

EU-India relations

2021/2023(INI) - 29/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 594 votes to 34, with 63 abstentions, a recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning EU-India relations.

The EU and India are due to meet at a leaders' meeting on 8 May 2021 in Oporto, Portugal, following their commitment to meet regularly at the highest level and to strengthen the strategic partnership established in 2004, with the aim of intensifying economic and political cooperation.

To this end, the European Parliament made a series of recommendations in the following areas:

General EU-India relations

Parliament recommended deepening the relationship between the EU and India as strategic partners, as well as upholding the commitment to hold regular multi-level dialogues, including summits.

Members called for consolidating the progress made under the strategic partnership and making concrete progress on priority issues, including global health resilience, climate change and green growth, digital transition and new technologies, connectivity, trade and investment, foreign, security and defence policy, and human rights.

Parliament stressed the importance of India as a partner in the global fight against climate change and biodiversity degradation and in a green transition to renewable energy and climate neutrality.

Members called for the promotion of a structured inter-parliamentary dialogue and asked that EU and Indian civil societies, including trade unions, faith-based organisations, feminist and LGBTIQI organisations, environmental organisations and chambers of commerce, be explicitly consulted on the implementation of EU-India relations.

Foreign and security policy cooperation

Parliament recommended promoting greater synergy in foreign and security policy through existing foreign and security policy dialogue mechanisms and within the fora set up under the EU-India Roadmap to 2025.

It stressed the need for closer thematic coordination of international security policies and action in areas such as nuclear security, chemical weapons mitigation, regional conflict prevention and peace-building, maritime security, counter-terrorism and violent extremism, as well as cyber security and hybrid threats.

Members also called for renewed EU efforts to bring India and Pakistan closer together and restore good neighbourly relations and to support India's bid for a permanent seat on a modernised Security Council.

Promoting the rule of law, human rights and good governance

Parliament recommended:

- placing human rights and democratic values at the heart of the EU's relations with India, so as to foster a constructive, results-oriented dialogue and better mutual understanding;

- develop, together with India, a strategy to address human rights issues, in particular those relating to women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities, as well as issues relating to freedom of religion or belief;
- address the problem of caste-based discrimination;
- address rule of law issues, such as the fight against corruption and the creation of conditions for independent journalists and civil society, including human rights defenders, and to integrate human rights considerations across the wider EU-India partnership.

Trade for sustainable development and prosperity

The EU is India's largest trading partner and India is the EU's 9th largest trading partner. Parliament recommended:

- making the most of India's commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based international trade order;
- promote India's decisive role in the current efforts to reform the World Trade Organisation;
- evaluate to what extent the Commission's negotiating mandate needs to be updated if the aim is to conclude a trade and cooperation agreement that would include ambitious provisions on an enforceable Trade and Sustainable Development chapter aligned with the Paris Agreement.

Resilience through sectoral partnerships

Parliament stressed the importance of digitisation partnerships with partners who share EU values and use technology in line with fundamental rights. It recommended taking effective measures to facilitate EU-India mobility, especially for migrants, students, highly skilled workers and artists, taking into account the availability of skills and labour market needs in the EU and India. People-to-people exchanges should be a key dimension of the strategic partnership.

COVID-19 pandemic

India is one of the countries hardest hit by the new COVID-19 pandemic with over 11 million confirmed cases and over 150 000 deaths. The Indian government has undertaken to donate millions of vaccines to countries in its immediate neighbourhood and key partner states in the Indian Ocean.

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation should include strengthening international security, improving preparedness and responses to global health emergencies, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Parliament recommended (i) recalling India's role as a leading manufacturer of pharmaceuticals, generic drugs and vaccines, particularly in the context of the current global health crisis; (ii) encouraging joint ventures to ensure universal access to COVID-19 vaccines; (iii) ensuring that the EU and India play a joint leadership role in promoting health as a global public good.