



Interview with Jessica Milano, Italy

Why do EU-Asia relations matter to you?

As a young European citizen watching the EU intensify its ties with the Asian continent, I decided to commit myself personally to the mutual understanding between two important actors from these regions: China and the EU. To do so, I became part of European Guanxi, an empowered network of young European professionals, scholars and students, which was founded in Barcelona in 2020. Our aim is to provide a broader platform for debate, discussion and analysis of EU-China relations under the values of mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. I joined European Guanxi because I strongly believe that, together with governments, civil society – especially youth – has huge potential to make a difference to mutual understanding and learning.

I see Europe-Asia cooperation not only as an opportunity but also as a necessity. Together, the regions account for more than 60% of global population, trade and GDP. Ensuring that all these people are represented at the same table is therefore fun-



The Proust Questionnaire

Freely inspired by a parlour game popularised by the French novelist Marcel Proust

Your chief characteristic?

I'm extremely reflective as a person. I ask myself a lot of questions and like to analyse what happens around me with a critical approach.

What do you appreciate most in people?

Honesty, a sense of humour and kindness.

Your idea of happiness?

Being healthy, having a job that I like and that enables me to earn enough money to travel around the world. Finally, having enough time to spend with the people I love.

If not yourself, who would you like to be?

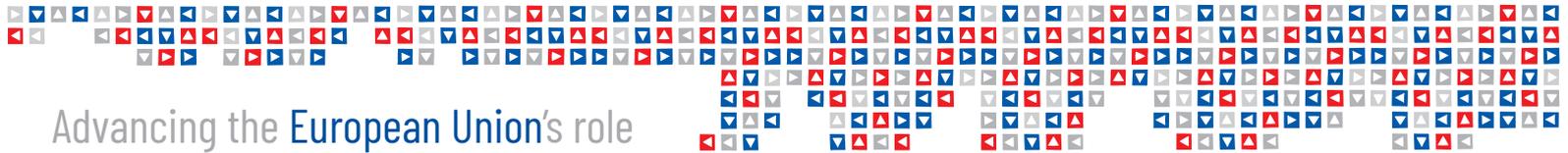
I've been taking dance classes for many years and one of my dreams, when I was a child, was to be a famous dancer, like the Italian Eleonora Abbagnato.

Your favourite European/Asian dish?

Italian spaghetti with ragù (tomato and meat sauce) always makes me crazy.

Your favourite European/Asian author or artist?

Tiziano Terzani, the journalist and writer. He's my point of reference to understand 20th century East Asia. In fact, he was one of the few Western reporters who worked and lived in the region throughout his career.



Advancing the European Union's role in multilateral fora in **Asia**

damental. I believe the international order we live in is undergoing profound and rapid changes. Despite the many geopolitical tensions, the growing level of interdependence among global actors is undeniable and became even more evident with the Covid-19 pandemic. In a world of transformations – which is gradually shifting its centre from the West to Asia – we must let diversity be the starting point for mutual learning rather than the cause of potentially dangerous misunderstandings.

What are the greatest common challenges for the EU and Asia today?

Today the fight against the coronavirus is the main challenge, not only for Europe and Asia but for the whole world. The pandemic made us realise – at a high price – that public health isn't a national issue anymore but rather an international one. We were already aware that global matters require global responses, and the post-pandemic recovery is an example. The real challenge lies in finding a way for a recovery that allows both Europe and Asia to prosper. We need a different form of globalisation: one that is sustainable, that pursues gender equality and that fights racism and any other form of discrimination. In other words, a globalisation that does not leave losers behind. I am confident that the Asian continent, which is home to new, vibrant and dynamic forces, can be a promoter of these values.

Which Asian achievement do you admire most?

I think one of the greatest Asian achievements has been the constitution of ASEAN. Bringing together entities with diverse ethnicities, histories, languages, religions, cultures and traditions should be viewed with great admiration. Of course, cooperation between actors that are so different in nature will somehow be limited. However, creating the opportunity for different interlocutors to sit at the same table is a significant achievement, and the international relevance of Southeast Asia is now growing significantly, both in geopolitical and economic terms.

Jessica is 25! An Italian student enrolled in a double-degree MA in International Science at Turin University (Italy) and Zhejiang University (PRC), she is doing an internship at the Italian Embassy in Hanoi (Vietnam). Her passion for Chinese culture started while learning Chinese at high school, which then nurtured her curiosity towards East and Southeast Asian cultures.

The **Asia-Europe Meeting** (ASEM) has been the major political platform linking Europe and Asia since 1996. Its 53 partners represent 60% of the world's population.

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