BACKGROUND

12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit & EU-ASEAN Leaders’ meeting

The 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit will take place on 18-19 October 2018 in Brussels, Belgium, under the theme "Europe and Asia: global partners for global challenges".

The meeting will be hosted and chaired by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, accompanied by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will also represent the EU. Additionally, Heads of State and Governments of 30 European States and 21 Asian partners, as well as the ASEAN Secretary-General, have been invited to attend.

The chosen theme underlines the important role that ASEM can play in supporting the rules-based order and the value of constructive multilateral cooperation. Connectivity will also be discussed during the summit, with an emphasis on strengthening Europe - Asia sustainable connectivity across ASEM's three pillars – political issues, economic and financial issues, and social and cultural issues - as a means of bringing countries, people and societies closer together.

On Thursday night, following the opening ceremony and a session with stakeholders, ASEM leaders will participate in a gala dinner in the presence of King Philippe of Belgium. The first plenary session on Friday morning will be dedicated to the promotion of inclusive growth and connectivity, the second to the support of the multilateral system and cooperation on global issues.

In a retreat session, leaders will discuss, in a more informal manner, regional and international issues, including non-proliferation, the denuclearisation of Korean Peninsula, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – the so-called Iran nuclear deal, counter-terrorism, maritime security and migration.

Along with the ASEM12 Summit, several side events are foreseen: the Asia–Europe Business Forum, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) young leaders' Summit, the ASEM Cultural Festival, the Asia Europe People's Forum and Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting the Asia-Europe Labour Forum, the Asia-Europe Economic Forum, and the ASEF Editors' Roundtable.

The Summit will provide an opportunity for many bilateral meetings in its margins and the signature of agreements between the EU and partner countries.

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The EU will sign a new Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) agreement with Vietnam and three agreements with Singapore:

- a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)
- an Investment Protection Agreement (IPA)

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The ASEM summit will be followed by an EU-ASEAN Leaders’ meeting. Leaders will discuss ways to strengthen the EU-ASEAN relationship, which remains a long-standing and unique partnership between our two regions.

1 This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.
Media programme
Thursday 18 October 2018
From 17.00 Arrivals of non-EU Heads of Delegation (Europa Forum)
19.00 Official welcome
19.25 Opening ceremony
   Session with stakeholders
21.00 Gala dinner in the presence of King Philippe of Belgium

Friday 19 October 2018
From 08.30 Arrival of ASEM Heads of Delegation
09.15 First Plenary Session:
   Building the future together: Promoting inclusive growth and sustainable connectivity
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   TTBC Signature ceremony with Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, Prime Minister of Vietnam
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10.45 Second Plenary Session:
   Reinforcing the multilateral system: advancing the ASEM partnership on global issues
12.15 Family Photo
12.30 Retreat session:
   International and regional issues
15.00 Closing Ceremony
15.30 Press Conference, with EU representation by Presidents D.Tusk, J.-C. Juncker, the Austrian
   Chancellor, S. Kurz (and representatives from the NESA and ASEAN Groups)
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17.15 Signature ceremony with Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore
17.45 EU-ASEAN Leaders’ meeting

- Video coverage in broadcast quality and photos in high resolution: http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu
ASEM

ASEM is a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. The summit is expected to reinforce the role of ASEM as a catalyst for effective multilateralism and to underscore the three pillars of the partnership: peace and security, trade and investment, sustainable development and people-to-people ties.

In this framework, ASEM partners are expected to underline their support for the rules-based international order with the United Nations at its core, and their joint commitment to open, free, and non-discriminatory trade and call to strengthen Europe-Asia sustainable connectivity across ASEM's three pillars.

Economic Cooperation and Connectivity

ASEM leaders are expected to reaffirm their strong support for preserving and strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system centred on the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The parties will stress the central role of the WTO in administering the global trading system, enhancing the rule of law, monitoring trade policies and settling disputes, and will exchange views on modernising and reforming the institution.

The summit will provide an opportunity for the partners to discuss the state of play in the world economy. Leaders should call for strengthened policies and cooperation to tackle global challenges in a sustainable way, and achieve inclusive economic growth, especially for the young people. Focus is also expected to be on cross-border trade and investment flows.

Leaders will also discuss connectivity in all its aspects from physical connectivity through sustainable infrastructural developments across Asia and Europe and digital connectivity to institutional linkages, political security-related dialogue and people-to-people ties. The 12th ASEM should welcome ongoing efforts to identify areas of connectivity in the context of the ASEM Pathfinder Group.

Days after EU Foreign Ministers are due to adopt a new EU strategy for better connecting Europe and Asia, ASEM leaders are also expected to welcome the adoption of the ASEM definition of connectivity and recall its main elements including the need to uphold market principles and agreed international rules, norms and standards. They should stress the importance of developing and strengthening transport systems and infrastructure that are environmentally, socially and fiscally sustainable.

Leaders will also discuss the impact of the digital economy and the need to work together on taxation and the digitalisation of the economy.

Global and regional challenges

Leaders are expected to exchange views on current and future challenges to international stability and non-proliferation, sustainable development, terrorism, climate change and migration.

The 12th ASEM Summit is expected to pay particular attention to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the preparation of the COP24 in Poland.

The Summit will also seek for more cooperation on international and regional issues of common interest and concern. This includes the situation on the Korean peninsula, maritime security, Iran and the JCPOA, as well as Ukraine.

Other key issues to be addressed are cooperation on human rights and ocean governance.

Summit side-events

The added value of ASEM is that it connects not only the highest levels of policy-making, but reaches various segments of society. In parallel with the Summit next week, Belgium will host numerous ASEM-related events.

- The Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) serves as a forum for inter-parliamentary contacts, exchanges and diplomacy among parliaments, and to promote mutual understanding among the people and countries of Asia and Europe.
- The Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) is an inter-regional network of civil society and social movements across Asia and Europe.
- The Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) is a meeting of business leaders from Asia and Europe, created by the ASEM to strengthen economic cooperation between the business sectors of the two regions.
• The Asia-Europe Young Leaders' Summit (ASEFYLS) focuses on ‘Ethical Leadership’ and provides a platform for reflection, dialogue and practice.
• The ASEM Cultural Festival ‘Europe meets Asia, Asia meets Europe’ will highlight two crucial themes: connectivity and heritage. It will show that intercultural exchange and the vision and creativity of artists can broaden our perspective on the past and the future. ‘Europe meets Asia, Asia meets Europe’ will be hosted by the Centre for Fine Arts-Brussels
• The Asia Europe Labour Forum (AELF) is organised by the International Trade Union Confederation. While the Forum is not an official ASEM Forum, it will present its conclusions at the ASEM12 Summit.

For more information see:
  • ASEM summit on the Council website
  • ASEM Infoboard
  • EEAS website on EU involvement in ASEM
  • Factsheet on ASEM (EEAS)
  • Brochure on ASEM (EEAS)
  • Factsheet on the EU’s strategy to connect Europe and Asia (EEAS)
  • ASEM: a statistical portrait (Eurostat)

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EU-ASEAN Leaders’ meeting

Following the ASEM Summit on 19 October 2018, a meeting of EU-ASEAN leaders will also take place. The meeting will be hosted and chaired by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, accompanied by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will also represent the EU.

Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore, which holds the Chairmanship of ASEAN for 2018, Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, which will hold the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2019, and Lim Jock Hoi, the ASEAN Secretary General will represent ASEAN.

Leaders will discuss ways to strengthen the EU-ASEAN relationship, which remains a long-standing and unique partnership between our two regions. They will reiterate the European Union’s support to the ASEAN integration process and will address opportunities to strengthen their cooperation, in particular on security and global challenges. Leaders are also expected to express their resolve to work together to reinforce the rules-based international order and multilateralism.

They will review progress in negotiations to conclude an ambitious EU-ASEAN Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and in both sides’ efforts to establish the parameters of a future region-to-region Free Trade Agreement, building on the bilateral FTAs between several ASEAN Member States and the EU.

They will also address our mutual interest in promoting dialogue and cooperation between the EU and ASEAN to ensure peace and stability, both regionally and globally.

Leaders should also address regional and international issues, including non-proliferation, the JCPOA, counter-terrorism, maritime security and migration.

Discussions will pave the way towards the 22nd EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, to be held in Brussels on 21 January 2019.

  • EEAS factsheet on EU-ASEAN relations
  • EEAS factsheet on EU-ASEAN trade cooperation celebrating 40 Years of Friendship & Partnership in 2017

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The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is a unique, informal platform for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. ASEM allows policymakers to exchange views on challenges across the 3 ASEM pillars:

- political issues,
- economic and financial issues,
- social and cultural issues.

ASEM covers areas, such as connectivity, trade and investment, climate change, in addition to broad security concerns such as counterterrorism, migration, maritime security and cyber issues.

55% global trade
60% global population
65% global GDP
75% global tourism

12th ASEM Summit “Global Partners for Global Challenges”, Brussels 18-19 October 2018

The 12th ASEM Summit (ASEM12), with the theme “Global Partners for Global Challenges”, will be held in Brussels on 18-19 October 2018. This Summit comes at a time of increasing interactions between the two continents with a growing number of trade and cooperation agreements, as well as stronger common engagement on security cooperation.

In a world of accelerating changes, the ASEM12 Summit represents a unique opportunity for the European and Asian ASEM partners to engage on political, economic and cultural topics. ASEM12 will be the most significant Europe-Asia gathering in 2018 and the largest summit in Brussels this year. The Summit will be chaired and hosted by the President of the European Council; the President of the European Commission, who will be accompanied by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, will also participate.

Connectivity will be discussed at length during the ASEM12 Summit and the EU will present a visual tool (the Sustainable Connectivity Portal) assessing Connectivity between ASEM partners. The Portal has been developed by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre, in close collaboration with Asian and European connectivity experts.
A policy-making laboratory since 1996

The 3 pillars of ASEM

**Political**
Important issues and challenges affecting both continents, including the fight against terrorism, common responses to international security threats, global environmental issues, management of migratory flows, human rights, welfare of women and children, etc.

**Economic and Financial**
Promoting growth and employment, enhancing cooperation on global financial issues, dialogue in priority industrial sectors, fostering connectivity between the two regions, etc.

**Social and Cultural**
A wide range of enhanced contacts and dialogue between the two regions on topics such as education, social protection and employment, and co-operation on the protection of cultural heritage.

For more information [eeas.europa.eu/asem](http://eeas.europa.eu/asem)  [www.aseminfoboard.org](http://www.aseminfoboard.org)
The European Union’s relations with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam date back to 1977 when official “Dialogue Relations” began. On 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 2017, ASEAN exported almost €135 billion to the EU and the EU €91 billion to ASEAN
- The EU has concluded negotiations for Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Singapore and with Vietnam and is negotiating FTAs with several other ASEAN countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines)
- In March 2017, the EU and ASEAN agreed to take new steps towards resuming talks for this region-to-region agreement
- The EU is the biggest provider of Foreign Direct Investment in ASEAN
- The EU has built an investment stock of over €263 billion in the region

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.

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, the Defence Officials Dialogue.
### INTEGRATION, CONNECTIVITY AND SECTORAL COOPERATION

The EU is a major development partner of ASEAN and the biggest donor to the ASEAN Secretariat, with around €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 (€85 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 is supporting 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.

### MOBILITY, EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Each year over 1,300 students and staff from ASEAN universities receive scholarships.

Almost 600 European students and staff will travel to ASEAN countries under the Erasmus+ programme.

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

10 million people travel between our two regions each year.

7 million are EU citizens who travel to ASEAN.