



European Union

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PRESS RELEASE

Evolving nature of European Union - Sri Lanka cooperation; from humanitarian and post-war assistance to higher education and Research and Innovation.

The EU organised the first meeting under the Collaborative Action towards Societal Challenges through Awareness, Development, and Education (CASCADE) project, held from the 3rd to 6th November 2013 at the Kandalama Heritage Hotel. The Project is funded under 'Horizon 2020', the new financial programme of the EU for Research and Development and with a budget of over €70billion (2014 – 2020).

The CASCADE project aims to provide the foundation for a future International Cooperation Network programme targeting South Asian Countries, which will promote bi-regional coordination of Research & Innovation cooperation. One of the key objectives of the 18-month CASCADE project is to assemble a regional position paper that identifies global challenges, research priorities and increases awareness on how to address common problems being faced.

In this context, the three day workshop in Sri Lanka has been a platform where partners from various countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and their European colleagues) have actively engaged in constructive discussions on how to address prevalent issues in the disciplines of sciences and humanities e.g. health, agriculture, maritime research, energy; climate action, resource management etc. Further, this initiative is well aligned with the declared priority of "Mahinda Chintana" emphasising the move towards a technologically advanced and knowledge based economy.

Speaking on the occasion, the Research and Innovation Counsellor of the EU Delegation to India, Denis Dambois said *"CASCADE is an excellent opportunity for raising awareness of the potential for EU-Southern Asia cooperation and stimulating regional and international participation. With the active contribution of countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the endeavour will be to pave the way for more advanced, inclusive and innovative societies"*.

The initiative involves a number of European and Asian research institutions, including the University of Salford (U.K.) which is the consortium leader, the University of Moratuwa and the Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities. Confirming the importance of CASCADE, the project coordinator Professor Dilanthi Amaratunga said *"this initiative is truly forward thinking and has generated great interest in the participating countries. Sri Lanka with its wealth of natural resources will play a key role in shaping future policies. I am pleased to be given the responsibility of this project will have long lasting impact on the lives of people."*