

The Tenth Anniversary of the EU-ROK Strategic Partnership

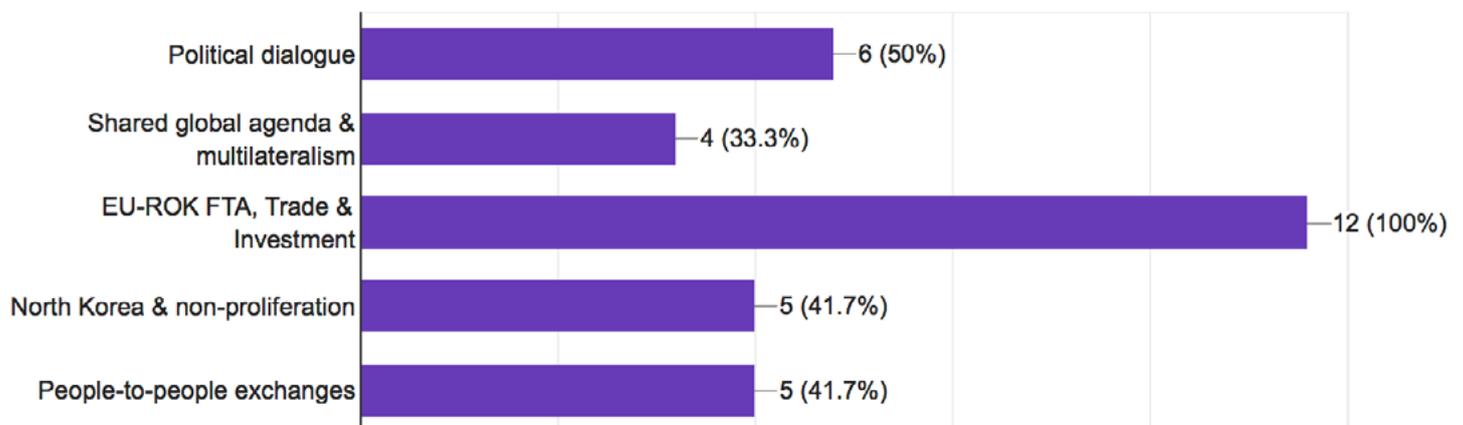
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The EU and South Korea are celebrating the tenth anniversary of their bilateral strategic partnership in 2020. We asked leading Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia security experts based in Europe to reflect on the successes, failures, and potential areas of future cooperation between the two partners (the responses were collected by December 4th). A total of twelve experts participated in the survey.

We asked them three questions: (1) What are the areas in which EU-ROK relations have made the most progress since the launch of the Strategic Partnership in 2010? (2) What is the area in which EU-ROK relations have failed the most to make sufficient progress since the launch of the Strategic Partnership? (3) What are the areas of (potential) cooperation that you think the EU and the ROK should prioritise over the next ten years? See their answers below.

By Paula Cantero Dieguez and Dr. Ramon Pacheco Pardo

1. What are the areas in which EU-ROK relations have made the most progress since the launch of the Strategic Partnership in 2010?



The area which has made the most progress according to the experts is trade, investment and the EU-ROK FTA (12 votes). This was followed by political dialogue (6 votes), security including non-proliferation and North

Korea (5 votes), science & research cooperation and people-to-people exchanges (5 votes) and, lastly, multilateralism and a shared global agenda with EU and ROK as like-minded partners (4 votes).

Dr. Eric Ballbach identified the areas with the most progress as; “Institutionalisation of political dialogue mechanisms on various levels, developing a common stance on many crucial issues toward a shared global agenda, and the EU-ROK FTA despite numerous challenges and a need for modernisation.”

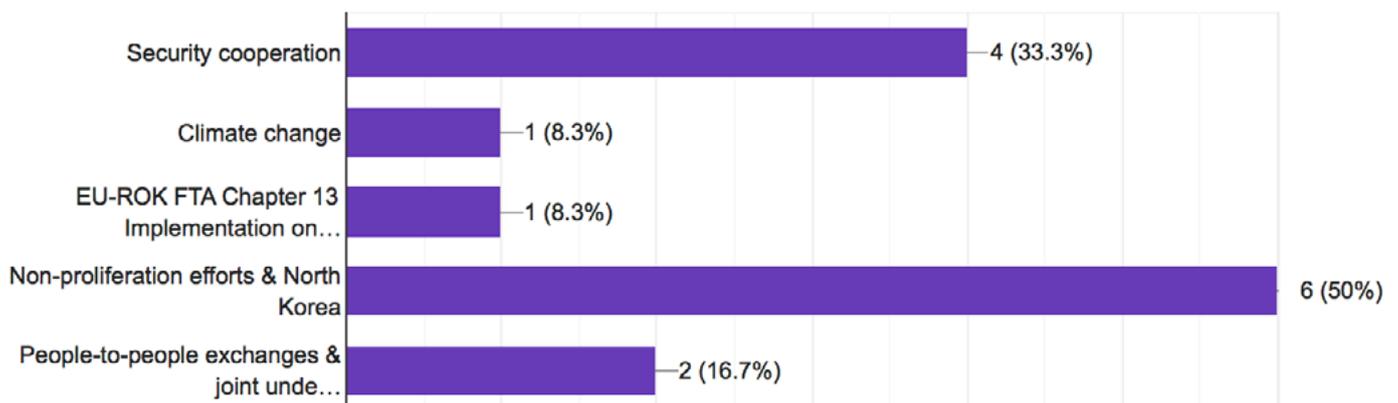
Dr. Tereza Novotna says; “The FTA is surely one of the biggest successes, despite still some outstanding issues such as beef and the sustainable development chapter. It contributed economically to both the EU and Korea and has also served as a model for future EU-led FTAs. People-to-people exchanges in various fields, from tourism, culture, to academic and student exchanges, have improved. Although there might not be an immediate economic benefit, it is even more important from the long-term perspective. Bringing people together enables mutual understanding, learning and future collaborations in these areas.”

Dr. Oskar Pietrewicz points to “Economics such as

boosting trade and investment, political dialogue advances such as establishing more than 35 dialogues and consultations mechanisms, supporting multilateralism by cooperation in regional and international organisations, as well as security such as non-proliferation efforts on addressing North Korean nuclear and ballistic missiles challenges, promoting the international non-proliferation regime of weapons of mass destruction, cooperating on implementing sanctions on the DPRK, and establishing a framework for the ROK’s participation in EU crisis management operations.”

“Trade and investment; EU goods exports to Korea have increased by 43 percent between 2010 and 2018, and EU services exports have increased by 79 percent from 2010 to 2016. Also, cooperation in regional and international organisations such as G20 and UN, as well as political dialogue, notably on climate change, environmental protection, development assistance, research and innovation in ICT, energy and mobility,” says Andreea Zaharia.

2. What is the area in which EU-ROK relations have failed the most to make sufficient progress since the launch of the Strategic Partnership?



The area which had the least progress was identified by the experts as the management of the North Korean threat and non-proliferation efforts (6 votes). Other areas in which sufficient progress has not been made are security cooperation (4 votes), people-to-people exchanges and joint understanding of each other (2 votes), climate change (1 vote), and the EU-ROK FTA (1 vote).

Dr. Marco Milani says; “The area in which the two partners have failed to make sufficient progress is probably the security pillar. Despite some form of cooperation and coordination regarding sanctions against North Korea, in terms of security, especially on the peninsula and in East Asia, there is ample room for the EU and the Republic of Korea to not only cooperate but also to take a leading role and

to enhance engagement and multilateralism.”

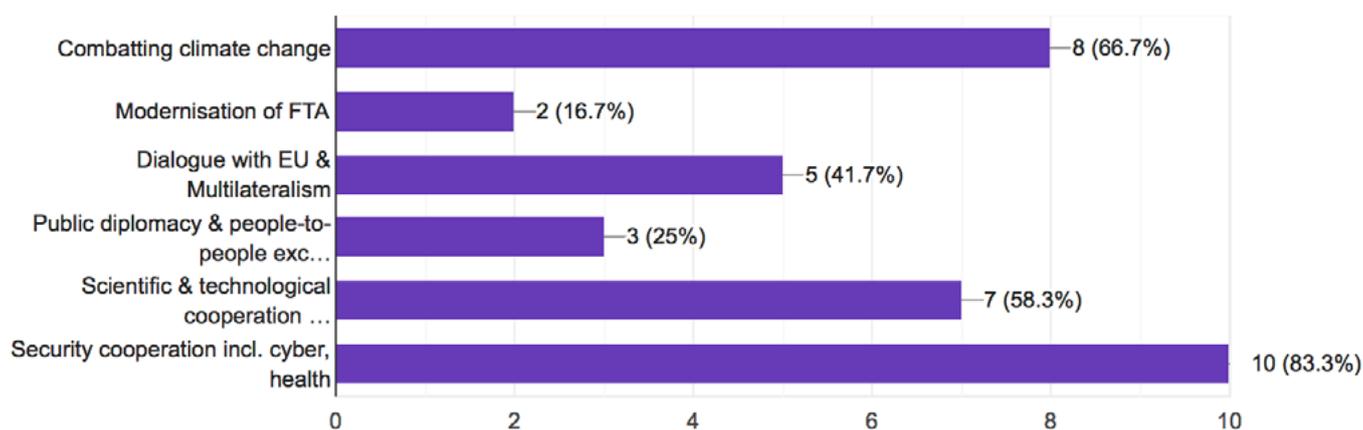
Dr. Eric Ballbach nuanced; “While cooperation in the field of security has slightly advanced, due to numerous reasons such as a lack of political will within the EU and South Korea’s geopolitical dilemma security, cooperation remains underdeveloped.”

On the topic of people-to-people exchanges, Dr. Lucia Husenicova says; “There is low level of awareness among EU citizens about the state of relations between EU-ROK. In general, people in Europe have limited knowledge

about ROK, its companies and presence in Europe. To increase awareness, cooperation in education and research would be vital. Despite agreements signed, we still have rather limited amount of Korean studies at universities in EU.”

Dr. Francesca Frassinetti pointed to the EU-ROK FTA, saying; “The implementation of Chapter 13 on Trade and Sustainable Development of the EU-ROK FTA has not made sufficient progress. It should be noted though, that the current Moon administration has committed to the long-overdue ratification of three core ILO conventions.”

3. What are the areas of (potential) cooperation that you think the EU and the ROK should prioritise over the next ten years?



The areas of potential cooperation which should be prioritised over the next ten years were identified as security cooperation including cyber, health, and space (10 votes), combatting climate change (8 votes), scientific & technological cooperation in digital and AI (7 votes), dialogue & multilateralism (5 votes), public diplomacy & people-to-people exchanges (3 votes) and the modernisation of the EU-ROK FTA (2 votes).

Dr. Eric Ballbach identified the areas as “The global agenda of the EU-ROK Strategic Partnership, i.e. climate change, digital transformation, etc., as well as coordinating and where possible syncing the EU’s emerging Indo-Pacific strategy with South Korea’s New Southern Policy, and modernisation of existing free trade agreements in particular with South Korea.”

Dr. Lucia Husenicova points to “Public diplomacy

and more presence of EU-ROK relations in public discussions, innovations and R&D in IT and green technology, and cyber security. This could be done within global platforms and as a part of global activities of both partners.”

“ROK has been one of the most successful countries dealing with the pandemic. There is a lot of room for learning on the European side. Further, the EU Green Deal and ROK Green New Deal are pretty much complementary. More cooperation could be done, especially if the US under the Biden Administration comes back under the Paris Accord and China sticks to its 2060 promise of carbon neutrality. Both the EU and ROK have a strong interest in revitalising and keeping the rules-based order in place. It might be easier with the Biden Administration, but both the EU and ROK may face a continued

US-China competition,” says Dr. Tereza Novotna.

Dr. Oskar Pietrewicz sees potential in “Broadening the global agenda of partnership by cooperating on global issues, such as sustainable development, climate change, green growth, health and

human security. Scientific, technological and security cooperation on digital matters such as digital transformation, 5G, 6G, data protection, cybersecurity, and promotion of multilateralism by strengthening multilateral institutions and effectively working on rules setting in global issues.”

Experts

Eric Ballbach, Korea Foundation Visiting Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs & Director Research Unit ‘North Korea & international security’, Institute of Korean Studies, Freie Universität Berlin

Sabine Burghart, University Lecturer, Centre for East Asian Studies, University of Turku

Nicola Casarini, Senior Fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali

Francesca Frassinetti, Associate Research Fellow, Asia Centre, ISPI

Hanns Günther Hilpert, Head of Asia Research Unit, SWP

Lucia Husenicova, Lecturer, Matej Bel University, Research Fellow, CEIAS

Alica Kizekova, Head of Asia Pacific Unit, Institute of International Relations Prague

Magnus Lundstrom, Associate fellow, Asia Programme, Swedish Institute of International Affairs

Marco Milani, Assistant Professor, University of Bologna

Tereza Novotna, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, Free University Berlin & Senior Associate Research Fellow, EUROPEUM Prague

Oskar Pietrewicz, Senior Analyst, The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)

Andreea Zaharia, Associate Researcher, The Romanian Institute for the Study of the Asia-Pacific (RISAP)

This publication analyses the views of the Europe Korea Expert Panel which is a network of the top Europe-based experts on Korean and Northeast Asian affairs drawn from think tanks, academia and research institutes. The panel was established to highlight European views on developments in the Korean Peninsula. The KF-VUB Korea Chair analyses these views and presents its own reflections on the results. [Visit this link to view the experts in the Europe Korea Expert Panel.](#)



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