



사단법인한국유럽학회  
The Korean Society  
of Contemporary European Studies

## EU-Korea@50:

# Bilateral cooperation and security challenges in North East Asia

## CONCEPT NOTE

On 24 July 2013, the European Union and the Republic of Korea will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations. The two sides have gone through major changes over the last five decades. The six original members of the European Community have expanded to the current EU-28, creating the largest market in the world. South Korea has gone from authoritarian rule to a fully-fledged democracy, while also becoming a member of the OECD. Today, the two sides - despite wide cultural and geographic distances - share the same commitment to democracy, human rights and market economy.

The EU-Korea relationship has evolved considerably in the last years. In 2010, the two sides signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA): the EU is South Korea's second largest trade partner, while Seoul is the ninth largest for the EU. With an annual bilateral trade of more than €80 billion in 2012, each makes an important contribution to jobs and growth in both economies. Alongside the trade dimension, the two sides have also fostered political relations by signing a new Framework Agreement (FA) and, at their October 2010 summit, they also decided to upgrade their relationship to a strategic partnership, thus initiating a High-Level Political Dialogue. The conclusion of the Korea-EU FTA and FA agreements and the upgrading of political cooperation between the two sides have the potential to yield spill-over effects aimed at creating a more peaceful environment in North East Asia.

North East Asia is one of the world's key engines for economic growth. The security climate has, however, deteriorated in the last months, following the provocations of Pyongyang and the announcement on 30 March 2013 that it had entered a 'state of war' with Seoul. Furthermore, China's growing assertiveness and the US rebalancing towards the region, coupled with the strain of Sino-Japanese and Korea-Japanese relations over territorial and maritime claims contribute to a rather gloomy picture. Although geographically distant, the region today accounts for almost a quarter of Europe's global trade. This raises the question as to whether the EU should enhance its political involvement in the area, including potentially increasing security cooperation with South Korea, Japan and China in order to address both traditional and un-conventional security threats.

With the aim of furthering discussions on these topics and provide concrete suggestions to policy makers, the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific division of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and in partnership with the Korean Society of Contemporary European Studies (KSCES), is organising an expert seminar on Thursday 11 July 2013. The first session will assess and examine the state of EU-South Korea relations. The following sessions will focus on security developments in North East Asia with the aim of discussing the security role of the EU in the area, including emerging avenues for cooperation between the EU and South Korea.