La cooperazione con l'Asia - Il programma "Asia-Link"

L'obiettivo del programma Asia-Link è promuovere la cooperazione nel settore dell'istruzione superiore tra l'Unione europea e i paesi dell'Asia del Sud e del Sudest e la Cina. Il programma costituirà un quadro per un'ampia gamma di attività volte a promuovere la comprensione e la sensibilizzazione ai problemi reciproci, gli scambi e la cooperazione economica tra le due regioni. Il programma comprende le seguenti tre componenti, alle quali potrebbe essere concesso un sostegno sotto forma di sovvenzioni:

- sviluppo di risorse umane Asia-Link;
- elaborazione di programmi di studio Asia-Link;
- sviluppo istituzionale e di sistemi Asia-Link.

DESTINATARI
Istituti di istruzione superiore pubblici e privati (senza scopo di lucro), reti di istituti di istruzione superiore, studenti di corsi post-universitari, insegnanti e personale amministrativo di tali istituti. Il programma finanzia progetti presentati da istituti di istruzione superiore pubblici e privati. Ogni progetto deve coinvolgere almeno 4 partner di cui due istituti europei di differenti paesi e due istituti asiatici di differenti paesi.

AREE AMMISSIBILI
I 27 Paesi dell'Unione Europea e i seguenti paesi: Islanda, Liechtenstein, Norvegia, Croazia, Macedonia, Turchia.
Inoltre i paesi asiatici: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambogia, Cina, Filippine, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldive, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tailandia, Timor orientale, Myanmar e Vietnam.

SCADENZA
Il programma è attualmente previsto fino al 2008

Per maggiori informazioni sul programma scarica
il depliant informativo (2 pag) o la brochure informativa (16 pag)

Per informazioni
Programma Asia-Link

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Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-link/index_en.htm
Asia-Link Programme
A programme for higher education networking between Europe and Asia

Objectives

The Asia-Link Programme was set up by the European Commission to promote regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in EU Member States and developing countries in Asia. The programme aims to promote the creation of new partnerships, to reinforce existing partnerships between European and Asian universities, and to create new sustainable links. The Programme is funded by the EU budget, under the budget line for “Political, economic and cultural cooperation with Asian developing countries”.

Programme activities

1. Partnership Projects

The major share of the programme’s budget provides co-funding for partnership projects. Four Calls for Proposals for partnership projects have been launched over the first four years of operation (2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005). Projects are based on a partnership of at least two European and at least two Asian institutions.

Under these four Calls, a total of 155 partnership projects have been selected for co-funding with a total of 707 participating institutions. The total EC contribution to the 155 projects selected so far amounts to € 53 million. In general, the EC contributes 75% of costs of the project. 90% funding is possible where Asian partners are exclusively from least developed countries.

Calls for Proposals have generated enormous interest among the academic community in Asia and Europe. Over the four Calls almost 1000 proposals have been submitted involving almost over 4500 higher education institutions in Asia and Europe.

A 5th Call for Proposals was launched in June 2006.

Partnership projects can undertake activities in one or more of the following three areas:

Human Resource Development
These activities aim to upgrade the skills of university teaching staff, in particular young faculty and future teachers (i.e. postgraduate students), and administrators. Each project should provide for mobility of nationals from both the European Union and the eligible Asian countries.

Curriculum Development
Activities aim to develop curricula, by producing new/improved courses, modules or teaching/training materials. Each project, which should be innovative,
covers activities relating to the preparation of curricula and course material (content definition, teaching tools, production/printing of course material), their dissemination and the training of professors/tutors to teach them.

Institutions & Systems Development
Grants are awarded for co-operative projects that aim to enhance the overall management of institutions of higher education through the sharing of experience between Asian and European institutions (or groups/associations of institutions).
The Programme is demand-driven, and as such the Guidelines for the Calls for Proposals set out a relatively wide range of priority areas. A number of thematic clusters can be identified among funded partnership projects:

2. Programme support activities

- Capacity-Building Actions
  Assessment of proposals for Asia-Link partnership projects received so far has shown that unsuccessful proposals often suffer from weaknesses resulting from poor project design and improper use of the logical framework approach to project construction. A series of five three-day pilot training workshops counting 50 participants each is being held during the last quarter of 2005. Some 200 representatives from higher education institutions will be trained on the use of the Logical Framework and on Project Cycle Management (PCM) as the basis for project design, management and evaluation

- Studies
  A series of three studies is currently under preparation. These are intended to provide a wider knowledge base to the higher education sector in Europe and Asia, in order to enhance cooperation and mutual understanding. The three topics are:
  - Patterns of HE cooperation and practical issues affecting EU-Asia university partnerships
  - Partnerships/relationships between universities and business/industry in Europe and Asia
  - University cooperation for sustainable development in Europe and Asia.

- European Higher Education Fairs
  A series of seven European Higher Education Fairs will take place over the 2006-2008 period, in China, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The Fairs provide a forum for European higher education institutions and associations to promote the European HE sector to Asian students and academics, and to exchange best practice on Asia-Link and other higher education cooperation initiatives.

- Asia-Link Forum
  Annual meetings bring together Asia-Link project representatives with representatives of the higher education sector in Asia and Europe. These meetings discuss project approaches and results, and provide advice and feedback on the Programme’s activities and priorities.

- Information, Communication
  The programme website, updated on a regular basis, provides a range of information, news and statistics on Calls for Proposals and funded projects. It also houses a partner search database, allowing interested higher education institutions to post their areas of interest. Flyers and brochures on the programme are also produced. Information sessions for potential applicants are organised in Europe and in Asia.

Website: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-link/index_en.htm
E-mail: europeaid-asia-link@ec.europa.eu
An overview

The Asia-Link Programme provides funding and support for cooperation and networking between the higher education sectors in countries in Asia and the European Union.

The programme was set up by the European Commission in 2002. By mid-2005, the programme had selected 156 projects for funding, bringing together higher education institutions in partnerships to develop human resources, draw up new curricula, and improve administration. A total of 710 institutions are involved.
Introduction: developing European Union–Asia partnerships

The European Commission's Asia-wide programmes

The European Commission’s priorities for the development of EU–Asia relations over the coming decade are outlined in the communication ‘Europe and Asia: a strategic framework for enhanced partnerships’ (adopted in September 2001). A key requirement of this strategy is the need to improve mutual understanding between the two regions through enhanced cooperation based on partnerships.

Therefore, besides its existing bilateral agreements with individual Asian countries, the EU has established ‘Asia-wide’ programmes to promote new forms of cooperation based on partnerships between organisations in the EU, and those in the developing countries of Asia. The programmes support cooperation in the areas of networking between higher education institutions, business cooperation and environmental solutions. These programmes are managed by the EuropeAid Co-operation Office (the European Commission’s development cooperation office) and the European Commission’s delegations in Asia. The programmes are managed along similar lines, providing grant co-funding to non-profit-making organisations working in a partnership mode.

Asia-Link is one of three European Commission programmes set up to promote partnerships between organisations in Europe and Asia.

• Asia-Link Programme — promoting regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions;
• Asia-Invest Programme — supporting economic cooperation by promoting business-to-business activities;
• Asia Pro Eco Programme — improving environmental performance and technology partnerships and to promote sustainable responsible investment.
What is the Asia-Link Programme?

Higher education is an area of huge potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between Europe and Asia. The European Union is keen to be a major partner with Asia in the sector. Closer ties between higher education institutions and mobility for students and academic staff can boost understanding between the two regions, and can provide a better basis for developing economic opportunities, with increased prosperity as a result.

The Asia-Link Programme was set up by the European Commission to promote regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in EU Member States and in Asia. The programme aims to promote the creation of new partnerships, to reinforce existing partnerships between European and Asian universities, and to create new sustainable links.

Besides promoting cooperation in this way, the Asia-Link Programme serves as a framework for a broad range of activities aimed towards promoting mutual awareness and understanding, exchanges and economic cooperation between the two regions. It is 'demand-driven', responding to needs identified by higher education institutions themselves.

The Asia-Link Programme does not provide individual scholarships or grants for individual researchers. Nor does it provide bilateral funding for the education sector in a particular country. The programme provides support in three main areas.

Asia-Link: the objectives

To help strengthen Europe’s economic and cultural presence in Asia, and that of Asia in Europe

To enhance mutual awareness and understanding

To provide a framework for the further development of EU-Asia cooperation in higher education

To promote Europe as a study and research centre of excellence
Co-financing for partnership projects

Partnership projects are organised, targeted and sustainable cooperative projects, established and endorsed by partnerships of higher education (HE) institutions from the EU and eligible Asian countries. The Commission 'co-finances' projects, providing 75% of project costs, or 90% for partnerships involving the least developed of the eligible Asian countries. Partnership projects are selected following a Call for Proposals.

Capacity-building

Asia-Link support goes to activities designed to improve project design and management skills within the higher education sector.

Information and programme-support measures

The programme also carries out activities to improve the information available to the HE sector in the two regions, to promote the programme, and to ensure it is meeting the needs of the HE sector. These include the activities to promote networking, to consult stakeholders, and to disseminate information.

Asia-Link: eligible countries

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(1) Institutions and organisations from Brunei, Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore can fully participate in projects as associates, provided they do not receive Commission funding.

(1) Excluding Hong Kong and Macau.
How does the programme provide support?

1. Partnership projects

These projects are run by partnerships between higher education establishments in Europe and Asia. The minimum partnership must comprise two or more European partners from different Member States, and at least two Asian partners.

Projects should aim to upgrade and enhance the skills of students, teaching staff and administrators of higher education institutions through the provision of in-country and overseas training; promote the exchange of experience and encourage mutual appreciation of study programmes and reciprocal access to higher education; raise awareness of opportunities in the sector and develop links that can ultimately lead to mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

Partnership projects may last between 12 and 36 months. Activities may cover the following.

(a) Human resource development

These are activities to upgrade the skills of university teaching staff, in particular young faculty and future teachers (i.e. postgraduate students), and administrators. They should also aim to promote mobility for both Europeans and Asians. Activities can include short teaching/training missions in Europe/Asia; short intensive overseas programmes for research purposes or to attend workshops; study/research abroad at PhD and Master's level; internships as part of a university–industry cooperation programme.

(b) Curriculum development

Project activities here may develop new curricula, producing new/improved courses, modules or teaching/training materials. Projects can match curricula to labour market needs, coordinate modules at different institutions, and use forms of distance education. These materials are then built into courses on offer at the participating institutions.
(c) Institutional and systems development

The activities are aimed at enhancing the overall management of higher education institutions through the sharing of know-how between Asian and European institutions. They can provide seminars and training sessions for officials, or develop peer reviews of institutions and what they offer.

Priority will be given to projects related to the following areas:

- economic development (economics, management, technology, engineering, science, health, etc.) and to specific economic sectors (i.e. agriculture, tourism, etc.);
- development of economic cooperation such as international relations, regional integration, conflict resolution, public policy, business law and taxation, sustainable development, business ethics, environmental sciences, etc.;
- contemporary European and Asian studies, European integration, Asian development, Europe-Asia relations, etc.;
- social and cultural development.

Other subject areas are, however, not prevented from participating, for example, as a component of multidisciplinary projects, provided that applicants can demonstrate their relevance to the overall objectives of the Asia-Link Programme.

Partnership project grants

Grants are awarded on a co-financing basis. Up to 75% of the total eligible project costs are funded by the European Commission grant (up to the grant ceiling). The remaining amount must be provided by the institutions involved in the partnership. In practice, this is usually provided in the form of a portion of the salary of the staff involved in the project.

Grants of up to 90% of the total eligible costs may be awarded for project proposals involving, on the Asian side, higher education institutions that are exclusively from the following least developed countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, East Timor, Laos, the Maldives and Nepal.
2. Capacity-building actions

The capacity-building actions strand is designed to develop project management skills for current and future projects.

Assessment has shown that unsuccessful proposals submitted to the Asia-Link Programme often suffer from certain weaknesses in the way they are designed and constructed. A common problem has been weakness within the logical framework. The logical framework method of analysis is widely used by many donors, and its use is encouraged by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. The logical framework forms the basis for the European Commission’s system of project cycle management.

Capacity-building actions therefore aim to provide training in the use of a project cycle management approach — and in particular the logical framework — in order to construct strong project proposals that will channel ideas into achievable, efficient and cost-effective projects.

3. Information and programme support

3.1. Information support and studies

One of the objectives of the programme is to provide support for the production of targeted information on structural aspects of higher education systems in the EU and Asia, and on cooperation initiatives between the two regions in this sector.

Improving mutual understanding and awareness through information of this sort is a key priority of the Asia-Link Programme, and a prerequisite for successful partnerships. Improving the quality and availability of information on key issues of higher education will help bridge some of the gaps that exist between the higher education sectors in Europe and Asia.
dedicated to higher education networking between Europe and Asia

3.2. Programme support

Stakeholders meetings

An Asia-Link stakeholders’ meeting is held once a year. The purpose of the meeting is to provide political and strategic programme orientation and gather recommendations on the future implementation of the programme. The meeting advises the European Commission on questions of approach and strategy that will contribute to the programme's planned objectives. It also contributes to the improvement of the programme and enables the Commission to get to know better the needs of beneficiaries and potential applicants. It is composed of a group of representatives (based on the principle of rotation) of higher education institutions, associations and governments from Europe and Asia, selected for their specific competence and knowledge in relation to the objectives and implementation of the Asia-Link Programme.

Information and promotion

The Asia-Link Programme has its own website on the Europa server. This is the main source of information for those wishing to apply to the programme, and for those seeking information about projects or potential partners. Regular electronic updates are sent to those subscribing to the programme’s mailing list.

Networking

The programme also organises opportunities for projects to network in order to share and compare ideas and best practice.
Who is eligible?

All projects must be based on a partnership involving higher education institutions from EU and eligible Asian countries. Applicants must have their headquarters in European Union Member States or in any of the eligible Asian countries. All partner institutions must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the applicants.

A higher education institution is defined as an institution which:

- provides courses at undergraduate and/or graduate level of higher education leading to a recognised qualification in its own country; and may be called a ‘university’ or bear some other relevant name (such as ‘polytechnic’, ‘college’, ‘institute’, or similar); and
- is recognised and its degrees accredited by the competent national authority in its own country.

Private higher education institutions that have been registered for a minimum period of three years may participate on the same basis as public institutions, provided that the project does not produce any profit for the applicant or partners.

The Asia-Link Programme is also open to:

- established networks of higher education institutions within the area covered by the programme;
- regional higher education institutions not belonging to any national system but formally recognised by one of the eligible countries.

Partnerships

As a minimum requirement, consortia must involve at least four partner institutions. At least two of these must come from different European Union Member States and two from one or more eligible Asian countries.

Associates may be involved in a project on the condition that they provide effective support and are aware that they will not benefit from the Community funding. Such associates could
be: governmental departments or agencies; relevant commercial organisations, such as individual industrial companies, banks, chambers of commerce; non-governmental organisations, think-tanks, associations; foundations, charities, etc. Associates may originate from the eligible countries or from Hong Kong, Macau, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore.

Asia-Link priorities

Priority is given to proposals that involve:

- more than the minimum number of partners;
- partners from more than one eligible Asian country;
- partners from eligible Asian countries that are defined as least-developed countries (see above);
- institutions from less-developed regions within eligible Asian countries.

While applications for partnership projects involving more than the minimum of four members are particularly welcome, this does not mean that very large partnerships are seen as preferable to smaller ones. The optimum size of a partnership is one which allows for the achievement of project objectives in the most cost-effective way.
How to apply

(a) Familiarise yourself with the Asia-Link Programme: Consult the programme website, and read the programme Guidelines for Applicants, published at the same time as the Call for Proposals.

(b) Ensure you are eligible to submit a project: Ensure you meet the eligibility criteria for the type of project for which you are applying.

(c) Ensure you have at least the minimum number of partners to develop a project: Each partner should contribute to the design and implementation of the project, providing facilities, human resources, skills and expertise, experience or similar inputs. Please ensure that there is the required minimum partnership for the type of project: check the eligibility conditions.

(d) Prepare a project proposal with budget: The project proposal must comply with the official EC format for presentation. Guidelines and application material for submitting a proposal are available on the programme website. Please follow these carefully.

(e) Submit your proposal: Submit your project proposal by registered post, hand delivery or courier service. Addresses and the procedures to follow are explained in the Guidelines.

(f) Selection procedure: Proposals are first screened for administrative compliance, and then assessed on both a technical and a financial basis according to evaluation criteria that are explained in the guidelines.

(g) Enquiries: Questions may be sent by e-mail or by fax to the addresses listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the Call for Proposals.

E-mail: europeaid-asia-link@cec.eu.int
Fax (32-2) 29-84863
Asia-Link to date

Under the first four Calls for Proposals, the Asia-Link Programme received 984 applications, involving 4590 higher education institutions.

The pie-chart shows that the institutions involved in these applications have been split roughly half and half between European and Asian institutions.

The four calls together approved 156 projects for funding. The following chart shows the country of origin of the coordinators and partners within these projects.
Asia-Link projects – some examples

**Nature conservation starts with education**

Fast economic development and increasing numbers of tourists combined to pose a serious threat to the natural habitats in China, particularly in the Province of Sichuan, home to the giant panda. In order to address this situation, the Asia-Link project ‘An integral approach to curriculum development for nature conservation in China’ integrated sustainable management of nature and wildlife resources in the curriculum of Sichuan Agricultural University. The achievements of the project are significant:

- six courses on wildlife and nature management launched in September 2003;
- course concepts and teaching materials collected;
- industry practice incorporated into the curriculum contents;
- Internet forum established to facilitate the exchange of experience;
- training for Chinese lecturers provided in China, the Netherlands and Finland;
- a series of workshops and seminars on nature conservation supported the EU-China exchange of know-how;
- additional support secured from the prestigious Wolong Giant Panda Breeding and Research Centre and the Wolong Giant Panda Reserve.

The partnership between the Sichuan Agricultural University, the Van Hall Instituut, (Netherlands) and the University of Helsinki (Finland) contributed to the education of trainers and students on how to offer their natural resources a better chance.
Multiple faces for our cities

In an era of rapid economic growth, China has to ensure that construction and planning remain environmentally sound, while preserving national traditions and culture. With support from the Asia-Link Programme of almost EUR 300 000, the project 'Euro-China exchange: technology and culture of generative design approach' set out to promote multilateral networking of academia from Europe and China in the field of generative approaches to creative building design, an innovative area of architectural design which can positively contribute to the demands of today’s building practices. Over a period of 24 months, the project achieved impressive results:

- a research Generative Design Laboratory set up for more than 100 students in each of the four universities involved;
- summer courses on architecture, industrial and habitat design initiated in the European universities for 50 postgraduate students;
- 14 papers on generative design published; 14 Master’s theses and five doctorate studies conducted;
- practical application of the research in the reconstruction of the famous Haihe Lou palace, the ‘Austro-Hungary’ district in Tianjin, and the recovery of the Shaoxing ancient city near Shanghai;
- a seminar on identity and design organised in Beijing;
- workshops on generative design organised in Shanghai and Tianjin.

The partnership between the Italian Politecnico di Milano and universities from Germany, the Netherlands and China contributed to the improvement of skills and mobility of postgraduate students and teaching staff from Europe and China and fostered their research cooperation in new fields of architecture design. http://www.generativedesign.com
LAND-MAN —
Man controlling the land

Nepal suffers from severe landslide disasters every year, resulting not only in a heavy loss of life but also in deterioration across the whole mountain environment. With a contribution of EUR 266,437 from the Asia-Link Programme, the project ‘LAND-MAN: a new curriculum based on open distance learning for Asian-European education and training in LANDslides MANagement’ set about linking up geologists and engineers within a virtual scientific group, and enabling them — together with students and professors — to have continuous access to education in the field. The project achieved important outputs:

- a website provided access to discussion groups, case studies, guidelines and research material in the field of landslides;
- a distance training course in landslide management was designed and placed online;
- three workshops familiarised professors and postgraduate students with the practice of distance training;
- an online virtual professional community set up as a meeting place for researchers and practitioners, enabling them to communicate and exchange ideas through e-mail discussion groups and message boards;
- multimedia formats of the courses ensured different approaches to the training content: tele-training, a CD course and web format.

Over a year of implementation, the project initiated by the consortium between the University of Sannio (Italy), University of Durham (UK), and Tribhuvan University of Kathmandu (Nepal) contributed to the development of education in the field of landslide management and promoted awareness and knowledge about landslide management among decision-makers.

http://www.land-man.net

For fact sheets on all Asia-Link projects, visit the programme website:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-link/fundedprojects.htm