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ABSTRACT OF PRESENTATION

The EU in the Eyes of Hong Kong Elites

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The European Union (EU) is a recognisable actor in the eyes of the 31 Hong Kong elites interviewed between May to October 2007. Notably, the euro, the EU flag and the process of European integration are the most mentioned images of the EU. By and large, the significance of the EU as an economic power is widely recognised. Most elites describe EU-Hong Kong relations as close and improving. However, Hong Kong elites have cast some doubts on the political and military powers of the EU. In terms of the EU's importance to Hong Kong, it occupies an important position after Mainland China and the United States.

When comparing the perceptions of the EU among Hong Kong media, general public and elites, there are more similarities than differences. The EU frequently appears in the images of all the three sectors as an economic and trading power, with doubts regarding the EU's international political-cum-military capacity.

In general, Hong Kong elites turn to web-based, English-only, sources for additional news and information about the EU. Still, there is a feeling among elites that they are inadequately informed about the EU's global actions and activities in Hong Kong and China. Some of the elites interviewed have not even heard about the European Commission (EC)'s office in Hong Kong.

With regards to the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM process), hardly anything is known, as far as Hong Kong elites are concerned. Those who happen to pay some attention to the ASEM 6 Summit which was held in Helsinki, Finland, in September 2006, dismiss it as irrelevant to Hong Kong.

Looking ahead, the EU's relevance to Hong Kong is expected to grow as EU-China relations develop. The roles and expectations of the EU vary depending on the elites' professional background and personal connections with the EU. There is a strong consensus among Hong Kong elites to see in the EU, considerable potentials for lesson-learning and sharing of values as long as Hong Kong continues to occupy a strategic position in such triadic relationships.