

50 ປີ ແຫ່ງການພົວພັນ ສປປ ລາວ - ສະຫະພາບ ເອີຣົບ
50th Anniversary of Lao PDR - EU Relations





Lao President Kayson Phomvihane receives a delegation from the European Economic Community

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LAO PDR-EU RELATIONS

This year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the European Union.

Our journey began in 1975, at a time of great change. What we now know as the European Union (EU) was then the European Communities (EC), and the Lao PDR was about to be established as a new nation. In May 1975, the Lao Embassy in France reached out to the EC to propose formal diplomatic relations. The European Commission warmly welcomed the request, and on 21 November 1975, relations were officially established. Just weeks later, the Lao PDR was born, and so began a partnership that has grown stronger with every passing year.

Over the last five decades, the Lao PDR and the EU have built a deep and enduring relationship rooted in friendship, trust, and shared aspirations. From development cooperation and trade to cultural exchange and connectivity, our partnership has delivered real progress for our people.

As we look ahead, the EU reaffirms its commitment to stand alongside the Lao PDR. Together, we will continue working for a future built on sustainability, connectivity and our shared values.



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POLITICAL COOPERATION



President of the European Council Charles Michel meets President of the Lao PDR Thongloun Sisoulith



Former HRVP Josep Borrell meets Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR Saleumxay Kommasith

The European Union's political cooperation with countries around the world started in the 1970s and became more structured in the 1990s with the launch of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

For Laos, a key milestone was the signing of the Cooperation Agreement in 1997, which created a framework for dialogue on governance, the rule of law, and international cooperation. Since then, political relations have grown through regular Joint Committee Meetings under the Cooperation Agreement, co-chaired by the Lao Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Managing Director of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and through Laos' active role in ASEAN, which links the bilateral partnership to the broader ASEAN – EU relationship. Under the Lao PDR ASEAN Chairmanship in 2024, significant progress was made in strengthening ASEAN-EU relations. Notable milestones include the visit in Vientiane of the EU High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell in July 2024 to attend the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Other high-level visits have given additional momentum to the partnership, such as Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen's trip to Vientiane in 2024 to launch an EU flagship programme on sustainable agriculture, and European Council President Charles Michel's participation in the East Asia Summit later that year. During these visits, bilateral meetings were held with Lao leaders, further reinforcing political dialogue and underscoring the shared commitment to advancing the Lao PDR-EU partnership within both the bilateral and regional contexts.

Today, political cooperation between Lao PDR and the EU covers governance, security, human rights, and sustainable development, while also addressing regional and global challenges like climate change. Looking ahead, both sides see opportunities to deepen their partnership further through stronger dialogue and closer cooperation in these areas.



HRVP Kaja Kallas meets Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR, Thongsavan Phomvihane



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In the early years, EU support focused on helping Laos overcome the tragic legacy of past conflict. UXO (unexploded ordnance) clearance was one of our first priorities — a humanitarian commitment to saving lives, restoring safety and reclaiming land for development. Through sustained support to UXO clearance and risk education, countless hectares of land were returned to productive use, enabling communities to farm, build schools, and live without fear, reflecting the EU's dedication to peace, security and human dignity.

But our cooperation has also evolved alongside Laos's own transformation. The EU has stood with Laos as a reliable partner in its national development path, supporting progress toward a more inclusive, green and resilient future, while investing in skills development, education, and vocational training to empower people and strengthen the country's human capital. Over the past ten years, the EU in Laos has worked under a "Team Europe" approach — combining the expertise and resources of Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg and Switzerland to maximise impact.

Working Together for Sustainable Development



The EU-Lao partnership is founded on a simple but powerful belief: that development should be people-centred, inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Together, we work to ensure that progress reaches every community — from mountain villages to growing towns. The EU has supported Laos in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and in implementing its National Socio-Economic Development Plans. Our cooperation promotes good governance, social equity and economic opportunity, ensuring that growth is balanced by environmental responsibility and respect for human rights.

Investing in People and Opportunities

People are at the centre of our partnership. The EU has made major investments in education, strengthening schools, vocational training and higher education systems to equip young men and women with the skills needed to thrive in a changing world. We have supported initiatives that improve maternal and child health, combat malnutrition and ensure communities have access to safe and sufficient food. Through these investments in people's capacities and resilience, we empower communities and create the foundation for inclusive growth — enabling individuals and families to shape their own futures.

Promoting a Green and Inclusive Future

The EU has been a long-standing partner in helping to modernise and diversify agriculture. Together, we have worked to strengthen food security, improve nutrition and enhance farmers' resilience to climate change. EU initiatives have helped introduce sustainable and climate-smart farming practices, improve access to markets, and encourage responsible use of land and water resources. We also support high-value agricultural and forest-based value chains, such as coffee, tea, and timber, promoting high quality, sustainable production. The EU and Laos share a commitment to environmental stewardship. Our partnership supports the protection of forests, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems — vital assets for the country's development and for the planet's health. Joint initiatives promote sustainable forest management, the restoration of degraded landscapes and the shift toward renewable energy. By encouraging sustainable investment and innovation, our cooperation helps Laos move toward a low-carbon, circular economy that benefits people and nature alike.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

The EU encourages regional integration, trade and sustainable tourism, helping Laos seize opportunities from its central position in Southeast Asia. The EU's Global Gateway initiative fosters sustainable investments in transport and road infrastructure. These enhance connectivity within Laos and with the region, opening new opportunities for trade, mobility and economic growth while ensuring environmental and social sustainability.



A Partnership for the Future



Today, the EU is increasingly moving from a traditional donor to an equal development partner, emphasising quality investments that deliver lasting impact. We cooperate closely in strengthening governance, transparency and the rule of law. Support to public institutions and civil society helps ensure that development is participatory, accountable and effective. We encourage the creation of an enabling business environment, creating opportunities for companies to invest responsibly in Laos and contribute to its economic transformation. By linking people, markets, and ideas, our partnership will continue to foster innovation and shared prosperity.

29 MAY

Letter dated 29 May 1975 confirming the wish of the government of Laos to enter into diplomatic relations with the European Communities

21 NOVEMBER

Official relations are established between the Lao PDR and the European Communities

2 DECEMBER

The Lao PDR is established and accredits its Ambassador to France, H.E. Mr. Keo Viphakone, to the European Communities

Lao President Kaysone Phomvihane receives a delegation from the European Economic Community

The Maastricht Treaty is signed, turning the European Communities into the European Union

The EU begins its first rural development and forestry projects in Luang Namtha and Phongsaly provinces

1975

1987

1992

1993

1997

1998

The EU upgrades its office to a fully-fledged Diplomatic Mission and appoints the first resident Ambassador of the European Union to the Lao PDR, H.E. Mr. Leo Faber

The 9th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 9) brings a high level visit from Brussels, with the President of the European Council, H.E. Herman Van Rompuy to Vientiane

Klauspeter Schmallenbach, Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Thailand and Somsavath Lengsavath, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Lao PDR open the EU's first delegation in Laos, on 14 May 2003

A Cooperation Agreement between the Lao PDR and the European Union is signed, deepening and broadening the relations

H.E. Mr. Sompadith Vorasane is accredited as the first permanent Lao Ambassador to the EU, based in Brussels

2016

2012

2003

The ASEAN Delegation of the European Parliament visits Vientiane

2017

21 NOVEMBER
Ms. Paola Pampaloni, Deputy Managing Director of Asia and Pacific of EEAS, visits Lao PDR to mark the achievements of 45 years of EU-Laos diplomatic relations and set foundations for future cooperation between the EU and the Lao PDR

JULY

HRVP, Josep Borrell and Prime Minister of the Lao PDR (During the visit to Lao PDR to participate in the EU-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference and the ASEAN Regional Forum in Vientiane, Lao PDR, 2024)

OCTOBER

The President of the European Council, H.E. Charles Michel, meets with the President of the Lao PDR, H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith (During the 19th East Asia Summit in Lao PDR, 2024)

21 NOVEMBER

HRVP, Kaja Kallas and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR, Thongsavan Phomvihane mark the 50th anniversary of Lao PDR-EU relations through an exchange of congratulatory letters

Visit of European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, and meeting with Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Somdy Douangdy

2019

2020

2024

2025



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