

Asia has a diverse environment which is under growing pressure from population growth, economic development and climate change. The region now faces a number of challenges including deforestation, desertification and loss of biodiversity, meanwhile, inter-related issues, such as air and water pollution, waste management and rapid urbanisation also crowd the environment agenda.



The EU is committed to helping Asia protect its environment and to finding a sustainable future for the region's growing economies. Environmental problems are rarely contained within national borders, which is why the EU has developed an approach to deal with them at regional level.

EC programmes in the environmental field

The Commission's [Regional Strategy Paper for EU-Asia Cooperation](#) (2007-2013) has identified the environment as a sector in need of major support. Funding of about **€102 million**

has been allocated for the strategy's **first four years**

, to be spent on implementing

two programmes in Asia

: **SWITCH Asia** which focuses on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and **FLEGT Asia** which promotes sustainable forest management.

Increased focus on SCP will help Asia move towards more sustainable consumption and production practices, while promoting trade in environmental goods and services. The programme **SWITCH Asia** champions 'green growth' and the development of environmental technology. It focuses on issues relating to the consumption of natural resources that link directly to increased greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. In turn, these problems can cause direct health risks, particularly for poorer communities.

Striving for sustainable forest management, the Commission published the EU FLEGT Action Plan in May 2003. The Plan set out a range of options for tackling poor forest governance globally, with particular focus on providing incentives and promoting markets for legally-produced timber products. The recently launched **Regional FLEGT Asia Programme** will complement actions that are already taken in the framework of the EU FLEGT Action Plan. Its overall objective is to improve forest governance in the Asia region, contributing to poverty eradication and sustainable forest management. FLEGT Asia is allocated with € 6 million and will run for four years from November 2008.

- More information on [SWITCH Asia](#)
- More information on [FLEGT Asia](#)

Recent assistance

Since 2002, the **Asia Pro Eco** Programme has been strengthening the environmental dialogue between Asia and Europe through the exchange of policy information, technologies and best practices that promote more resource-efficient, market-driven and sustainable solutions to

urban environmental problems in Asia.

Partnership projects between EU and Asian organisations have been funded since 2003 and are now supported through networking events to share experiences that can lead to improved environmental management in the region. Between 2002 and 2006, €53 million was granted to co-fund 132 projects for implementation up to 2009. There will be no further Call for Proposals under Asia Pro Eco.

The **Asia Urbs** Programme funded work involving local authority partnerships from Europe and Asia, which designed and ran environmentally sound urban development projects. 99 projects were funded over the course of the programme and their experiences remain of interest to those working in sustainable urban development. The programme had a budget of €42.3 million over a period of six years and the final call for proposals took place in 2004.