

## **Panel: Knowledge Connectivity between Asia and Europe**

Virtual, intellectual, financial and cultural connectivity is one of the most important phenomenon in 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These drivers of connectivity are instrumental in trade, travel, technology, knowledge and cultural transformations; and entail communication and linkages through diversified physical and virtual routes and networks, helpful in shortening travel time and enhancing the productivity and transportation of goods and services. These methods also unite regions and countries through environmentally friendly energy ecosystems, high-level secure and consumer friendly digital communication, encouraging cooperation and communication in advanced education, innovation, research, culture and tourism.

Within this broader discussion, there are vital indicators of Europe-Asia connectivity. Asian markets account for over one-third of exports from the European Union (EU), and almost half of the goods and services imported by the EU come from Asian countries. Both regions are annually trading in excess of 1.5 trillion euros, and accounting for over 60 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although, historically, both continents have been sharing ideas, goods and services, the full potential of connectivity is yet to be optimised.

Proposals have been made for a renewed policy framework to step up EU action and strategy on connectivity between Europe and Asia in order to develop a multifaceted and mutually beneficial corridor of knowledge and network of opportunities focusing on peace and security, social development, economic empowerment, education, culture, energy and infrastructure.

The fiscal and financial stability of both regions, requires long-term planning with far reaching effects and immediate implementation. As a first step, there is a greater need for knowledge sharing in regulatory experience, technical expertise and funding opportunities of projects that help interoperability and convergence; promote fiscally and environmentally sound growth; and strengthen the linkages in a way that will be mutually beneficial. To this end, the experts in this panel will discuss the possibility and frameworks for connecting the EU with Asia, through transport corridors, clean energy channels, digital networking and knowledge sharing through student exchange programmes. This is attainable through bilateral, regional and international partnerships based on equity and mutually agreed standards of cooperation, and attainable by leveraging sustainable financing for investments in both regions.

More specifically, this panel will explore the following key questions:

- 1- What are the needs, possibilities and policy options for construction of maritime, air and ground transportation infrastructures which could enhance the existing frameworks of bilateral relations?
- 2- How can energy-starved regions of Asia and EU benefit from intra- and inter-regional energy transfers? How can renewable energy resources be dovetailed to non-renewable energy infrastructures, benefitting from 1.3 trillion euros a year of infrastructure investment acquired by Asia in coming decades?
- 3- In wake of the wider knowledge gap, how can student exchange programmes such as Erasmus or Marie Curie be expanded in order to share knowledge and create new avenues of scholarly discourse? How can such endeavours benefit EU and Asia in the fields of science, technology, businesses, social and cultural issues, energy needs and

human health etc. and staff mobility benefit from digital connectivity between Asia and Europe?

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