).
- In 2015, a programme to support the farmers' organisations (AFOSP) already began work, and a study facility to support green economy and urban development in ASEAN will soon follow ([Asia Investment Facility](#)).

#### **2. Climate change, environment and disaster management (€60 million / 37.5%)**

- In the area of climate change, priority has been given to the sustainable use of peatlands and reducing problems caused by haze, [environmentally sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient cities](#), and [environmental education](#).
- The EU support to strengthening disaster management capacities in ASEAN will also continue.

- An added focus on Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas is expected to follow.

### **3. Comprehensive Dialogue Facility (€25 million / 12.5%)**

The Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument ([E-READI](#)) aims at supporting ASEAN regional integration processes and reducing poverty, by offering technical assistance and by conducting dialogues with the EU in multiple sectors:

- i. Human rights, maritime cooperation, peace and reconciliation, election observation, migration and mobility in the Security and Political pillar;
- ii. Science and technology, ICT, energy, trade facilitation, agriculture and natural resources, forestry in the Economic pillar;
- iii. Climate change, disaster management, environment, education and youth, development goals, health and communicable diseases, food safety, culture and media, and tourism in the Socio-Cultural pillar.

Apart from the new programmes, on-going cooperation activities include a total of €10 million allocated for the EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region ([EU SHARE](#)), a programme that supports the harmonisation of recognition systems between ASEAN universities. This will make it easier for students to transfer credits from one university to another and improve the comparability of degrees.

For more information please visit: <http://eeas.europa.eu/asean/>