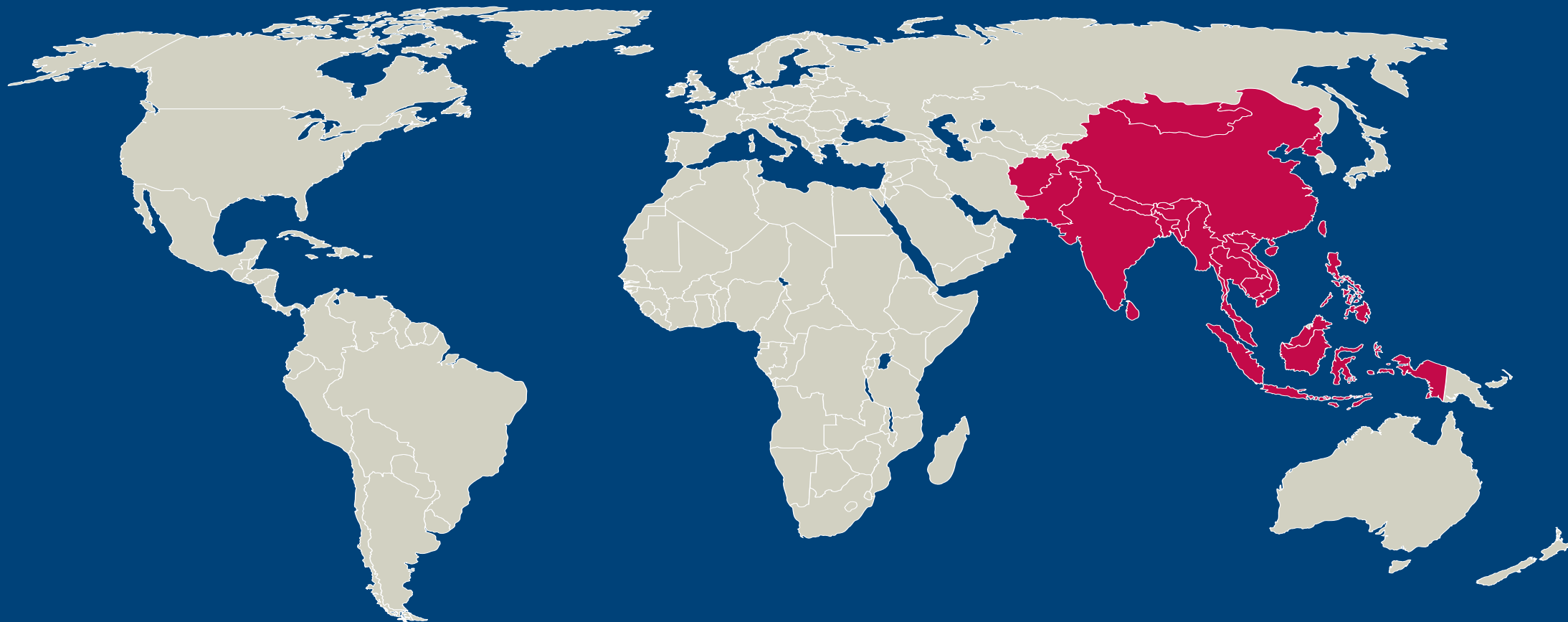


EuropeAid

European Regional Programmes in Asia



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How the EU helps reduce poverty in Asia

Half of the world's population lives in Asia and the region contributes one-fourth of the global economic wealth. Yet Asia is home to two-thirds of the world's poorest people – 800 million of them live on less than one dollar a day. Alleviating poverty in Asia is therefore essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals to which the EU is firmly committed. Significant progress has been made but there is still a long way to go before the targets set by the international community are achieved by 2015.

Poverty is very much a development issue that, in turn, is linked to environment, education, trade and health. In order to be effective, development strategies must go beyond national frontiers and span regions – an eminent reason why regional integration and sustainable development have been given a pride of place in the EU's cooperation programmes in Asia.

Action for sustainable development

The **Pro Eco** programme is an example of how the EU promotes sustainable development. Encouraging the sharing of innovative technologies, best practices and policies, it supports capacity building to improve environmental conditions and quality of life. It helps Asia to develop less polluting and more resource-efficient products, processes and services. Pro Eco takes a special interest in improving water and waste sectors. This in turn has a positive impact on climate change. The programme is of great benefit to non-profit organisations. These include chambers of commerce, professional associations, universities, research institutes and NGOs.



The EU contributes to the fight against climate change with a new programme called **SWITCH**. It promotes sustainable consumption and production in Asia targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The SMEs play a key role in development but face difficulties in making the transition to an environment friendly mode of operation. SWITCH helps them to adopt production methods that conform to international environmental standards. The result is not only resource savings but also increased employment and higher income. SWITCH also benefits children as well as both female and male workers: they are assured reasonable wages and decent working conditions.



Illegal logging and international trade in illegally-harvested timber is a major problem for many timber-producing countries in the developing world. The **EU's Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)** seeks to address the situation. The rationale behind the EU's response to the global problem is quite apparent: illegal forestry activities cause environmental damage, cost governments billions of Euros in lost revenue, and fuel corruption. They also undermine the rule of law and good governance. In some cases revenues from the sale of illegally-harvested timber have financed armed conflicts. Illegal logging also retards sustainable development in some of the poorest countries of the world.

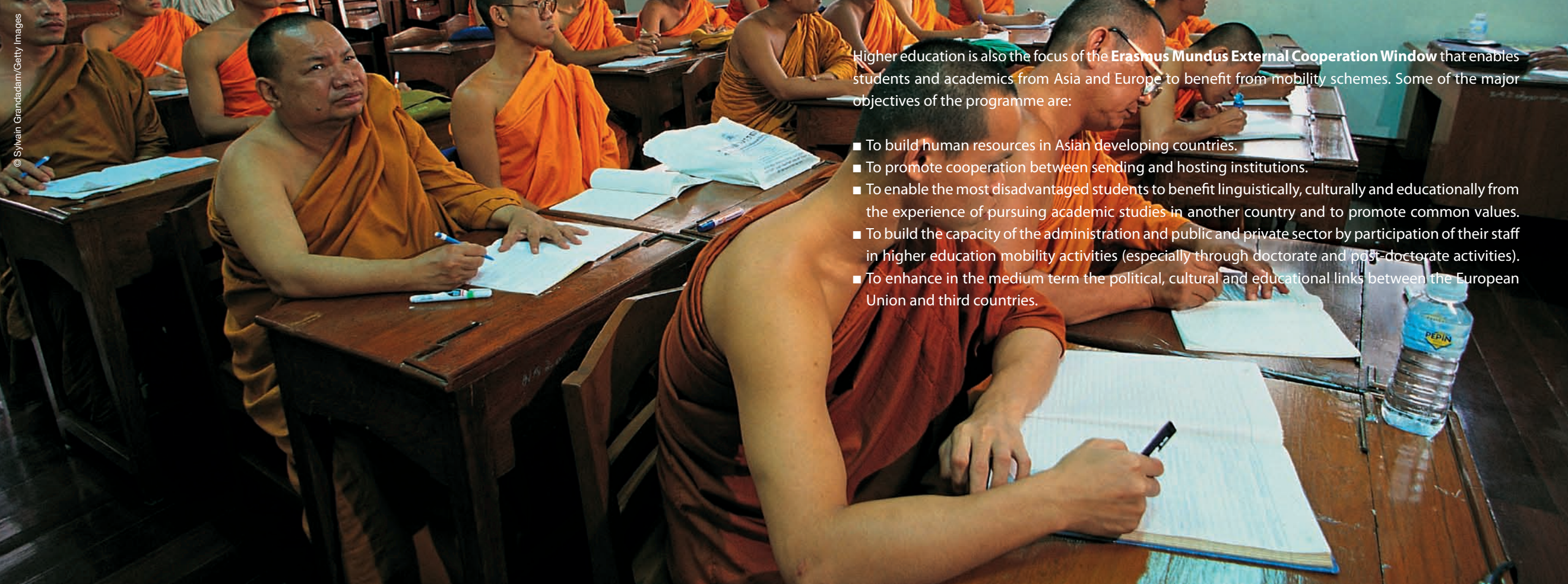
With this in view, the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade programme addresses these problems through support to timber-producing countries, information networks to promote trade in legal timber, increased use of certified wood, support for private sector initiatives to advance corporate social responsibility, and safeguards for financing and investment.



Decent education is a prerequisite for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The EU's **Asia Link** programme fosters regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in Europe and the developing countries in Asia. The programme helps develop new and existing partnerships between European and Asian universities.

Along with direct support to universities, the programme has funded a series of European Higher Education Fairs in seven Asian countries since 2006. These include symposia offering forums for debate and dialogue on higher education cooperation between the EU and the relevant partner country.

Everyone has a right to decent education



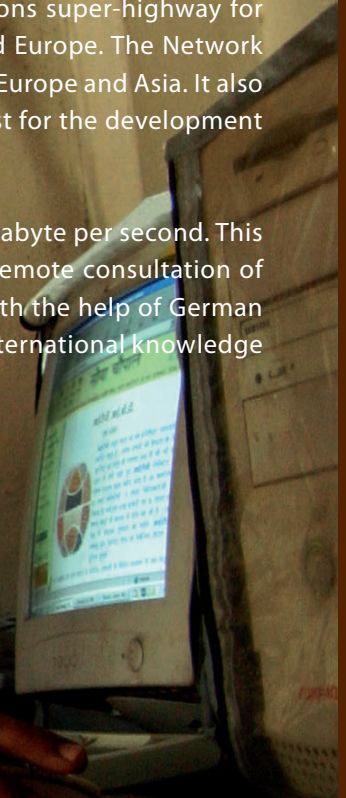
Higher education is also the focus of the **Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window** that enables students and academics from Asia and Europe to benefit from mobility schemes. Some of the major objectives of the programme are:

- To build human resources in Asian developing countries.
- To promote cooperation between sending and hosting institutions.
- To enable the most disadvantaged students to benefit linguistically, culturally and educationally from the experience of pursuing academic studies in another country and to promote common values.
- To build the capacity of the administration and public and private sector by participation of their staff in higher education mobility activities (especially through doctorate and post-doctorate activities).
- To enhance in the medium term the political, cultural and educational links between the European Union and third countries.



Efforts to mitigate poverty and create conditions for sustainable development will not succeed without adequate channels of communication. The EU's **Trans-Eurasia Information Network** offers such a channel. It is an advanced Internet-based telecommunications super-highway for collaborative use by the research and education communities in Asia and Europe. The Network boosts direct connectivity in the fields of research and education between Europe and Asia. It also helps improve intra-regional connectivity within Asia and acts as a catalyst for the development of national research networks in the developing countries of the region.

The Trans-Eurasia Information Network operates at speeds of up to 2.5 gigabyte per second. This high speed enables the doctors in Vietnam to provide surgery with the remote consultation of Austrian experts, or Philippine meteorologists to predict the typhoons with the help of German scientists. Besides, it enables a large number of students to benefit from international knowledge using e-learning.





Asia is a crucial partner for the EU, not only politically and culturally, but also economically. EU's **Asia-Invest** promotes Euro-Asian business cooperation, in particular among small and medium-sized enterprises, thus increasing opportunities for mutual trade and investment. The programme helps the integration of Asian SMEs into the global trade system.

Towards fairer trade for everyone



The programme has funded partnership projects between business intermediary organisations in the EU and Asia, helping them to benefit from trade and economic liberalisation.

The **Asia Trust Fund**, managed by the International Trade Centre, has given technical assistance for trade in Asia. Financed by the European Commission and other donors, it has responded quickly to the requests made by the authorities in Asia and has provided support in the form of rapid transfers of know-how to these regions.



Halting the spread of killer diseases

Health is a key to alleviating poverty and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For this reason the EU attaches great importance to improving the way the international agencies, donors and poor countries work together. The objective is to develop and implement health plans, creating and improving health services for the poor thus saving more lives.

Asia receives significant external development resources, including those from the EU. The European Union is therefore keen to cooperate with partner governments and other external donors to achieve the best possible results for the funds that the EU is providing.

The EU focus is on promoting health reform on a bilateral basis. But some specific priorities are treated on a regional level.



The EU assistance in Asia has been traditionally targeted at national level, via bilateral country programmes or by funding NGOs and health bodies. Recently both the EU and Asia have suffered outbreaks of infectious diseases of a transboundary nature. These cannot be combated without a regional strategy. The emphasis therefore has to be on developing a rapid, broad-based response at regional level.

This is what the EU has done. The European Commission has responded to the global threat of avian flu by providing immediate support to face potential crises. It is also working through a longer-term strategy designed to stimulate institution building and encourage global networking that will help rehabilitate affected areas.

The European Commission has also identified animal and human health as a major sector needing support. Over the next four years, €105 million will be spent on a health programme covering the Asian and Central Asian regions. The project is part of a globally coordinated response involving other international donors and countries.



The EU's **Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia** (RHIYA) is another important programme. It aims at improving the sexual and reproductive health of the most vulnerable sections of the population in South and Southeast Asia and in mainstreaming adolescent sexual and reproductive health into Asian governments' policies and programmes.

The initiative, managed by the UN Population Fund, allocated between 2003 and 2007 €22 million on projects in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

The results of this regional programme are currently scaling up in the policies of the participating countries.

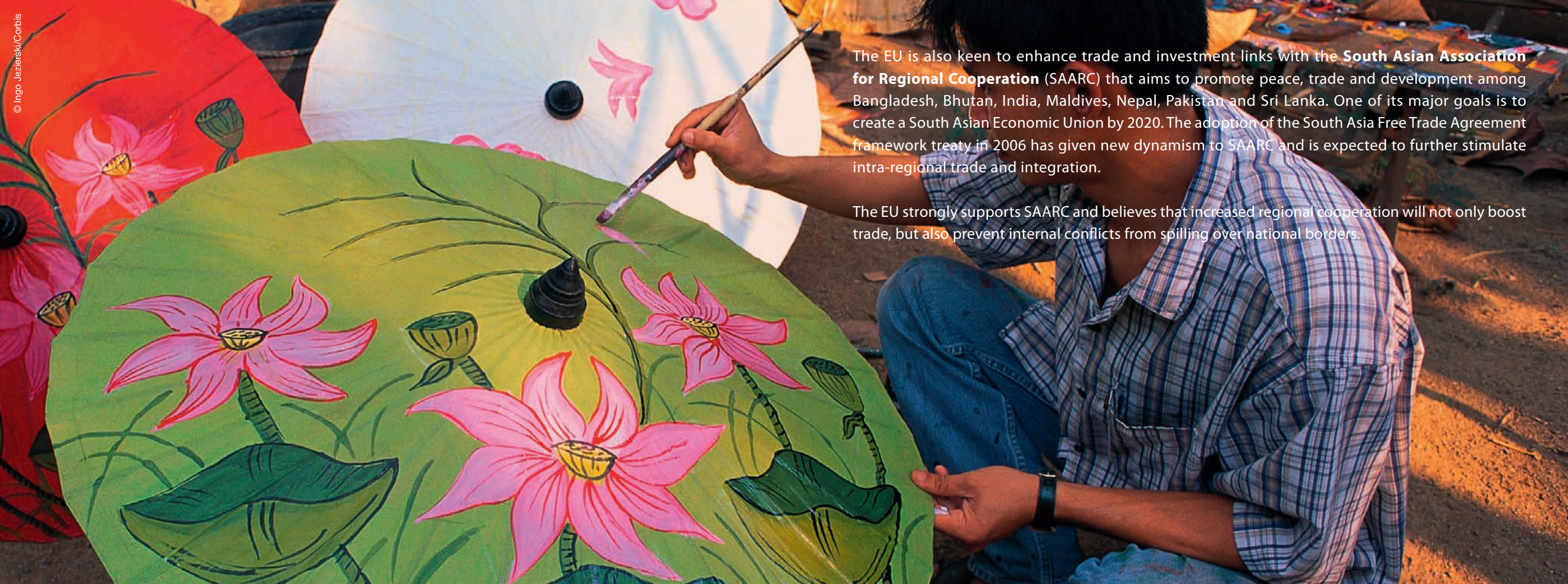


More and better aid. Focus in partnership

Adequate aid and fair trade that hold the key to stability and the alleviation of poverty in the region, form the focus of EU's Asia policy. Equally important is regional integration to which the EU is committed worldwide. In fact, the EU is working with several dialogue partners in Asia to build cooperative activities in the region. One of these is the **Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**. The regional grouping was established to foster economic growth, social progress and cultural development, while promoting regional peace and stability. The European Union is committed to building close links with ASEAN and recently earmarked €40 million to support related activities.

The EU's six priority areas are:

- Supporting regional economic integration.
- Promoting human rights, democratic principles and good governance.
- Mainstreaming justice and home affairs issues.
- Injecting a new dynamism into regional trade and investment relations.
- Continuing to support the development of less-prosperous countries.
- Intensifying dialogue and cooperation in specific policy areas.



The EU is also keen to enhance trade and investment links with the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** that aims to promote peace, trade and development among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One of its major goals is to create a South Asian Economic Union by 2020. The adoption of the South Asia Free Trade Agreement framework treaty in 2006 has given new dynamism to SAARC and is expected to further stimulate intra-regional trade and integration.

The EU strongly supports SAARC and believes that increased regional cooperation will not only boost trade, but also prevent internal conflicts from spilling over national borders.



The multilateral communication between the EU and Asia takes place through the **Asia-Europe Meeting** (ASEM). ASEM's key objective is to strengthen relations between Asia and Europe in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership. The European Union is keen to further strengthen ASEM and provides assistance through a number of channels. The EU has committed €28 million to support, among others, the Asia-Europe Foundation and the ASEM dialogue facility in order to increase policy dialogue and good governance.

European Commission

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