

Since January 2009, Jan Willem Blankert works as a diplomat for the European Commission in Jakarta as Special Advisor for the relationship of the EU with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN; the ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta).

In 2003 to 2007 Jan Willem worked in the European Commission's Headquarters in Brussels on the ever more dynamic relationship between the EU and China. He is an economist and a veteran of economic and political reform and integration. Between 1985 and 2003, he worked on European integration issues, first in Brussels, and after that in Poland, Bosnia and Serbia as these countries were gearing up for integration into the EU.

Jan Willem graduated with an economics degree from the University of Amsterdam in 1975. He worked for the governments of Suriname (1976–1981), and Tanzania (1982–1983). He was a Programme Officer at UNICEF, Uganda in 1984 and a lecturer at the Amsterdam Business School in 1985.

He wrote this book while on a fellowship at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore during the academic year 2007/2008. The opinions (sometimes very personal) expressed in this book are strictly his own.