

# Workshop on the Future of European Studies in Asia

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## ABSTRACT OF PRESENTATION

### Introduction to the “EU through the Eyes of Asia” Project: elite interview highlights

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The elite interviews undertaken in the six selected locations in Asia (China, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand) for ESIA’s “EU through the Eyes of Asia” project all followed an identical methodology. Researchers in each location targeted a sample of 32 individuals drawn from the political, business, civil society and media elites. The researchers were trained in interviewing techniques with individual face-to-face, semi-structured on-record interviews employed as the data collection technique. The interviews took place in relevant political and economic centres - Bangkok, Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong - during April to October 2007, and on average lasted up to one hour in duration. Anonymity was offered to all respondents and where sources are identified this was with the explicit permission of the interviewee. This approach has proven to be particularly effective for approaching “key informants” – it is more personal, flexible, respects privacy and status, and can generate greater openness and trust between interviewer and interviewee.

The study’s analysis utilised qualitative interpretative methodology capitalising on its strong insight and interpretation. To improve the reliability of this particular attitudinal research, the collected data was analysed using content-analysis methodology incorporating cognitive semantics tools. The employed methodology revealed the categories that “mapped” the concept “EU” via re-construing the mental “schemata” of the concept.

The elite analysis serves to provide both a snapshot of country-specific views and perceptions of the role of the EU locally as well as generate comparative themes of similarities and differences across the Asian region. These comparisons are thematic as well as by category of elite and provide an important benchmark against which further studies can be evaluated.