**Regional Multi-annual Indicative Programme Asia and the Pacific 2021 – 2027**

This programme will cover an area spanning from the Gulf and Caspian Sea to the Pacific Islands, an area which is extremely heterogeneous in terms of human and physical geography, economy and level of development and democracy. The area encompasses the full spectrum between highly industrialised to least developed countries. Notwithstanding this diversity, overarching converging interests and priorities for EU engagement certainly exist. They offer possibilities to maximise the impact of joined-up actions, in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Asia-Pacific regional programme follows the geopolitical and “policy first” approach underlying the NDICI, aimed at building partnerships and supporting EU interests and is based on a subsidiarity principle complementing actions at country level. The scope is broad also covering countries with no dedicated national programmes, notably India, China and High Income Countries in the wider region. In addition to regional-wide and multi-country programmes, the programme serves as a basis for the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) in Asia and the Pacific. It is designed to support the regional priorities and EU interests in the broad areas of the green deal, the digital agenda, sustainable jobs and sustainable growth, migration and forced displacement, peace and security, governance and rule of law with Multilateralism at its core. It will focus on three continental priority areas, namely regional integration and cooperation (addressed by sub-regional components as well as by a Pan-Asia component), pursuing EU interests with key partners, and migration and mobility.

As regards **regional integration and cooperation**, the programme pursues a tailor-made approach in the concerned sub-regions (Central Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, and the Pacific). However, other relevant countries in sub-regional initiatives can be included where appropriate. A Pan-Asian framing allows for cross‑regional and cross-border actions outside a specific sub-regional context while respecting the subsidiarity principle.

In line with the EU’s Central Asia Strategy, this regional programme will address two priority areas in **Central Asia** including Afghanistan: resilience and prosperity. Resilience will cover water and energy, human rights, rule of law and support to civil society, and regional peace and stability, with a focus on integrated border management. It will also address drug related challenges and combat trafficking of human beings. Prosperity will focus on digital connectivity, entrepreneurship and regional trade and human development, including post-pandemic efforts to build back better.

In **South Asia**, a particular focus will be put on addressing regional integration issues and promote cooperation between the countries of the region to enhance security. Environment and climate change, including resilience will be covered as well as sustainable connectivity and integration through trade, energy and digital sectors. Multilateralism will be promoted to address global challenges as an alternative way to other actors’ oppositions and help to de-escalate geopolitical tensions. The focus will also be put on protecting and promoting human rights, consolidating and supporting democracy and the rule of law, through good and inclusive governance and cooperation for regional security.

EU cooperation is foreseen at regional level with **South East Asia** **and ASEAN** as well as with sub-regions, covering groups of countries with comparable needs and priorities in relevant areas, in order to improve regional coordination and integration. The programme will also be flexibly conceived, addressing issues such as ASEAN accession processes or the broader ASEAN-led mechanisms in the region. EU support will engage on the Green Alliance addressing circular economy, climate resilience and energy efficiency, in addition to biodiversity protection and management. Sustainable connectivity through trade, transport, digital as well as people-to-people through education and research will also be covered.

Taking into account the unique features and challenges of the **Pacific** region, the EU will support enhanced regional integration by building on lessons learned from regional programmes financed by the European Development Fund (EDF). EU support will further strengthen the Green‑Blue Alliance between the EU and the Pacific region, based on the shared vision of the European Green Deal, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and the new post-Cotonou Pacific Regional Protocol.

The **Pan-Asia** programme will mainly ensure complementarity with national and sub-regional action on priorities and cover only those actions for which there is strong operational and political rationale not covered on those levels. This would include specific areas within the green deal, connectivity and security that substantively benefit from continental dialogue and realise considerable synergies, cross-regional actions, such as cooperation on the Himalaya, regional cooperation relevant for East Asia and the Middle East, Asia-wide regional processes as well as possible inter-regional cooperation with other regions (Africa and the Neighbourhood). Economic governance issues across the region will also be covered with multilateral partners.

As regards the **pursuit of EU interests with key partners**, this priority area focuses on engagement with China, India, the Gulf and high income and industrialised countries and the other High Income countries in the region.

The relationship with **China** is simultaneously one of the most strategically important and one of the most challenging. As negotiating partners, economic competitors and systemic rivals we have shared interests and commitments for example in addressing climate change and implementing the Agenda 2030. Advancing and protecting key EU interests such as in trade and investment, with a particular emphasis on the implementation of the investment agreement, on tackling persisting market access barriers and further levelling the playing field will ensure a successful stronger Europe. At the same time, China poses a considerable challenge for EU interests and values bilaterally, in third countries and globally.

The “EU-**India** Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025”, endorsed at the 15th EU-India Summit held in July 2020 and the EU Strategy on India of 2018 are the guiding policy documents and the NDICI will allow the EU to help deliver the objectives contained in them. To this effect, cooperation will fall under three key pillars: green deal, sustainable growth and governance, peace and security.

The **Gulf** is a heterogeneous sub-region including major oil and gas producers and exporters. Over the past years, some countries of the region have signalled interest in diversifying their economies away from hydrocarbons overdependence as well as embarking in social transformation reforms for more open and inclusive societies. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is the EU’s sixth largest export market and the EU is the second biggest trading partner of the GCC global trade. The Gulf is widely exposed to the impact of climate change and facing serious environmental challenges. In light of this situation, the Gulf countries have an important role to play regarding the EU ambitions towards climate neutrality. Fostering peace and security in the Gulf, including de-escalation of tensions between countries, support to dialogue and confidence building measures paving the way for long-term regional solutions, is also a priority.

Finally, the Asia-Pacific region hosts some of the most important and influential **High Income Countries (HICs) and territories**. Programming action with HICs in the region focuses on reinforced cooperation to revamp multilateralism, in particular the democracy-driven type of multilateralism. Furthermore, promoting EU standards, policies and values in Asia requires that the EU act in collaboration and alliance with the Asian HICs.

A comprehensive regional programme addressing **migration and human mobility** in Asia and the Pacific will complement actions implemented at national level. It will notably address the three major regional refugee crises (Syrian refugees in Iraq, Afghan refugees and Rohingyas) and will facilitate a coordinated approach, allowing to maximise synergies, economies of scale in the delivery, and ensure the necessary flexibility in line with the EU’s commitments. In line with a Team Europe approach, actions will be designed and implemented where possible in coordination with EU Member States and their development agencies and European financial institutions. It will also tackle other key areas in the migration-related spectrum, at regional- sub-regional level, addressing issues of common concerns, including human trafficking, the fight against drugs, border management, labour migration/remittances etc.

Financial resources catalysed by EU guarantees/blending under **EFSD+** for enhancing bankability, providing additional financing, mitigating credit risk and promoting concessional lending to partner countries, are instrumental to meet financing needs in Asia and the Pacific without harming debt sustainability, while promoting green investments at the same time. The ‘policy-first’ principle will apply in full support of the priorities, areas and sectors identified in this regional MIP or in the country MIPs of the Asia-Pacific region.

**Regional Team Europe initiatives (TEIs)** will aim to support our interests, values and policy priorities, ensure coherence and synergies with interventions in the region while further underpinning regional integration efforts. This will be achieved notably through:

* a “Green Alliance Team Europe Initiative” for ASEAN/South East Asia,
* a TEI on ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity,
* a “Green Blue Alliance for the Pacific”,
* a possible TEI on the Afghan Refugee Crisis,
* a possible Pan Asia SME TEI to deliver Sustainable Consumption and Production,
* a TEI on “Digital Transformation in Central Asia” and
* a TEI on “Water-Energy-Climate Change in Central Asia” initiative.