# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Ambassadors’ Statement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Values and Structure</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall EU Approach in Myanmar</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace and Conflict Sensitivity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Finance Management</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Private Sector Development</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance and Democracy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid Information Management System</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword by the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The end of 2016 saw the completion of the first nine months of the government of the National League for Democracy, elected by the people of Myanmar through the General Elections of November 2015. This has been a time of hope and challenges, of difficulties and opportunities. We have been strengthened in our endeavours by the support of our people and the cooperation of friends throughout the world. The European Union (EU) has long shared our commitment to the values of peace, tolerance, democracy, prosperity and freedom. We are confident that these common values will enable us to work together in full understanding to promote sustainable development, stability and progress, not merely in our country or region, but throughout the globe.
EU Ambassadors’ Statement

Myanmar is going through a remarkable process of reform and democratic transition, one that is significant both for its own people and for the region. The new government has a historic opportunity to consolidate democracy and to achieve peace, national reconciliation and prosperity. This stands not only to benefit the people of Myanmar but also to serve as an example for the region, strengthening ASEAN and enhancing stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The EU and its Member States are strongly committed to supporting this democratic and economic transition while recognising that, after five decades of authoritarian rule, such change is going to take time. The support that we provide covers a range of political, social, economic, and cultural activities which aim to foster a peaceful, free, democratic and prosperous country.

We hope that this Blue Book will give readers a better understanding of the relationship between the EU and its Member States and Myanmar, one that we look forward to further strengthening in the future.
EU Values and Structure

The EU is a unique political and economic partnership between 28 European countries, known as the Member States. They have decided to progressively link together their economic and political affairs in order to secure peace and prosperity for all of their citizens and to act as a force for stability in the world. Together, over a period of 60 years, they have built a region free of conflict where democracy, economic growth, freedom, tolerance and cultural diversity flourish.

This Union is based on the rule of law - the Member States have agreed a set of treaties to govern their collective affairs and established a series of institutions to oversee their implementation including the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Court of Justice of the EU, and the European Central Bank.

With more than 500 million inhabitants, the EU and its Member States today represent the third largest population bloc in the world after China and India. Its citizens are able to move freely between the Member States, living and working where they wish. In the same way, trade flows between them without borders, customs, tariffs or quotas to impede it. This has helped the EU become an economic powerhouse that today is the second largest economy in the world and accounts for over 20% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In terms of relations with other countries, the EU and its Member States have developed a single foreign policy so that they can speak and act as one in world affairs. This policy seeks to promote peace, protect human rights, and encourage democracy, prosperity and the rule of law. Providing development aid to other countries is an essential part of this policy and today the EU and its Member States are the world’s largest aid donor, supplying around 60% of global aid. This amounts to a contribution of some €75 billion (105 trillion Myanmar kyat) each year that is spent across more than 150 countries on fighting poverty and working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Overall EU Approach in Myanmar

The EU and its Member States are deeply committed to supporting Myanmar’s transition process right across the spectrum, from peace to political reform, health to human rights and gender equality, education to the environment, technical assistance to trade, and public finance management to private sector support.

We supported the historic elections in 2015 and everything we do is shaped by a strong commitment to peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Collectively, the EU and its Member States are one of the largest donor groupings in Myanmar, providing approximately €450 million (627 billion Myanmar kyat) in funding each year.

We work with many different partners including the government, Parliament, Ethnic Organisations, non-state actors and the private sector. We have a dedicated Roadmap to guide our work with civil society and are an active member of the Cooperation Partners Group which brings together all of the international agencies and bilateral donors providing support to Myanmar. We liaise closely with government through its Development Assistance Coordination Unit, which is chaired by the State Counsellor, and via the ten Sector Coordination Groups that have been established.

Our way of working is set out in the Agenda for Change which we have agreed at our capitals’ level. This emphasises coordinating and focusing our support in order to achieve greater impact. We have also signed up to international aid effectiveness commitments which help us align our aid with Myanmar’s goals, structures and systems, as opposed to providing stand-alone support.

We have a joint EU strategy for Myanmar which sets out the overall objectives for our work and how and where the EU and each Member State will contribute to these. In this way, we can deliver more than the sum of our parts, ensure against gaps and overlaps, and be more predictable and transparent in our support.

Over the coming years, we have agreed to work on 13 distinct areas:

- Peace
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Culture
- Education
- Environment
- Gender
- Health
- Infrastructure
- Public Finance Management
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- Tourism
- Trade and Private Sector Development
- Water

Support for democracy and human rights underpins all of our activities and we also provide significant assistance for governance reforms and undertake wide-ranging humanitarian work.

You can find more information on our work in each area in the dedicated sections below.
Peace and Conflict Sensitivity

Peace is an essential condition for the consolidation of democracy, the protection of human rights, and the fostering of social, economic and political development. Promotion of peace is also one of the core values of the EU and its Member States, along with human rights and the rule of law. Our objective is to strengthen a nationally-owned and inclusive peace process that ends ethnic armed conflict in Myanmar and results in a sustainable peace from which all the people of the country benefit.

The fast-paced democratic transition process that is currently underway can only be successful in a peaceful and stable context. To promote a sustainable peace, we are working on building confidence between parties and fostering reconciliation as well as sharing experience of federalism. Currently, the EU and its Member States provide one of the largest contributions to the peace sector in Myanmar, with approximately €125 million (175 billion Myanmar kyat) committed in ongoing contracts.

Our support follows a comprehensive approach, providing a range of different stakeholders with assistance. We supply technical and financial aid to structures and institutions working on the peace process, but also to the leaders, negotiators and coordination bodies representing Myanmar’s various ethnic groups. The National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (formerly known as the Myanmar Peace Centre), which the EU has supported since its establishment in 2012, has played a crucial role in bringing the government and the Ethnic Armed Organisations to the negotiating table and in providing expert advice to all relevant parties.

Donor coordination is essential given the complexity and sensitivity of the peace process and it is for this reason that the EU and many of its Member States are active contributors to the recently-established Joint Peace Fund. The Fund supports nationally-led efforts to achieve a lasting settlement of ethnic armed conflict in a flexible, responsive and coherent manner. It works together with the government, ethnic constituencies, civil society and academia to increase inclusion, trust and participation in the peace process and to contribute to ensuring the safety and security of vulnerable communities. It also includes a focus on strengthening the role of women in peace-building. The Fund is administered by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and began operations in April 2016 with over €100 million (139 billion Myanmar kyat) pledged by Australia, Canada, Denmark, the EU, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, the UK, and the United States. The EU, as one of the witnesses to the signature of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, is now working together with other stakeholders and donors through the Fund to support the next stages of the peace process, including the National Political Dialogue and, potentially, the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanism.

A second joint programme, the Peace Support Fund (PSF, soon to be rebranded the Paung Sie Facility) is led by Australia, Sweden and the UK. To date, this has aimed to provide flexible, demand-driven, responsive and conflict-sensitive support to platforms for consultation, participation and engagement with conflict-affected communities. The goal has been to promote dialogue between key peace process stakeholders, to strengthen
the role of women, youth and civil society in the peace process, and to help reduce intercommunal tensions and violence. With the advent of the JPF, the PSF is slowly withdrawing from direct support to the peace process and will focus more on building peace at a local level.

The EU and its Member States recognise that only a locally-driven peace process can guarantee the implementation of a sustainable and long-lasting peace. All our initiatives are therefore based on a deep analysis of local context. We have also been implementing activities in all ethnic areas with various consortia, thus supporting community-based organisations. This support at the local level aims to protect human rights, improve livelihoods and foster reconciliation. It seeks to build the capacity of the government, ethnic groups and communities to engage in a political dialogue with local authorities and Ethnic Armed Organisations.

Humanitarian support is also provided by Denmark, the EU, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK to conflict-affected populations and Internally Displaced People throughout the country. This work includes projects with civil society organisations and media professionals to help develop a dialogue of reconciliation, which is respectful of diversity at all levels of society.

Given the complexity and sensitivity of the peace process, we aim to follow a conflict-sensitive approach in all our development and humanitarian work in Myanmar.
Agriculture and Rural Development

The agriculture sector makes up an important share of Myanmar’s economy, amounting to almost 30% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) when livestock and fisheries are included, and providing jobs to almost two thirds of the population. An estimated 70%, or 37 million people, live in rural areas and about a quarter are estimated to live below the poverty line. The main causes of rural poverty are low incomes, indebtedness, low agricultural productivity, a lack of adequate infrastructure, and the limited coverage of basic and financial services.

Given this situation, the EU and its Member States place a major emphasis on supporting the rural development sector. For example, the EU dedicates approximately one third of its cooperation portfolio to reducing rural poverty and increasing rural incomes. This work is undertaken in line with national strategies, supporting the bottom-up planning promoted by the government’s Department for Rural Development, building capacities in the Agriculture and Fishery Departments, and supporting the government in reinforcing its nutrition-related programmes.

Denmark, the EU, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK all fund the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) which is also supported by other donors as well as contributions from the private sector. This is a multi-donor fund with total financing of some €415 million (593 billion Myanmar kyat) that was established in 2009 to improve the lives and prospects of smallholder farmers and landless people in rural Myanmar, aiming to improve food security and help people cope better with shocks and setbacks. LIFT promotes agricultural commercialisation, climate smart agriculture, financial inclusion, business and skills development, and targeted nutrition support for mothers and children. It also helps on policy making, so that all funding to the sector can be better used.

The EU and Germany support the Myanmar Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (MYSAP) with financing of €22.5 million (32.2 billion Myanmar kyat). MYSAP works to develop aquaculture
in selected States and Regions of Myanmar, in partnership with the Department of Fisheries, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation, and a number of key technical partners such as WorldFish.

Denmark provides assistance for the promotion of co-management of coastal fisheries resources under its Sustainable Coastal Fisheries programme which is implemented by the government’s Department of Fisheries.

Germany, through GIZ, supports the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation in its efforts to develop a sustainable agriculture and quality food sector. The aim is to facilitate the production of healthy, quality foods for both domestic and export markets. Work is also ongoing to improve nutrition among adolescent girls, women and young children in Eastern Shan State and Rakhine State, in partnership with government and INGOs.

Italy contributes to the Department of Rural Development’s National Community Driven Development Project with a €20 million (29 billion Myanmar kyat) soft loan. The Project, which is carried out in collaboration with the World Bank, aims to enable poor rural communities to benefit from improved access to basic infrastructure and services and to enhance their capacity to respond effectively to emergencies. In addition, through funding to Italian NGOs and universities, Italy supports the improvement of fishery sector management and works to increase the resilience of rural communities to adapt to climate change and to ensure food security, by promoting more efficient and sustainable agriculture practices, mainly in the regions of Magway and Yangon and in Rakhine State.

The Netherlands has a specific focus on development of the agricultural sector, working on seeds, potatoes, other vegetables, poultry, dairy, fisheries, and aquaculture, as well as providing cross-cutting support to the enabling environment, State Agricultural Institutes (see TVET section below), plant protection and farming systems.

The EU and its Member States also provide advisers to support government in a number of areas, for example on natural resources management - which is an integral part of developing rural areas - and on enhancing communities’ resilience.
Culture

The richness of Myanmar’s culture is undeniable and its monuments, religious rituals, traditions and folklore are remarkable examples of the country’s achievements, values and diversity. Both tangible and intangible cultural assets are spread all over Myanmar and together define the identity of the country and have a key role in its sustainable development.

The EU and its Member States recognise that these assets need protection and are therefore providing support to the country to achieve this. In partnership with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, we commit more than €2 million (3 billion Myanmar kyat) a year to culture. Our support includes work to conserve cultural heritage by helping to transmit relevant know-how and best practices as well as the promotion of cultural activities and exchanges, many of which aim to raise awareness and promote understanding.

In the area of cultural preservation, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, and the UK are all active. For example, since 2012 Italy, under its Capacity Building for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage project in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has provided support for key Myanmar cultural sites to gain international recognition and protection through inclusion on the World Heritage List. Several of us also provided aid to Bagan after the August 2016 earthquake.

In the area of cultural exchange, we support a wide range of activities and some Member States, such as France, Germany and the UK, have dedicated institutes attached to their embassies to take this work forward. Germany regularly holds workshops and concerts, for example connecting traditional Myanmar music with jazz; France and Germany have worked on restoring old Myanmar films; the UK have showcased arts and crafts from Myanmar’s different ethnic groups; Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden have worked with groups representing the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community to create awareness and highlight issues of concern; Italy regularly promotes Italian arts, music, and cinematography in Yangon and has also held special events bringing the best of Italian cuisine, fashion and design to Myanmar; and Denmark supports democratisation through music by promoting the Voice of the Youth Festival. Many of us also offer language courses and together we organise an annual European film festival.
Education

From 2013 to 2016, the Ministry of Education, with support from donors including Denmark, the EU, Germany, and the UK, completed a Comprehensive Education Sector Review which identified the critical challenges in the main education sub-sectors: preschool, kindergarten, primary, secondary and alternative education, as well as technical, vocational and higher education. This extensive evidence base guided the drafting of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) which provides all education stakeholders with a roadmap for sector-wide reforms, with a view to drastically improve teaching and learning in all schools and educational institutions.

In 2007, recognising the need for major reforms to improve access, quality and equity in the education sector, Denmark, the EU and the UK, together with Australia, Norway and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), set up the first and largest multi-donor partnership for basic education. In its second phase (2012-2016), this funded the Myanmar Quality Basic Education Programme (QBEP) with a total of €76 million (109 billion Myanmar kyat), which has supported the government to improve access to, and the quality of, preschool, primary and non-formal education. QBEP has aimed to ensure that national education policies and plans, in particular the NESP, are inclusive and informed, and to support the delivery of quality education services to children in 34 core disadvantaged townships.

The EU, Denmark and UNICEF continued to support the key education priority reforms of the new government through Building on QBEP (July 2016 - June 2017). This included support to finalise and start up the NESP, to kindergarten and non-formal primary education, and to school rehabilitation and construction in Rakhine State. Teacher education, which is a priority reform area, is supported by Finland through the Strengthening Teacher Education in Myanmar project which is implemented by UNESCO.

Support to improving access to education, reducing school drop-out rates, and strengthening the quality of education is provided by Denmark and Finland together with Australia through the Decentralising Funding to Schools Project (DFSP), which started implementation in 2014. The DFSP is led by the Ministry of Education and managed by the World Bank, and will run up to the end of 2020. Denmark and the UK, together with Australia, fund the Myanmar Education Consortium, which supports improved access to quality basic education for the hardest to reach children in Myanmar, especially through monastic and ethnic education systems.

Germany, through GIZ and KfW, is a major actor in the promotion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Myanmar in support of sustainable economic development. Please see the dedicated section below on this.

The EU and several of its Member States also support a variety of projects implemented by NGOs, as well as higher education through capacity development of specific institutions and scholarships.
In today’s global economy, a nation’s success depends fundamentally on the knowledge, skills and competencies of its people.

National Education Strategic Plan, 2016-21
Environment

Myanmar is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and biodiversity. The country is now at a critical point in its development where decisions about their conservation and use will shape its environmental, political, social and economic future. As Myanmar has opened up and economic growth has accelerated, so too has the demand for natural resources and for goods and services that have an impact on them, such as power generation. This has already led to challenges ranging from rapid deforestation to serious air pollution. At the same time, Myanmar is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change and suffers regularly from cyclones, floods and droughts, issues which are only likely to get worse in the future. In many ethnic areas, land and the resources contained within it also have the potential to be either a driver or a resolver of conflict, depending on how they are managed.

The Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) has a mandate to oversee both how natural resources are extracted and how the revenues from them are distributed. An emphasis is also being placed by government on making more effective use of renewable energy sources for electricity generation and developing small private energy production enterprises. In addition, undertakings have been made to reform both agricultural and industrial practices to make them more environmentally friendly. To ensure that environmental concerns are adequately taken into account when promoting development and growth, officials need to work across Ministry lines. To promote such an approach, a National Environmental Policy has been developed with support from both the EU and its Member States and other donors. This will serve as the precursor to a new National Environmental Strategy and Master Plan. Implementation capacity will however be the key determinant of change.

A dedicated Sector Coordination Group on Environmental Conservation has been set up to bring together government and donors. The Group aims to support the government in formulating and implementing its strategy for the sector and coordinating international support to it. Several European members of the Group have worked in partnership with the government in developing Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures and sector-specific guidelines as well as ensuring the necessary assessment capacities are in place to vet new investment proposals.

The EU has been active in rolling out the global Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade initiative (FLEGT) in Myanmar with the UK providing dedicated support and financing. This aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening forest management, developing community forestry and promoting trade in legally produced timber. Support is being given to government, the private sector and civil society to take work forward. Cooperation in the forest sector is further expanding with the roll out of the National Forest Inventory and National Forest Monitoring and Information System, a joint initiative between MONREC, Finland and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), as well as work on community conservation and management of forests and national parks.
The EU and its Member States also support work to encourage environmental sustainability in general in the private sector, through initiatives such as the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business which is supported by Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the UK, as well as sector-specific initiatives in areas including textiles and fisheries.

With the support of the EU and its Member States as well as other donors, the country has also become actively involved in international processes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), forming national platforms to drive implementation. For example, Myanmar’s membership and implementation of EITI has been supported by the UK, along with Australia, since 2013. The Myanmar Climate Change Alliance was also established with significant European support and has been instrumental in promoting climate sustainability in the country through the development of the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and other key policy instruments.
Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls

Women in Myanmar were for decades significantly marginalised in social, political, and economic life, and strategic interventions for improving women’s status and rights were largely absent. Today, women continue to have limited voice in political decision-making, and their wellbeing and opportunities in life continue to be influenced by inequalities in health, education, and employment - particularly among the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls.

As Myanmar moves forward in its transformation toward peace, democracy and greater social and economic prosperity, it is important to ensure the greater inclusion of women and girls in these processes and to advance their rights to political and economic participation, safety from violence, and sexual and reproductive health. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 (NSPAW) identifies a framework for doing exactly this. The focal point for its implementation is the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. This Department also functions as the overall government focal point on gender equality and women’s rights.

Gender equality is enshrined within the legal and political frameworks of the EU and of its Member States, and is a key principle informing both humanitarian and development work supported by us in Myanmar. Across all the areas that we support, emphasis is placed on mainstreaming gender issues, including ensuring that women and girls benefit equally with men and boys from development and humanitarian aid efforts.

Several EU Member States are also providing specific support to operationalise and implement the NSPAW, with strategic engagement focusing on support to increasing women’s political empowerment and participation, including in the context of the peace process; support to development of an effective response to violence against women and girls, including work at the policy level and at local levels to increase access to violence response services, particularly in areas affected by conflict; policy level support for advancing women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), developing and implementing standard operating guidelines, supporting access to SRHR services and establishing referral pathways with violence response services; targeted support to improve maternal health, including through nutrition support; support to empowering women and girls economically, including through livelihood and income generation support, including support to increasing women’s access to finance and to women’s entrepreneurship development; as well as targeted support to increasing access of the most vulnerable girls and boys to education, including through the provision of school stipends and grants. As reflected by these areas of support, specific emphasis is placed on addressing the needs and rights of the most vulnerable groups of women and girls.
Larger, gender-specific programmes, and programmes with specific gender components, that the EU and its Member States are supporting include: the UNFPA-led Women and Girls First-Initiative (Finland, Italy, and Sweden); the Peace Support Fund (Sweden and the UK) and the Joint Peace Fund (Denmark, the EU, Finland, Italy, Sweden, and the UK), which include funding commitments to advance UN Security Council Resolution Number 1325 on women and peace and security; the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (Denmark, the EU, Sweden and the UK); and LIFT (Denmark, the EU, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK).

“Gender equality is enshrined within the legal and political frameworks of the EU and of its Member States, and is a key principle informing both humanitarian and development work supported by us in Myanmar.”
Health

The new government has made health one of its key policy priorities, increasing the budget for the sector and, under a new National Health Plan, committing to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. The EU and its Member States are providing support to help make this a reality. There is much work to be done as decades of under-investment in the sector has resulted in a health care system that falls far short of both needs and international standards. Maternal and child mortality rates are high and diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS are all too common.

The EU and its Member States working on health place a particular emphasis on aligning with national plans and systems to ensure the sustainability of their support. Denmark, the EU, Sweden, and the UK have all channelled a substantial amount of their support through the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund, a multi-donor programme that seeks to strengthen the national health system and improve access to it for poor and vulnerable people. The Fund has placed a specific emphasis on improving maternal, new-born and child health, on combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and on strengthening the health system. In addition, we contribute to international funds such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which are active in Myanmar through national or regional programmes.

Some Member States are also supporting specific technical institutions. For instance, France is helping to develop the capacity of health laboratories and the UK is supporting medical training facilities. There is also ongoing work with the private sector, for example to improve drug quality to support the containment of drug-resistant malaria. Finland and Sweden provide dedicated support for children and women, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights in conflict areas.

Coordination in the sector is promoted by the Myanmar Health Sector Coordinating Committee which has been established by the government and provides technical, financial and strategic oversight of health activities. Its membership includes government, donors and civil society.

The next five years will be crucial for the transformation of the health sector as the EU and its Member States work with the country and with other partners to deliver decent and affordable healthcare to all.
Photo: EU
Infrastructure

Myanmar suffers from a lack of infrastructure, both in rural and urban areas, that is significantly challenging its development and impeding its competitiveness. The need for more and better quality infrastructure extends across electricity, transportation, and communications.

With an estimated 70% of the population living in rural areas, expanding rural infrastructure and access to critical services will be key to reducing poverty. But Myanmar also faces a booming demand for infrastructure services in urban areas, with a rapid urbanisation rate that is expected to bring 10 million more people into large cities by 2030.

In this context, the EU and its Member States place a strong emphasis on supporting the infrastructure sector in both rural and urban areas, with a focus on Mandalay and Yangon for the latter. In particular, we aim to support Myanmar in building capacity and in infrastructure construction and systems’ management.

One illustrative initiative in the sector is the Mandalay Urban Services Improvement Project (MUSIP). This is supported by France through a concessional loan of €40 million (58 billion Myanmar kyat), by the EU through a grant from its Asia Investment Facility of €8 million (11.5 billion Myanmar kyat) which is channelled through France, and by the Asian Development Bank through a concessional loan of €56 million (80.5 billion Myanmar kyat). MUSIP aims to improve water supply and sanitation in Mandalay. This should provide up to one million people with access to good quality drinking water, assist with the empowerment of the municipal public operator responsible for water services, and promote action to tackle climate change and foster green investments.

Several EU Member States work to foster private investment in infrastructure. For example, the UK funds support to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy to help develop a Public Private
Partnership. They also contribute to InfraCo Asia, a donor-funded, commercially-managed company which develops sustainable, socially responsible infrastructure projects and is working on rural electrification in Myanmar.

Germany, through GIZ and KfW, is supporting the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation in the implementation of the off-grid component of the National Electrification Plan. This work helps develop mini-grids, which are decentralised small-scale distribution networks that provide local communities with power for domestic and productive use. These tap into the country’s renewable energy resources as well as providing new jobs. Through KfW, Germany also supports the Ministry to electrify households in remote areas using Solar Home Systems (SHS) as well as supporting the extension of the country’s main electricity grid.

Through KfW, Germany also supports the rehabilitation of rural roads in Southern Shan State as well as road and bridge reconstruction in Sagaing in areas that have suffered from flooding.

France, through Proparco, a subsidiary of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) that is devoted to private sector financing, supports the development of Myanmar mobile phone networks along with its German and Dutch counterparts, FMO and DEG.
Public Finance Management

During the decades of military rule in Myanmar, public financial management (PFM) systems stagnated and key elements of a modern PFM system were completely absent. The concerned institutions were underdeveloped and the objectives of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency were not pursued. Reform of the country’s PFM systems began under the government that took office in 2011.

With support from donors, in 2012/13 the government conducted an initial Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) review, which revealed important shortcomings in all aspects of the PFM systems. PEFA is a tool for assessing the status of public financial management and provides a thorough, consistent and evidence-based analysis of PFM performance at a specific point in time - see: https://pefa.org/). On the basis of this review, in 2013 a national PFM reform strategy was prepared and adopted, and a series of key reform measures were initiated. Structural and institutional reforms included the introduction of parliamentary oversight of public spending through the establishment of a Joint Public Accounts Committee representing both chambers of the Parliament, setting up of the Central Bank of Myanmar, establishment of Treasury and Internal Revenue Departments within the Ministry of Planning and Finance, and the separation of Union budgets from States and Regions budgets. Reviews of the legislative and regulatory framework were undertaken and preparation of a Public Finance Law and regulations began, together with work on public procurement and taxation laws.

Despite the range of issues to be addressed, and the limited capacities of the concerned institutions, there has been significant progress to date, though much work remains to be done over the coming years. Important analytical work has been carried out through a Public Expenditure Review and other technical work financed by donors, and there has been considerable progress in a number of technical areas including development of a Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF), debt management, tax administration and policies, customs, fiscal transparency through steps towards application of Open Budget Index norms as regards publication of key fiscal documents, and adherence to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

Reform efforts are now entering a new phase. The democratically-elected government that took office in April 2016 has given renewed priority to PFM reform objectives, and in its economic policy priorities express its intention to combat corruption and create a fully transparent and efficient PFM system.

The PFM reform strategy is part of a long process which will include its review and update as well as a sequenced implementation plan. Development of such a plan will ensure coherence between all the ongoing activities, and strengthen the government’s strategic management of the overall reform process.
The government is working with a number of international partners supporting different aspects of development of the PFM system, including:

• Asian Development Bank (ADB): public debt management and public-private partnerships.

• International Monetary Fund (IMF): PFM legal framework, taxation, macroeconomic, and banking sector issues.

• Japan: customs, tax and Central Bank support.

• USA: capital budget planning processes and government oversight of state enterprises, tax.

• World Bank Multi-donor Trust Fund (supported by Australia, Denmark and the UK): a broad range of core PFM and budget systems as well as public procurement and government oversight of state enterprises.
Technical and Vocational Education and Training

For sustainable economic development in Myanmar, a skilled labour force is essential. The reform of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system is therefore of high importance. This is closely linked to the government’s economic policy and the need to develop a skilled workforce for the industrial and service sectors. The existing TVET system in the country faces many challenges in terms of quality, labour market orientation, management and financing. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has emphasised the importance of TVET and its high priority for the economic development of the country.

The high priority of TVET is reflected in the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (NESP) where it is emphasised as one of nine Transformational Shifts. The stated goal is that “more learners can access TVET and graduate from quality-assured and labour-market responsive TVET programmes under a more effective TVET management system”.

Complementary to improving the formal TVET sector, recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning have become issues of considerable importance in national education policy initiatives.

TVET has a long history in Europe, particularly in countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, where dual apprenticeship systems contribute to some of the lowest youth unemployment rates worldwide. The success of this dual approach, which combines practical on-the-job training in companies with theoretical education at vocational schools, is based on a strong involvement of the private sector in TVET.

The EU and its Member States are committed to supporting the government in its goal of establishing a flexible, labour market oriented TVET system that emphasises stronger cooperation between the government and TVET institutions on the one hand, and companies on the other.

Germany has committed €25 million (36 billion Myanmar kyat) to the sector. The German programme aims at a quantitative and qualitative improvement in vocational training through fostering close relations and partnerships between companies, chambers, business associations and TVET institutes, and investing in modern TVET infrastructure. It is implemented by the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Education with support from KfW and GIZ.

The Netherlands’ Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NICHE) is funding a four-year project to enhance the capacity of the Department of Agriculture to coordinate and implement key transformations in the agricultural TVET system. Work takes place with State Agricultural Institutions on curriculum review and teacher skills updates to better align them to regional specifications and labour market demands. NICHE is also funding a project for capacity building in
the water management sector through supporting the Yangon Technological University and Myanmar Maritime University.

The multi-donor Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) also works on TVET, focusing on business and skills development and the connection of workers to new jobs and economic opportunities.

The coordination of donor activities with the priorities of the government is facilitated by the government-led Job Creation Sector Coordination Group to which Germany provides technical support.
Tourism

The government has identified the tourism sector as one of its key priorities in helping to promote sustainable development and job creation. The country has excellent potential as a tourist destination given its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. As it has opened up in recent years, this has been reflected in a sharp rise in the number of foreign visitors. Some 4.7 million tourists visited in 2015 as opposed to only 800,000 in 2011. Tourism now accounts for nearly 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with that figure expected to rise to 8% by 2025.

Donors have also been increasing their support to the sector, working in line with the Tourism Master Plan that has been put in place by government. The EU, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK all work in the sector, providing around €3 million (4.4 billion Myanmar kyat) each year which is distributed among 20 different projects. These cover a broad range of activities from studies, surveys and action plans to capacity building, training and job creation, to the promotion of responsible tourism, destination management, and marketing. Some initiatives are nationwide while others focus on particular tourist destinations such as the Inle Lake region, Yangon, Mandalay and Shan State.

Luxembourg’s five-year Tourism Human Resources Development programme supports the design and implementation of the national human resources development plan for the tourism sector.

Italy mainly supports cultural and eco-tourism, through capacity building projects. This includes, in partnership with Italian universities and NGOs, a focus on the definition of an integrated development plan for tourism in the cultural heritage cities of Upper Myanmar and the planning and promotion of ecotourism in Lampi Marine National Park.

The Netherlands have funded a four-year project aimed at increasing tourist sector related incomes of Kayah enterprises, providing support to local communities and strengthening the whole value chain.

Germany supports the Tourism Value Chain Promotion project and the Tourism/Technical Vocational and Educational Training project at Inle Lake and in the surrounding area.
Trade and Private Sector Development

The EU and its Member States are committed to open and fair trade with our trading partners and it is our goal to increase opportunities to trade with the world. Free and fair trade has the potential to foster prosperity and increase living standards for all. It paves the way for sustainable development and inclusive growth. Foreign investment is also an essential engine for generating economic growth and jobs, whether at home or abroad, for reducing poverty, and for transferring technology and know-how. It is our policy to promote responsible investment, which benefits both the investor and the recipient country in the long-term.

Myanmar has transformed remarkably since reforms started in 2011. Its economy has developed with growth rates that are amongst the highest in the world. The country is endowed with abundant natural resources and benefits from various trade privileges with other countries.

The government outlined its framework for the future development of the economy in a 12-point economic policy plan in July 2016. Its intention is to achieve sustained inclusive development and it emphasises the importance of reform in fields like infrastructure, public finance and private sector promotion. In order to promote a competitive and vibrant private sector, the strengthening of institutional capacities - especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) - has been defined as a priority task. Moreover, trade and investment facilitation, including transparent and predictable rules and regulations, is needed to contribute to a better business environment. The EU and its Member States welcome these initiatives and support the government in this important transition to make use of its vast economic potential for the benefit of the people of the country.

In 2015, EU-Myanmar bilateral trade in goods reached €1.2 billion (1.7 trillion Myanmar kyat), a 40% increase since 2014 and a 300% increase since 2012. EU imports of goods from Myanmar amounted to €675 million (940 billion Myanmar kyat) in 2015. Garments made up more than half of these with the remainder including rice, fisheries products, wood products and beans.

EU companies are increasingly investing in the country, creating new jobs, bringing in new technology and know-how, opening up opportunities for local suppliers, and making new products and services available for the people of Myanmar. In terms of foreign direct investment, the EU Member States are the fourth largest foreign investor.

The EU and its Member States are working on a
number of initiatives to support trade and private sector development.

We played a major role in the recovery of Myanmar’s economy by removing sanctions and reinstating trade preferences in 2013. The latter was done under the Everything But Arms initiative which now allows Myanmar products to enjoy duty-free and quota-free access to the European single market of over 500 million consumers, the largest of its kind in the world. This has been the major cause of the large increase in trade volumes between Myanmar and the EU over recent years.

In 2014, negotiations for an Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) started. Once in place, this agreement will establish a level playing field for all EU and Myanmar investors to ensure the protection and fair treatment of investors on both sides. This will not only help to further increase investment, but also to enhance transparency, good governance and the protection of workers’ rights and the environment.

The EU and Germany together fund the €10.5 million (15 billion Myanmar kyat) Myanmar Trade Development Programme, implemented by GIZ, which enables the country to take advantage of its re-integration into the world trading system including ASEAN. It covers trade facilitation, trade policy development, sanitary and phytosanitary standards and quality infrastructure issues. The UK, along with Australia, funds support to the enabling environment for business via the International Finance Corporation.

Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the UK, along with Norway and Switzerland, provide support to the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, which works to encourage responsible business activities throughout the country. SMART Myanmar (SMEs for environmental Accountability, Responsibility and Transparency) is a €2 million (3 billion Myanmar kyat) EU project that supports SMEs in the garment industry to produce their products in a sustainable manner that is in line with international standards, therefore providing them with the opportunity to export to European markets.

In cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the EU and its Member States are also fostering labour rights and decent work by strengthening the relations between government, businesses, workers and other stakeholders. This will help Myanmar to become an even more attractive business and trading partner in the world. Denmark is supporting the government’s labour market reforms including through capacity building activities aimed at developing safer and healthier working conditions and improving social dialogue. Sweden is working with the ILO and private sector companies such as H&M and C&A to improve industrial relations in selected garment factories, with a focus on women’s rights.

In 2014, we launched the European Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar. Its aim is to reinforce the mutually beneficial relationship between Myanmar businesses and their European counterparts, to give greater visibility to Myanmar in Europe, and to share experiences on good management practices, including corporate social responsibility. The Chamber cooperates closely with bilateral chambers from the Member States on the basis of complementarity and subsidiarity.

Germany, with almost €53 million (77 billion
Myanmar kyat) and five ongoing projects, focuses on fostering a favourable environment for SMEs with work that includes institutional capacity building and SME financing via the local banking sector.

The UK has seven projects that are related to the private sector with a total volume of €29 million (42 billion Myanmar kyat). The largest and newest of these is the DaNa Facility, a 5-year programme focusing on inclusive, responsible and competitive business growth as well as investment and trade.

Denmark is implementing projects targeting a sustainable marketplace and responsible business, as well as setting up an €11m (15.7 billion Myanmar kyat) challenge fund to support national SMEs on management, resource efficiency and working environment.

Italy’s economy is mainly sustained by SMEs and it brings its expertise and knowledge of this sector to Myanmar by supporting SME development with a pro-poor and inclusive project in cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). In addition, funding is provided for a selection of projects implemented by Italian universities and NGOs including specific components aimed at sustaining SMEs working in aquaculture, tourism, and agriculture.

We work to coordinate all of this support to trade and private sector development with the programmes and projects of other donors in the country.
Water

Water forms an important part of Myanmar’s wealth of natural resources and is pivotal for the country’s new phase of economic development. It is used for a wide variety of purposes including facilitating food production, generating energy, driving industry, and providing inland transport. But its use and management also has a vital role to play in safeguarding the health of both humans and ecosystems, which it has the potential to both help and harm. Sustainable water utilisation and management therefore involves balancing development with social and environmental concerns, managing opportunities and risks, and ensuring equity.

The country has five major river basins but water is unevenly distributed in time and location. For example, 90% of annual rainfall occurs during the monsoon season. Climate change is exacerbating this situation. The result is that different parts of the country face different issues around water at different times, ranging from flooding to shortages. This influences everything from agriculture to industry and from the environment to health and safety. Good water management is therefore essential but it has unfortunately been lacking in the past in many areas.

The government, through the National Water Resources Committee, has been working to coordinate all efforts in the field of water. In 2014, it adopted a National Water Policy, taking an integrated approach to water resources management covering the various areas mentioned above. It also set out new institutional arrangements to facilitate this and promote the kind of inter-ministerial coordination that is needed.

The EU and its Member States are working to support this new Policy, recognising how important it is for the country’s sustainable development. The Netherlands has undertaken a study for an Integrated Water Resources Management Masterplan and is now working with other donors to implement its recommendations, including the development of an Integrated Ayeyarwady Delta Strategy. Other Member States such as France provide support on urban water supply in Yangon and Mandalay. Capacity building is at the heart of our work and this has included assisting the government to become a member of networks such as the Delta Alliance and the Global Water Partnership in order to benefit from international best practice.

An informal donor group on water has been established which is co-chaired by the Netherlands and includes Australia, France and the World Bank. This group aims to ensure a coherent approach across the other, official, Sector Coordination Groups where water has a role, for example Agriculture and Rural Development, Energy and Electric Power, Environmental Conservation, Health, Nutrition, and Transport and Communications.
Photo: EU
Governance and Democracy

Myanmar has embarked upon a historic social, political and economic transition towards an emerging democracy. However, decades of military rule have left the country with a legacy of poor governance, weak institutional capacity and frail service delivery. Strong, transparent and accountable institutions, followed by a vibrant civil society and an independent media, are essential to the functioning of modern democratic states. In the congested media landscape in Myanmar, it is critically important to give independent media outlets a chance to survive, and for this purpose Sweden is supporting the Media Development Investment Fund.

To assure Myanmar’s inclusive and sustained democratic transition and the overall wellbeing of its people, our objective is to support Myanmar in strengthening effective governance systems and public institutions, developing capacities across government for policy making, planning and implementation, and promoting the rule of law and democratic governance.

Public administration, including de-centralisation and local governance reform, is one priority. Together with the UN, the EU helped government to draw up a Framework for Administrative Reform. The EU has deployed technical experts to support the national planning process, including the formulation of a National Comprehensive Development Plan, while Denmark, Germany, Italy and the UK are providing support to the government’s Central Statistical Organisation. In a joint effort with our development partners, the EU and its Member States have identified various opportunities to strengthen Myanmar’s planning processes at the national level and to engage in reforms with Myanmar’s Union Civil Service Board, as well as supporting a number of pilot planning and development projects at township and municipal level.

Democratic values and a strong commitment to human rights underline all our engagement and are mainstreamed into all of our development programmes. Civil society has a critical role to play in the success of Myanmar’s social and political transition and the EU and its Member States work to promote the establishment of an environment that protects and fosters civil society’s rights. We help facilitate civil society engagement with government, expose local organisations to international best practices, ensure their involvement in our own planning processes, and channel part of our support to the country through them.

Elections are an essential component of a functioning democracy. The EU, Denmark, Sweden and the UK, together with other development partners, made a crucial contribution to the holding of peaceful and competitive general elections in 2015 and by-elections in 2017 through various programmes such as STEP Democracy. The EU and its Member States continue to support the Union Election Commission, Parliament, political parties, civil society, domestic election observation groups, media and the public on further democratic and electoral reforms.

The EU and its Member States recognise that a fair and just rule of law system is essential to build lasting trust among individuals, communities, civil
society and the institutions that deliver justice. To promote genuine rule of law, the EU supports a large ‘access to justice’ programme called MyJustice that equips people with the knowledge, confidence and opportunities to have their disputes fairly and equitably resolved by improving access to, and strengthening the capacity of, both formal and informal justice systems. This programme especially targets vulnerable groups but also the legal profession and justice institutions to better use and respond to innovations, such as community mediation and paralegal services, thus cultivating a more community-driven approach to local justice issues. Denmark has launched a major programme on Rule of Law and Human Rights (running from 2016 to 2020) which supports the Union Attorney General’s Office, the Office of the Supreme Court of the Union, lawyers, civil society organisations as well as university law departments in strengthening capacities on core aspects of rule of law and human rights and in promoting reform in relevant areas. The programme is based on participatory approaches, supporting partners to identify their own needs and priorities and to take the lead in the implementation of activities.

Myanmar also benefits from legal capacity building of justice sector professionals and strengthening of rule of law institutions to help them better fulfil their mandates, with support from Finland, Sweden, the UK and other donors. This includes support to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide advice to Myanmar’s newly-formed Rule of Law Coordination Body.

Police play a central role in upholding the rule of law and human rights, and at the same time need to themselves adhere to the rule of law. Therefore, the EU is working with the Myanmar Police Force to achieve comprehensive reforms that would result in a more preventive, balanced and professional approach to law enforcement, based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a more service-oriented and accountable Force that is trusted by the different communities. The UK also supports the Myanmar Police Force, through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), on the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) and how it can start to work with other agencies to implement this in selected communities. Sweden partners with UNODC to support the government to fulfil its obligation as a signatory to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

The European commitment to promoting good governance and democracy has also involved direct support to the statistical sector, aimed at strengthening Myanmar institutions’ policy planning capacities. Along with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the UN, the EU assisted with the drafting of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics. Finland, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK all supported the historic 2014 census and related data publication, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other donors.
Aid Information Management System

For development assistance to be effective it needs to be coordinated and aligned with national priorities. Gaps and overlaps need to be avoided and government, civil society and other stakeholders need to know what donors are doing. To facilitate this, the EU provided funding for the government to develop an online Aid Information Management System (AIMS) to track donors’ projects and programmes.
Now online and fully operational, Mohinga - http://mohinga.info - tracks over €5 billion (7.2 trillion Myanmar kyat) in aid commitments, comprising over 1,500 activities. Aid flows are mapped and graphed by location, sector, ministry, and donor. Interactive dashboards and customisable reports allow users to visualise and use the information in a wide variety of ways. Donors submit data through an online web interface or they can import data directly from their capitals’ submissions to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)
The main donor coordination body in Myanmar, the Cooperation Partners Group, has created a dedicated Work Stream on AIMS which includes the EU, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, along with other interested donors. The Work Stream holds regular meetings with government. Currently, Germany and Italy are also providing financial support to further develop the capabilities and use of the system.
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