

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Association for Business and Commerce was established in 2011 and since then became the unified voice of the European business in Thailand. With great support from the EU Delegation and in close collaboration with the European Chambers of Commerce it's our aim to further strengthen the economic relations between Thailand and Europe, to promote Thailand as an attractive market for foreign investment and to support initiatives such as the European Union's strategy on connecting Europe and Asia.

The European Union is Thailand's third biggest trade partner after China and Japan. Trade between the European Union and Thailand amounted to 37 billion Euro in 2017.

We strongly believe that connectivity contributes not only to economic growth and jobs but also to global competitiveness and trade. It contributes to people, goods and services to move across and between Europe and Thailand and it will enhance prosperity and safety of people and societies.

The European Union's strategy on connectivity encompasses the areas of transport, energy, digital and human dimension and it promotes an approach to connectivity which is sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based. Most of these areas are well represented by the EABC's working groups, representing the major industries such as:

- "Automotive",
- "ICT & Digital Economy",
- "Energy & Energy Efficiency",
- "Transport & Logistics" and many more.

Today I would like to talk about aviation as this industry is one of the most dynamic industries in recent days. Using the example of the aviation industry, I would like to highlight the numerous benefits as a result of the further driving of the European Union's Connectivity Strategy.

The International Air Transport Association, also known as IATA expects 7.8 billion passengers to travel in 2036. This is a near doubling of the 4.3 billion passengers, expected to fly this year.

All indicators lead to growing demand for global connectivity. The world needs to prepare for a doubling of passengers in the next 20 years. It's fantastic news for innovation and prosperity but it's also a huge challenge for governments and industry to ensure meeting this essential demand.

The biggest driver of demand will be the Asia-Pacific region. The region will be the source of more than half of the new passengers over the next two decades. China will replace the United States as the world's largest aviation market by 2022 and the United Kingdom will fall to fifth place, surpassed by India in 2025, and Indonesia in 2030. Thailand will enter the top ten largest markets, while other countries will fall in the rankings.

EU-level aviation agreements create new economic opportunities in Asia and in the European Union and ensure fair and transparent market conditions based on a clear regulatory framework for all actors. They ensure market access, promote investment opportunities, facilitate air travel and provide a wider choice to consumers. They also aim to ensure high standards of safety, security, air traffic management and infrastructure, as well as in consumer, social, and environmental protection.

Once concluded, it is estimated that the economic benefits of the agreements could be up to 7.9 billion Euro in the first seven years of the agreement and up to 5.700 new jobs by 2023.

Global connectivity is a driver of trade and tourism and directly contributes to economic growth and job creation. A European Union and ASEAN agreement would be the first ever bloc-to-bloc agreement, with a combined population of 1.1 billion people. Besides providing economic benefits fostering people – to – people connectivity through additional tourism and business, it would underpin ongoing efforts of regional integration in the field of aviation.

The EABC recognizes and welcomes Thailand's support of the ASEAN Single Aviation Market and its willingness to implement all ASEAN open skies agreements in order to realize the liberalization of air freight and passenger services and to pave the way for greater regional integration of air transport services. Thailand's ambition to further align with the international standards on safety, security and facilitation of air transport are highly welcome.

The EABC is a sustainable partner in the European Union's many projects to improve connectivity.

One of the examples is our support of a training course for railway technicians at the college in Sattahip as part of a project funded by the European Union. The EABC is currently working with the EU Delegation to further inform Thailand about the benefits of European technical standards in the transport sector, automotive and railway.

In regards of digital connectivity, the EABC has a clear position on how we can enhance Europe – Asia connectivity from a Thailand perspective. Our position includes:

- The promotion of the development of a properly structured telecom industry and SOEs to undergo evolution and real reforms.

- The removal of inappropriate and NTM-based barriers to investment.
- The achieving of affordable mobile broadband.
- Digital literacy
- Trusted internet via multi-stakeholder model development.
- A cybersecurity law which recognizes different roles of government and engenders trust.
- The harmonization of GDPR and Thai personal data protection law.

We clearly recognize Thailand's leading role in the Southeast Asian region and are pleased about the excellent cooperation with all official bodies. An essential task of the EABC is to create a connection between the European business and Thailand by means of our working groups.

For the challenges of the future, the further strengthening of trade relations and thus the prosperity of the population, the EABC is an important connector.

At the end and on behalf of our many members, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the great hospitality that Thailand gives us all and for the support the EU Delegation provides us with.

Thank you for your attention!