

The future of EU-US relations

In December 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) published an ambitious agenda for transatlantic cooperation with the incoming US administration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. This was followed by an EU-US Summit on 15 June 2021, which saw the launch of new formats for EU-US collaboration. Yet unexpected foreign policy developments since then have raised questions about the partnership's future. Parliament is expected to debate and vote on a report on the topic during the October I plenary session.

A fresh start

After four years of mostly fraught relations with former President Trump, the EU saw the inauguration of US President Joe Biden as an opportunity to find common cause on global challenges. [A new EU-US agenda for global change](#) adopted by the Commission in December 2020 identified scope for cooperation on the pandemic, the climate, trade, security and democracy. The new US administration has reaffirmed its support for multilateralism and traditional alliances, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); re-entered the Paris Agreement; re-joined the World Health Organization (WHO); given new [impetus](#) to global tax reform; and, on 22 September 2021, joined the EU in a [partnership](#) for global vaccine distribution. The EU-US Summit in Brussels on 15 June 2021 saw the launch of, inter alia, an EU-US security and defence dialogue and an EU-US Trade and Technology Council (the latter of which met for the first time on 29 September). On 21 July 2021, the two co-chairs of the European Parliament – US Congress Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue, Radosław Sikorski (EPP, Poland) and Representative Jim Costa (Democrat, California) – [hailed](#) the opportunity to leverage the EU-US partnership to [address shared challenges](#).

Ongoing transatlantic divergences

Yet progress in some areas has been slow: a US travel ban on foreign visitors was [lifted](#) only on 20 September 2021, months after the EU eased restrictions on US travellers; tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on EU steel and aluminium exports on national security grounds remain in place; and talks on a new cross-border data agreement have [not yet concluded](#). Moreover, the US has appeared not to consult the EU on major foreign policy decisions: on 5 May 2021, the Biden administration [announced](#) support for a proposal at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to waive intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines, taking the EU by [surprise](#); the hurried exodus of NATO forces from [Afghanistan](#) in August 2021 drew [criticism](#) from some European US allies of the unilateral nature of the Biden administration's decision to withdraw; and the surprise [announcement](#) on 15 September 2021 that Australia was cancelling a contract signed in 2016 to procure diesel-powered submarines from France's Naval Group, and instead entering into a new security partnership and procurement arrangement with the US and UK, dubbed 'AUKUS', came one day before the publication of the EU's own Indo-Pacific [strategy](#). France protested the surprise announcement by recalling its ambassadors to Australia and the US, and High Representative Josep Borrell [suggested](#) that it ran counter to EU-US cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

European Parliament position

On 15 July 2021, Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted an [own-initiative report](#) on EU-US relations under Rule 54. While [acknowledging](#) ongoing transatlantic divergences and calling for greater EU self-reliance in security and defence, the report also calls on the two sides to work together to strengthen multilateralism and on shared foreign policy, security and economic objectives, including the pandemic, human rights and global tax reform.

Own-initiative report: [2021/2038\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Tonino Picula (S&D, Croatia).

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