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Revisiting EU competitiveness in Asia in particular ADB Member Countries

Preliminary Workshop 16 November 2026 Online

On 16 November, Sandeep Bhattacharya from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) together with Irma Mosquera Valderrama (GLOBTAXGOV Project at the Leiden Law School -Leiden University the Netherlands), and Suranjali Tandon (National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, India) organize an online (via zoom) Workshop on Revisiting EU competitiveness in Asia in particular ADB Member Countries .

Date and Time

Leiden, The Netherlands: 16 November from 10:00-13:00 p.m. Time zone: Central European Time CET (Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris)

Manila, Philippines 16 November from 16:00-19:00 p.m.

Who should attend?

This workshop is addressed to academics, including junior and senior researchers, government officials, policy makers (EU, regional and international organizations), among others.

Registration is free. Link to registration here

Venue

Online via ZOOM. When registered, you will receive the zoom link.

Moderator

Irma Mosquera Valderrama, is Full Professor Tax Governance at Leiden Law School (Leiden University), the Netherlands. Contact details:
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This workshop is organized in the framework of the Strategic Partnership between Leiden University and ADB. More information on this partnership available here.

Background

EU is at the crossroads as it attempts to address the internal and regional concerns of competitiveness of the EU and its businesses while it establishes deeper economic relationship with developing economies through the bilateral trade, economic partnership agreements amongst others. Some agreements of importance for ADB Member Countries are the 2026 EU India Free Trade Agreement, the 2019 EU Viet Nam Trade Agreement and Investment Protection Agreement which has been recently updated (January 2026) to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement, the (under negotiation) EU Philippines Trade Agreement, and the 2023 Samoa Agreement that has replaced the EU-African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Cotonou Agreement which includes some ADB Member Countries in the Pacific[1].

Even as these agreements help foster bilateral investment and trade flows there are implications for investment and trade policy in these economies. For instance, these agreements may include provisions relating to, but not limited to, sustainability, investment governance, climate action, tax good governance. These provisions may sets standards for developing countries that can be onerous to comply with leading to legal consequences such as costly international disputes. The existence of possible disputes will reduce the effectiveness of these agreements in enhancing EU business competitiveness in the ADB Member Countries.

Furthermore, unlike Africa where several agreements have been negotiated which also include specific agreements on sustainable investment[2], clean trade and investment partnership[3], the agreements conclude by the EU with the ADB Member Countries (see

[1] Fiji, Maldives, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Neue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu.

[2] 2024 EU-Angola Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) Link here Other recent launched negotiations EU-Côte d'Ivoire Link here

[3] 2025 EU -South Africa Clean Trade and Investment Partnership (CTIP). Link here CTIP is a new instrument in the EU's trade policy toolbox to bolster the EU's competitiveness, diversify supply chains and boost economies.
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769576/EPRS_BRI(2025)769576_EN.pdf

above) provide a comprehensive approach to trade and investment which sometimes may create more problems in ensuring that all agreements' objectives are being met.

The ADB has addressed in several partnerships reports the relationship between the ADB and the EU which has focused more on technical assistance and/or co-financing (i) to support businesses[4], (ii) to advance climate action in Asia and the Pacific[5] and (iii) to advance governance reforms and fiscal resilience[6]. However, this approach from ADB-EU is not linked to the trade, investment, tax, sustainability provisions which have been introduced in the above mentioned agreements concluded by ADB Member Countries. Therefore, by working in silos, either EU technical assistance/co-financing or trade/economic partnerships, the EU and the ADB are missing an important opportunity to link some of these goals not only to technical assistance, but also to address key global challenges such as climate action, investment governance, and sustainability in specific agreements as it has been done by the EU with some African countries.

Therefore, it is important for the EU to rethink its relationship with ADB Member Countries so that the ADB becomes the right partner to engage with the EU in these topics. The fragmented use of agreements and partnerships i.e. within ASEAN, Samoa Agreement (replacing ACP Cotonou agreement) and the ADB Member Countries shows that there is more to be done, and that the EU together with the ADB can contribute to deal with these topics which also benefit EU business wanting to invest in ADB Member Countries. This is also in line with the Draghi report on EU competitiveness[7] and with 2 of the main priorities of the current EU Irish Presidency to be more competitive mainly by strengthening EU trade and relationships as well as by advancing on climate actions by focusing on energy transition.[8]

In 2025, Karaki and Bilai rightly stated that "the EU has insufficiently leveraged the potential and resources of multilateral and regional development banks (MDBs/RDBs).In a context of geopolitical competition and constrained EU budgets, more deliberate

[4] ADB-European Union - Partnership Report 2022

[5] ADB- European Union- Partnership Report 2024

[6] 2025 European Union's Work with ADB | Asian Development Bank. See also ADB Partnership Report 2025

[7] The Draghi report on EU competitiveness https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report_en

[8] https://irish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/our-priorities-competitiveness/
See also Press Release 10 June 2026. Government publishes Policy Programme for the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU. https://irish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/government-publishes-policy-programme-for-the-irish-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-eu/ The Draghi report on EU competitiveness https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report_en

engagement with these institutions is strategically necessary".[9] The description of the three points mentioned above i.e. onerous standards resulting in more international disputes, the lack of specific agreements to deal with clean trade deal, sustainability and the focus on technical assistance and co-financing, shows that the EU and also the ADB can do more to enhance their competitiveness, as well as to address the above mentioned key global challenges.

To address these challenges, this workshop will invite experts from academia, policy makers in Europe, the ADB and in ADB Member Countries to discuss how the key global challenges such as climate action, investment and tax governance, and sustainability can be addressed in agreements concluded by the EU and ADB Member countries.

Programme

16 November

10:00-10:10 a.m. CET Welcome and Introduction by Sandeep Bhattacharya ADB and Irma Mosquera Leiden University

16:00-16:10 p.m. Manila time

10:10-10:25 a.m.

16:10-16:25 p.m. Manila time

Executive Director ADB Satya Srinivas

Negotiations of Free Trade Agreements: A practical experience from ADB Member Countries

10:25-11:10 a.m. Climate Action Trade Agreements

16:25-17:10 p.m. Manila time

Suranjali Tandon **Asia perspective** -National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, India

Anna Marhold **European perspective** - Leiden Law School

Mattea Cordier **Climate and FTAs** – Advisor, Sector Project Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development, GIZ

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[9] ECDPM. How can the EU leverage MDBs to advance its geoeconomic interests? Discussion Paper 399. Available at https://ecdpm.org/application/files/3917/6478/0181/How-can-the-EU-leverage-MDBs-to-advance-its-geoeconomic-interests-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-399-2025.pdf

Q&A

11:10-11:55 a.m. Investment and Tax Governance

17:10-17:55 p.m. Manila time

Julien Chaisse , **Investment Governance in Trade Agreements –** City University of Hong Kong

Irma Mosquera, Good Tax Governance in Trade Agreements- Leiden Law School- Leiden University

Hanna Bucher, The importance of Trade Facilitation to attract investment. Senior Public Sector Specialist (Trade and Industry) ADB

Kehinde Folake Olaoye, Trade, Investment and Sustainability: Insights from Recent African Regional Economic Agreements College of Law- Hamad Bin Khalifa University

Q&A

11:55-12:05 a.m. Coffee Break

17:55-18:05 p.m. Manila time

12:05-12:45 Sustainable Agreements to foster sustainable growth, improve the investment climate and create new opportunities for businesses.

18:05-18:45 p.m. Manila time

Jason Rudall - Leiden Law School

Vincent Beyer- Legal Affairs Officer, International Investment Agreements Section, UNCTAD - International Investment Agreements for Sustainable Growth: From Protection to Facilitation, Cooperation and Development

Other speakers to be confirmed

Q&A

Additional reading

- Energy transition investment and the transfer of knowledge and skills: Implications for investment treaty design Link here
- The reform of international investment agreements – state of play Link here
- World Investment Report 2026 Link here

- Comparative Analysis of Trade and Sustainable Development Provisions in Free Trade Agreements Velut, JB., et al. London School of Economics. Report available here.
- 2024 EU-Angola Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) Link here
- Other recent launched negotiations EU-Côte d'Ivoire Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) Link here
- The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth. Brussels, 22.6.2022, COM(2022) 409 final Link here
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12:45-13:00 p.m. **Reflections on EU Competitiveness**

18:45-19:00 p.m.Manila time Suranjali Tandon National Institute of Public Finance and Policy and Irma Mosquera Leiden University