



## **Overview of key actions and developments for the CSO consultation on the EU's Asia-Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027:**

Directorate-General for International Partnerships  
Directorate for Asia and the Pacific

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Funded by the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE), the Asia-Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme (RMIP) 2021-2027 was approved in November 2021. It establishes the strategic priorities to be pursued during the period 2021-2027 in complementarity with the EU's thematic and bilateral programmes covering partner countries in the region. The RMIP's objectives are aligned with the EU's priorities for external Action as well as the EU-Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Global Gateway (GG) adopted in 2021.

In May 2021, March 2023, and September 2024, the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) held consultations with members of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD) and other civil society organisations, local authorities and social partners. During the meetings, participants shared recommendations concerning the formulation and implementation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 (RMIP).

Ahead of the next consultation foreseen on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025, this report aims to provide insights on how the topics of last year's discussion have evolved and are reflected in the current programming of the RMIP. This document provides information on the topics of the 2024 discussion: 1) Climate change, energy and environment, 2) Migration and forced displacement, and 3) Digital, as well as on private sector involvement which will replace digital as a focus topic in the 2025 consultation.

## CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT

### “Climate change, energy and environment” – Brief summary of actions approved between 2021- August 2024

The **Pan-Asia** flagship **SWITCH Asia programme** supports sustainable consumption, production and circular economy in partner countries. In 2021, the EU provided a Policy component (EUR 20 million) to foster dialogue between national governments and local/EU stakeholders (notably with the private sector and civil society organisations) over the period 2023 - 2026. In 2023, a call for proposals in “Support to the greening of value-chains” was launched (EUR 24 million) to fund collaborative projects.

Furthermore, at Pan-Asia level, contributions from the RMIP were made to Global Challenges programmes tackling “Climate change, energy and environment” priorities. Those programmes have dedicated activities in the Asia Pacific region, including the “Water security for all” action (EUR 2.4 million), “Combating wildlife trafficking” (EUR 8 million) and “Capacity Development for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)” (EUR 22 million).

In **Central Asia**, the EU has adopted in 2023 a contribution (EUR 20 million) to the regional Team Europe Initiative on Energy, Water and Climate Change, the landmark regional programme through which the EU and its Member States endeavour to support a green and sustainable transition in the region. In particular, the TEI focuses on two components: improved regional integrated water-energy resources management and increased investment for a green transition.

In **South-East Asia**, the EU adopted in 2021 the **EU-ASEAN/Southeast Asia Green Initiative** adopted in 2021 (EUR 30 million) promoting a green and inclusive growth model. The initiative was formally endorsed by the EU-ASEAN Summit of December 2022 and 5 projects (including two grants with CSOs) were signed in 2022.

An action enhancing regional energy connectivity (EUR 5 million) was adopted to help address the energy and transmission challenges in South Asia, focusing on Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. The technical assistance will support Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal to build their capacities to participate in cross-border electricity trade.

EU and **China** have a mutual interest in supporting efforts to tackle global challenges and environment and climate are the most dynamic areas of EU-China cooperation. Several actions have been implemented in these sectors to support the priorities identified under the EU-China High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue and to advance clean energy transition in line with the external dimension of the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement targets. These include an action (EUR 5 million) to further develop China's Emissions Trading System (ETS) towards a cost-effective tool to reduce emissions, an action to continue to address the demand for illegal wildlife products in China (EUR 1 million), in support of key objectives of the

EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, support to the reduction plastic waste and marine litter in China by supporting circular economy, cooperation on water management to address water-related issues (compounded by urbanisation, population growth, pollution and competing water demands) and enhance global water leadership.

Furthermore, the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) has supported Chinese think tanks engagement to promote structured exchanges and intellectual debates on topics of relevance, such as on global green governance.

In **India**, several actions were initiated in 2021-2022, such as the “Climate, Energy, Trade and Innovation Support in India” (EUR 5 million) to support the EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership and reinforce cooperation on an affordable, clean and secure energy transition and implementation of India’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The “Global Gateway India” action approved in 2022 also covers several thematic areas including Just Energy Transition, urbanisation, water partnerships and circular economy projects (EUR 22,5 million). Support to India’s green transformation is also further supported through a dedicated action looking into clean energy and climate; sustainable finance and biodiversity adopted in 2023 (EUR 15 million). This will, inter alia, support the development of the EU-India Green Hydrogen Partnership, promote the uptake of offshore wind, support credit lines for green investments with public banks, help develop bankable green projects, and improve agro-ecology and natural farming.

Regarding the **Pacific region**, in the context of the wider Team Europe Initiative (TEI) “Green-Blue Alliance”, further support of EUR 6 million was provided to the Kiwa Initiative in 2022 to help Pacific countries attract climate finance to protect biodiversity against the impact of climate change through nature-based solutions. Other actions approved include the “Pacific Solutions: Integrated Ocean Management” (EUR 1.5 million) and support to the “Pacific NDC Hub” (EUR 3 million) helping Pacific Island Countries to finance and implement their countries’ NDCs towards sustainable and resilient development and transition to a low-carbon development pathway, while considering gender-sensitive aspects.

Actions to strengthen partnerships with **High Income Countries** in support of the green transition were supported by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) under the RMIP, through several actions including the Cooperation on green transition action with the Gulf Cooperation Council (EUR 3 million); the EU-Korea Green Partnership Action”(EUR 4 million), as well as regional initiatives such as the action to enhance Responsible Business Conduct for green, digital, and resilient supply chains in Asia (EUR 4 million).

Furthermore, a EUR 3,8 million Support Facility for the implementation of the EU-**Japan** Green Alliance was established to facilitate and strengthen the dialogue to support the implementation of the EU-Japan Green Alliance, move forward EU objectives on the green transition and to incentivise more ambitious approaches by Japan towards the implementation of key multilateral environmental agreements and pledges.

### Update on programming since last PFD consultation (September 2024):

In the **Pan-Asia** framework, a new action was adopted under the SWITCH Asia Programme. Its aim is to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient, and circular economy across Asia by encouraging sustainable production and consumption practices. The specific objectives include greening key economic value chains, improving the circular economy investment climate, and encouraging responsible consumption of sustainable products. Central to this new phase is the focus on scaling up successful pilot projects integrating grants and financial instruments linking to concrete financing mechanisms and strategic partnerships with private sector actors and financial institutions.

Furthermore, at Pan-Asia level, contributions from the RMIP were made to the global challenges action “Nature for resilient investments and infrastructure” priorities that will have activities in the Asia Pacific region, enhancing nature-based solutions.

A regional Civil Society Facility for **Central Asia**, with an amount of EUR 4.5 million, was launched in September 2024. The two main objectives of the Facility are to: i) enhance the participation of Central Asian CSOs in regional policy processes, including during the annual Civil Society fora; ii) support the development of capacities and, thus, the engagement of Central Asian youth representatives in national and regional policy processes. The implementers are the UNOPS, in partnership with the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Annual EU – Central Asia Civil Society Fora are organised with the support of the Facility. The next forum (6<sup>th</sup> edition) will be held in Bishkek in the first half of February 2026. Under the Civil Society Facility, 5 thematic working groups have been created this year on:

- Climate Change and Environment Protection (Global Gateway (GG) flagship in Central Asia)
- Digital Transition and Transformation (GG flagship in Central Asia)
- Governance, Social and Responsible Business (enabler of GG – 360 degree approach)
- Women Empowerment (enabler of GG – 360 degree approach)
- Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making (enabler of GG – 360 degree approach)

Each of these groups has around 25 participants (on average 5/country). These thematic groups will meet regularly, mostly online, beyond the annual civil society fora.

In **South Asia** we continue to support the regional priorities (climate change and environment, connectivity and security). Work continues to support South Asian cross-border electricity trade to facilitate climate change mitigation efforts via the integration of renewable energy, and improvement of energy security.

In **South-East Asia**, the EU has committed EUR 30 M to launch two new regional projects on biodiversity financing and on Nature Based Solutions. The new project on biodiversity financing (EUR 15 M) is a partnership with KfW and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity to support livelihoods and ecosystems, focusing on protected areas. The Nature Solutions Finance Hub is an initiative of the ADB to which the EU has committed EUR 15 M. These actions will complement previous projects under the Green Team Europe Initiative with ASEAN.

In the **Pacific**, the phase II of the Regional Ocean Programme “Pacific-EU Marine Partnership Programme” (PEUMP2 - EUR 20 million) aims to address the preservation of the ocean while allowing the Pacific countries to sustainably exploit its marine resources, through different strands of awareness raising, information sharing and training activities at various levels.

The “Pacific regional Electrification Fund” (EUR 15 million) aims to address the full electrification of remote areas through sustainable and renewable sources of energy. The project will allow deprived communities to have better access to basic services through access to the internet, such as e-administration, e-education, e-health, limiting the isolation of these communities. The programme not only includes installation of hard components to either access the main grid or creating a local mini grid but as well the support to national authorities to improve their policies and the existing (or to be created) facilities.

The Pacific Climate Change Initiative (Pac- CCI, EUR 18 million) adopted in 2025 includes:

*Component 1* (EUR 16 million) aims to make PICs’ school infrastructure and education systems

more resilient to climate change and develop a regional facility to tackle investments, learning, and capacity building in school infrastructure maintenance and upgrading/retrofitting for resilience.

*Component 2 (EUR 2 million)* will support the Regional Pacific NDC Hub's fourth programming phase to help PICs develop their climate strategies and actions.

In **India**, a new action was approved (CECP III - EUR 8M) to provide additional support under the EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership to the existing EU-India policy dialogues facilitating India's green transition. Focus will primarily be on sectors such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, including solar and offshore wind, green hydrogen, advanced biofuels and energy storage, (smart) grid integration and financing, climate mitigation and adaptation.

Under AAP 2024, support is also being provided for the greening of the Indian financial system (EUR 2 million) and for biodiversity (EUR 2.5 million).

We continue to work with partners to promote sustainable urbanisation through green investments focusing on green urban mobility, urban infrastructure and renewable energy. Building on the EU-India Partnership on Smart and Sustainable Urbanisation, the EU continues to support cities in India to drive sustainable development and climate action.

In **Yemen**, in August 2025 a multiannual support package of EUR 75 million was adopted, focusing on building an economically self-reliant, climate-resilient, food-secure, Yemen by strengthening local governance, improving access to sustainable basic services (water and energy), and fostering market-driven livelihoods and job creation that reduce dependence on humanitarian aid, while contributing to more opportunities for youth and supporting women to maintain and grow their position in the public domain. A significant focus of this programme will be on restoring local authorities' capacity to provide basic services, notably water and energy, and to ensure a more stable supply of water and energy. Another objective of this programme is to systematise the application of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches to enhance long-term food security and climate-smart agricultural practices in the agriculture and food systems.

### Pipeline:

At Pan-Asia level, the action "Farmers for Green Growth" is currently under adoption. It will strengthen farmers organisations and sustainable value chains. It will also promote research and innovation to support green transition through agroecological approaches and regenerative agricultural practices.

In Afghanistan, DG INTPA is finalising the 2025 support package of EUR 83 million, with a funding decision expected by year's end. In view of the country's growing economic challenges, EU support will focus on economic stabilisation and community resilience, helping Afghans better cope with current and future shocks. CSOs will play a central role in implementing these efforts. They are key partners in engaging communities, building local ownership, and driving inclusive and sustainable solutions, also in the areas of livelihoods, climate resilience, and natural resource management. Given Afghanistan's high vulnerability to climate change, frequent natural disasters, and growing water scarcity, CSOs will help translate EU support into local action, for instance by developing and sustaining climate-resilient practices at the community level.

# MIGRATION AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

## Migration and forced displacement” - Brief summary of actions approved between 2021- August 2024

The “Displacement Tracking and Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy in Asia” (DATA) program, launched in 2022 (EUR 9 million) has a multi-country coverage and contributes to strengthen evidence-based formulation and implementation of humanitarian and development policy and programming on migration and displacement in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In **Central Asia**, 2 projects were launched in 2022 focusing on “Remittances, Investment and Migrants’ Entrepreneurship in Central Asia” (REMIT - EUR 6 million) and on “Improving Migration Management and Migrant Protection in selected Silk Route countries” (PROTECT - EUR 9 million).

Under the Regional TEI on the **Afghan Displacement** situation proposed in the Asia-Pacific regional programme, an action to support Afghan refugees and displaced people in Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan (EUR 51 million) was approved in 2021.

In **South Asia**, several actions were adopted in 2023 and subsequently launched, including the action “Preventing and Addressing Trafficking of Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants” (EUR 9 million), the “Rohingya Resilience programme in Bangladesh” (EUR 35 million), the action “Sustainable reintegration of returnees and improved migration management in Pakistan” (EUR 7 million) and the two “Talent Partnership” actions respectively with Bangladesh and Pakistan (EUR 3 million each). In 2022, the Prottasha II project was launched to support the sustainable reintegration of **Bangladeshi** returnees and improving migration governance (EUR 20 million).

In **South-East Asia**, two actions looking into decent work and labour migration were approved in 2023, including the action “Ensuring Decent Work and Reducing Vulnerabilities for Women and Children in the Context of Labour Migration in South-East Asia” (EUR 13 million), and the action “Migration, business and human rights in Asia: Promoting corporate responsibility and migrant worker’s rights in supply chains” (EUR 5 million).

In response of the **Myanmar** displacement crisis, an action “supporting encamped Myanmar refugees in Thailand” living in nine camps in Thailand along the Thai Myanmar border was approved in 2021 (EUR 12 million).

In **China** an action “EU Trade, Gender, Consumer Safety, Migration, Employment and Social Affairs Policies” supporting EU-China Migration and Mobility policy dialogue was approved in 2022 (EUR 10.85 million).

## Update on programming since last PFD consultation (September 2024):

In **South Asia**, an Action on a “Comprehensive approach to Climate Mobility in South Asia” (EUR 5 million) was approved in 2024. It aims to increase the scope of options available to the individuals, communities, governments, and other stakeholders affected by climate induced migration and displacement. Specifically, it will focus on i) Increased availability and coordination of climate mobility data for evidence-based policymaking and implementation. ii) Enhanced adaptation and resilience of governments, communities, and migrants to climate-induced migration and displacement and iii) Improved policy and institutional responses to climate risks and climate mobility.

In **South-East Asia**, two Actions were adopted in 2024: “Building knowledge and capacity on the migration and climate change nexus in South-East Asia” (EUR 5 million) and “Ship to Shore



Rights in South-East Asia – Safe migration for decent work in the blue economy” (EUR 11 million). The Action on migration and climate change aims at improving the climate adaptation of populations at risk, especially socio-economically disadvantaged groups within selected Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. It will focus on improving evidence, policy and ASEAN engagement. The Ship to Shore Action will promote safe labour migration and decent work for a sustainable fish and seafood supply chain, including primary production (capture fishers and aquaculture) and post-harvest processing in South-East Asia.

In **Myanmar** on migration/refugees and the Rohingya crisis (in follow up of last year’s CSOs consultations, even if under special measures and not RMIP): Food security remains a key concern in Rakhine for all communities. Through the LIFT programme, agriculture support projects continue to operate in Rakhine. Under the Nexus Response Mechanism and through another EU funded initiative we are supporting a local partner’s consortium working in Rakhine to reinforce mechanisms of social cohesion between communities Rohingya Muslims on one side and Rakhine Buddhists on the other and building support among Rohingya and Rakhine communities for dialogue to de-escalate violence and find avenues for an inclusive political dialogue in the future.

Addressing the situation in **Afghanistan**, the “Regional Programme in support of durable solutions for displaced and returning Afghans and their host communities” (EUR 48M), adopted in 2024, will be implemented in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asia to achieve durable solutions for Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons. It aims to improve access to health, education, livelihoods, and legal protection across the region, while supporting returnees in Afghanistan - particularly women-headed households, unaccompanied minors, and persons with disabilities - with sustainable livelihood opportunities and essential services. CSOs are placed at the centre of implementation due to their role in delivering sustainable, local impact. For instance, in Pakistan, UNHCR regularly engages civil society under the Refugee Response Plan to strengthen the asylum system and promote refugee and host community self-reliance, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees’ whole-of-society approach. In **Iran**, under the DG INTPA funding (and now also covering DG MENA) NRC works closely with local organizations through mechanism of Multi-Purpose Service Centers (MPSCs), which serve as inclusive hubs for service delivery and community engagement. This model not only ensures direct access to essential services for Afghan and host communities but also strengthens the capacity of local partners by involving them in all stages of programming from needs assessment and consultation to training delivery and follow-up.

### Pipeline:

Two actions are currently going through the adoption process under the AAP in favour of **Asia-Pacific Region** for 2025 for migration, forced displacement and mobility: 1. Action on “Support to Displaced Myanmar populations in Thailand” (EUR 15 million) and 2. Action on “Integrated Border Management” for Pakistan (EUR 5 million) to improve a human rights-based border management that facilitates safe and regular mobility, supports protection-sensitive procedures, and contributes to preventing irregular migration and cross-border crime.

Two Actions to be implemented in **South and South-East Asia** are tentatively planned for the AAP in favour of Asia-Pacific Region for 2026 for migration, forced displacement and mobility: “Integrated Border Management Bangladesh” and “Durable Solutions for Displaced Myanmar Populations along the Thai Myanmar Border”.

In **Afghanistan**, the additional support package of EUR 83 million, to be finalized by the end of 2025, will contribute to addressing the root causes of migration and forced displacement. The EU’s approach recognises that migration challenges are deeply linked to local resilience and

therefore considers support to CSOs a key component of its response. Through its support, DG INTPA provides critical assistance to women, local activists, and CSOs, ensuring that Afghan-led initiatives play a key role in creating livelihood opportunities, delivering basic services, and supporting reintegration for both returnees and host communities, especially in return-dense areas. The EU also supports women-led CSOs and Afghan NGOs as key service providers.

For the regional response, we are also preparing an additional support package which will specifically target the current displacement crisis in Afghanistan but also the surrounding countries such as Pakistan, Iran and some Central Asian countries of EUR 38,5 Mio.



# DIGITAL

Digital is included in this note to report on developments since last year's consultation as digital was one of the focus topics in 2024. However, this year we will not consult on this topic.

## “Digital” – Brief summary of actions approved between 2021-August 2024

A **Pan-Asia** action covering Central Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia has been approved in 2024 to “support the resilience of Asian countries’ to violent extremism in the digital space”<sup>36</sup> (EUR 5 million). The action aligns with Global Gateway digital priority area in supporting open, stable and secure cyberspace, based on rule of law, human rights, democratic values, and inclusivity. It will address online radicalisation and digital harm with a priority focus on youth and women who are vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment purposes and are targeted through social media and other digital avenues, including gaming platforms. At the same time, the action will leverage IT technology and tools to facilitate dialogue, promote understanding, and counter misinformation and hate speech.

In **Central Asia**, the action “Dialogue and Action for Resourceful Youth” (DARYA – EUR 10 million) approved in 2021 promotes regional cooperation to improve vocational training policies for youth, including on digital skills and literacy.

In 2023, the first component of the **Central Asia** Regional Digital TEI was adopted (EUR 20 million). Through this Action, the EU supports the establishment of an enabling environment for digital connectivity in the countries of the region, covering areas including regulatory reform, e-government, cybersecurity, and data protection. This component is part of the broader TEI which also includes investments in satellite connectivity infrastructure.

The “**EU-ASEAN** Sustainable Connectivity package (SCOPE)” (EUR 60 million) adopted in April 2023 partly focuses on digital connectivity. The overall objective of the digital component (SCOPE-Digital) is to foster EU-ASEAN cooperation on Earth Observation-based environmental services through improved use of Copernicus (EUR 4 million). The specific objective/outcome of the action is to strengthen the capacities in selected ASEAN member states, as well as in the wider ASEAN region, to manage the increased Copernicus data flow building on Copernicus mirror site in the Philippines and produce added-value services. Digitalisation is also an important component of the SCOPE Trade project (EUR 20 million), with support to the ASEAN framework on digital trade.

A new action on “European Perspectives on Digital **China**” was approved in July 2024 (EUR 3 million) to enhance understanding of China’s digital and technological developments (regarding policies and investments), both domestically and in third countries (including through the Belt and Road Initiative), among EU stakeholders and policy makers, foster EU expertise in this area and increase the EU’s economic security and resilience.

## Update on programming since last PFD consultation (September 2024):

At **Pan-Asia** level, the action “Copernicus in Asia and the Pacific” aims to support public authorities, institutions, and relevant stakeholders in Asia-Pacific in making effective use of Copernicus Earth observation data to address environmental, climate change-related, and socio-economic challenges. To achieve this goal, the action focuses on two key areas: 1) capacity building of public authorities and institutions to utilize Copernicus data, and 2) stakeholder engagement to enhance the comprehension and use of Copernicus data among stakeholders, while fostering collaboration at local level and with EU counterparts.

In **Central Asia**, the second component of the Regional TEI (EUR 35 M) was adopted in 2024. It is a Blending grant, combined with a EUR 25 M loan from the EIB, channelled to the European satellite operator SES to provide digital connectivity to underserved communities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Implementation has started in 2025 in Kazakhstan, with negotiations ongoing in the other three countries for a start to implementation in 2026.

In the **Pacific**, the EU is intensely looking into possibilities of improving communication between the Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) and between the PICs and their global partners. The most evolved discussions for the time being involve the so called “Tam Tam” Global Gateway flagship project, an important subsea cable between New Caledonia and Vanuatu which has strategic importance in the Pacific region.

In **South Asia**, the EU is supporting capacities and regional coordination through the use of Earth observation and climate services applications. The programme aims at reducing the impact of climate change and natural hazards enhancing the availability, access and use of spatial information for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and related environmental management.

Furthermore, in South Asia, the regional Action “Addressing the exploitation of technology and online spaces by terrorist and criminal groups in South Asia” will enhance the resilience of South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives) and improve cross-border cooperation in addressing the challenges posed by technology-enabled crime and terrorism, thereby strengthening public safety and regional stability.

In **India**, under AAP 2024, the Trilateral Cooperation Action builds on the EU-India Trade and Technology Council decisions. It aims at strengthening trilateral cooperation between the EU and India for example on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and interoperability of digital public services.

Within the multiannual support programme for **Yemen** adopted in August 2025 (EUR 60 million), DG MENA will pay particular attention to youth and women beneficiaries, whose economic empowerment and financial inclusion are strongly connected to digital literacy and digital skills. These are important factors that can help women and men integrate financially and can foster innovative solutions for financial institutions and for the private sector, particularly MSMEs and business associations.

An action to strengthen digital partnerships and digital cooperation with **High Income Countries** in Asia Pacific (EUR 4 million) was adopted by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) under the RMIP.

### **Pipeline:**

At **Pan-Asia** level, the action “Asi@Connect - Phase 2” is currently under preparation. It shall maintain and improve a high-capacity internet connectivity network for education and research institutions across the Asia Pacific region, while also strengthening the capacities of national research and education networks, as well as facilitating research and education collaboration within the Asia-Pacific region and between Asia-Pacific and the European Union.

# PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

## Private sector involvement - Brief summary of actions approved since 2021

The **Pan-Asia** flagship SWITCH Asia programme supports sustainable consumption, production and circular economy in partner countries. In 2021, the EU provided a Policy component (EUR 20 million) to foster dialogue between national governments and local/EU stakeholders (notably with the private sector and civil society organisations) over the period 2023- 2026. In 2023, a call for proposals in “Support to the greening of value-chains” was launched (EUR 24 million) to fund collaborative projects. In 2025, a new action was adopted under the SWITCH Asia. Its aim is to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient, and circular economy across Asia by encouraging sustainable production and consumption practices. The specific objectives include greening key economic value chains, improving the circular economy investment climate, and encouraging responsible consumption of sustainable products. Central to this new phase is the focus on scaling up successful pilot projects integrating grants and financial instruments linking to concrete financing mechanisms and strategic partnerships with private sector actors and financial institutions.

Furthermore, at Pan-Asia level an action on “EU-Asia cooperation on competition and subsidies control” was adopted in 2024. It aims at fostering an enabling environment and a level playing field for trade and investment.

**Central Asia** has benefitted since 2021 (and before) from programmes supporting the development of private sector/entrepreneurship, the improvement of business climate, trade. In 2023 was adopted the programme entitled “Prosperity in Central Asia – Enhancing inclusive business environment to facilitate investments and international trade along the Trans-Caspian corridor”. The Prosperity programme aims to advance the connectivity agenda of Central Asia through the operationalisation of the Trans-Caspian corridor and the internationalisation of Central Asian businesses, to promote high-level political engagement and support the modernisation and reform of economies and to increase cooperation between the EU and relevant Central Asian countries on critical raw materials.

In **South-East Asia**, several regional projects involve the private sector, although private sector development may not be their main focus. The technical assistance facility under the Green Team Europe initiative, adopted in 2021, supports initiatives such as the establishment of an ASEAN centre of expertise on SMEs in the green transition. The SCOPE trade project, adopted in 2023, also engages closely with the private sector, in particular to get business perspectives on the development of the ASEAN policy framework which the project supports.

In **South Asia**, a new regional programme targets private sector organisations and CSOs to enhance the understanding of existing and emerging EU trade-related legislation and regulatory standards (Trade Facilitation Programme for South Asia). The programme aims at improving understanding of EU legislation and export requirements by public (government bodies) and private (businesses) sectors in South Asian countries as well as preparedness of action stakeholders on complying with EU legislation and export requirements.

In the **Pacific**, the EU supports the Pacific’s sustainable economic growth by fostering a private sector focused on green and blue economies. Our efforts prioritize enabling micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to access finance while creating a supportive legal and institutional environment. We invest in climate-resilient, green, and blue initiatives across key sectors such as agriculture and tourism. In agriculture, we strengthen value chains to boost productivity and resilience. In tourism, we promote practices that respect the environment and culture.

The EU and Pacific Island Countries are deepening cooperation to harness international trade for sustainable economic development. A key tool in this partnership is the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which is progressively establishing an asymmetric free trade area. This allows Pacific countries to export goods to the EU duty-free for all their exports, while EU market access for imports from the Pacific remains limited. A central feature of the agreement is to promote trade in sustainably produced goods, aligning economic growth with environmental and social responsibility. EU-funded trade programmes provide technical assistance to Pacific Island Countries to ensure smooth implementation of the EPA. These programs also support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in boosting their exports to Europe and across the Pacific region.

A new trade programme in the Pacific will support Pacific Island Countries and Pacific Overseas Countries and Territories to increase international and regional trade in sustainably produced goods (Trade and Sustainable Development Programme). Also, we will collaborate with Pacific governments to build robust financial systems, including strengthening banking systems by ensuring affordable correspondent banking relationships.

In September 2025, we organised the first ever EU-Pacific Business Forum in Nadi, Fiji. The event brought together 300 representatives from 18 Pacific countries and French overseas territories, both from the public and private sectors. A further bilateral Business Forum will be organised in 2026 with PNG and the second regional Forum is scheduled for 2027.

In **Afghanistan**, between 2021 and 2024, DG INTPA has adopted four successive Special Measures, totalling EUR 507 million, to provide basic needs and livelihoods assistance to the people of Afghanistan. Of this, EUR 95.7 million has been allocated to the employment sector, aiming to sustain jobs and enhance economic opportunities - including community-based employment - particularly for women, youth, and vulnerable groups such as minorities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Community-led private sector engagement has been promoted through support to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), business development services, improved market access, and microfinancing, including both microfinance institutions and community-based savings groups. CSOs have been key partners in these efforts, notably by supporting women-led enterprises and strengthening community cooperatives.

As regards **Yemen**, livelihoods support and job creation are important components of past and future programmes designed both at DG INTPA and DG MENA. Through its multiannual support programme for Yemen, DG MENA will contribute to improving the business climate for private sector development and trade facilitation and their integration with the Gulf region as well as creating dignified employment opportunities for men and women, support for local businesses, strengthened access to financial institutions, and skills development programs to promote inclusion in workforce in private sector initiatives.

In **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea (RoK)** a Business to Business Cooperation (B2B) programme for EUR 15M was launched in December 2023. The overall objective is to strengthen the presence and visibility of EU companies in the RoK and Japan through an increase and diversification of export and investments and more resilient, green and digital value chains. The programme will support a total of 20 business missions to both countries benefitting approximately up to 1000 European SME's and startups.

### Pipeline:

For **Afghanistan**, DG INTPA is in the process of finalizing the 2025 support package of EUR 83 million, to be completed by the end of this year. For the 2025-2027 period, EU assistance in Afghanistan will adopt a more focused approach on livelihoods. Future interventions will also prioritise economic stabilisation, particularly women's economic empowerment and community-led private sector development, with a strong focus on MSMEs. DG INTPA's support is implemented in close partnership with CSOs, which play a crucial role in reaching communities, identifying local

needs, and ensuring inclusivity. CSOs help connect MSMEs and entrepreneurs - particularly women and vulnerable groups - to socio-economic opportunities, provide capacity-building and advocacy on socio-economic rights, and foster linkages between local businesses and markets. By empowering CSOs that work directly with MSMEs, EU support contributes to more resilient, inclusive, and locally driven economic stabilisation.