

**January 2022**

The European Union has gradually expanded its competences in external policies. Today it aims to play a leading role on the international stage, as a key supporter of the multilateral system, guided by the fundamental values of human rights and democracy. The Union is a strong defender of the multilateral trade system in accordance with the norms of the World Trade Organization, and pursues open and mutually beneficial trade relations with other countries. It is a major development aid provider and stands ready to provide humanitarian help whenever a crisis occurs. It has enhanced its capabilities to act as a peace and security provider. According to its founding Treaties, the Union shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations. The Union fosters broad political, trade and economic relations with other countries, in particular geopolitically important countries such as the United States, Japan, Canada, Russia, India and China, and has established strong partnerships with regional and global organisations, such as the African Union and the United Nations.

On EU external policies:

A new approach to EU enlargement

Briefing by Branislav Stanicek, March 2020

The 2003 Thessaloniki Summit opened the door to a European future for the western Balkans. However, since then progress towards EU membership has been slow. In February 2020, the European Commission announced a revised enlargement methodology. The new approach aims to strengthen the political process by improving tools to push reforms forward, notably in the areas of the rule of law and the economy. It makes accession negotiations more credible, more predictable, more dynamic and guided by a stronger political steer.

A new neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument – Global Europe

Briefing by Beatrix Immenkamp, July 2021

The regulation governing Global Europe comes under Heading 6 – 'Neighbourhood and the World' of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which sets out the main priorities and overall budgetary framework for the EU's external action from 2021 to 2027. It brings together 10 separate instruments and funds in the 2014-2020 MFF, as well as the European Development Fund (EDF), which has until now been outside the EU budget.

Charting a course through stormy waters: The EU as a maritime security actor

Briefing by Tania Latici, Eric Pichon, Branislav Stanicek, February-2021

The European Union is a one-of-a-kind maritime actor, which brings both opportunities and responsibilities. It is argued that if all the EU Member States were to combine the capacities and capabilities of their navies, they would form one of the world's largest maritime powers. There is therefore room for better integration of capabilities and greater coherence among the EU's tools to promote its multi-dimensional strategic maritime interests.

FOLLOW EPRS<http://epthinktank.eu>

@EP_thinktank



european parliamentary research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



european parliamentary research service

Critical raw materials in EU external policies: Improving access and raising global standards

Briefing by Marcin Szczepanski, May 2021

While global demand for critical raw materials (CRMs) is rising, export restrictions imposed by resource-rich countries is intensifying competition for these materials. To boost its access to CRMs, the EU has a dedicated strategy based on three pillars: two internal (increasing domestic sourcing and circularity) and one external, which is mostly about securing supply from third countries.

European Peace Facility: Investing in international stability and security

Briefing by Beatrix Immenkamp, June 2021

The European Peace Facility (EPF) is a new off-budget fund with a financial ceiling of €5.692 billion financed by Member State contributions. The EPF, operational as of 1 July 2021, should make it easier for Member States to share the costs of EU military operations. Controversially, for the first time, the EU is now able to provide the armed forces of partner countries with infrastructure and equipment, including weapons.

International trade dispute settlement: WTO Appellate Body crisis and the multiparty interim appeal arrangement

Briefing by Jana Titievskaia, April 2021

As the WTO Appellate Body is unable to hear new appeals, no disputes can now be resolved at the highest instance, causing widespread concern in the context of escalating global trade protectionism. To find a temporary solution to the impasse, the EU and a number of trade partners have set up a multiparty interim appeal arbitration arrangement.

International trade policy

EPRS ideas paper by Jana Titievskaia, July 2020

Trade accounts for a higher proportion of the EU economy than that of the United States of America or China, which can make the EU's economic model more vulnerable to import and export disruptions. In recent years, the multilateral liberal trading order has been facing unprecedented turbulence, including rising protectionism. At the same time, the European Commission remains committed to the promotion of free and fair trade.

Global human rights sanctions – Mapping Magnitsky laws: The US, Canadian, UK and EU approach

Briefing by Martin Russell, November 2021

Human rights sanctions are nothing new, but the death in 2009 of Russian whistle-blower Sergei Magnitsky in detention resulted in calls for more vigorous action to counter continuing abuses in many countries. This briefing compares four sanctions programmes: the US Global Magnitsky Act, Canada's Sergei Magnitsky Law, the UK's Global Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Regulations, and the EU's restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses, the most recent of the four to be adopted.

Mapping threats to peace and democracy worldwide. Normandy Index 2021

Study by Elena Lazarou and Branislav Stanicek, July 2021

The 'Normandy Index', now in its third year, aims to measure the level of threats to peace, security and democracy around the world. It was presented for the first time on the occasion of the Normandy Peace Forum in June 2019, as a result of a partnership between the European Parliament and the Region of Normandy. The Index is complemented by 51 individual country case studies.

FOLLOW EPRS



<http://epthinktank.eu>



@EP_thinktank



europaen parliamentaire research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



europaen parliamentaire research service

New EU scheme of generalised preferences

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, January 2022

On 21 September 2021, the Commission published its proposal for a new EU scheme of generalised preferences. Renewing the scheme appears to be both a necessity and an opportunity to strengthen its conditionality in the light of lessons learned and the increasingly urgent need to address climate change. Taking on board proposals from civil society, but also from the Parliament, the Commission proposes mainly some 'fine-tuning' to ensure that its benefits remain broadly shared and to improve monitoring and stakeholder involvement.

On the path to 'strategic autonomy': The EU in an evolving geopolitical environment

Study by Suzana Anghel, Beatrix Immenkamp, Elena Lazarou, Jérôme Saulnier and Alex Benjamin Wilson September 2020

The EU is at risk of becoming a 'playground' for other global powers unless it develops both 'soft' and 'hard' power tools, allowing it to speak the 'language of power'. In the short term, the EU is set to continue to rely on such 'soft power' tools as sanctions, trade and climate diplomacy. In the long term, however, it may consider developing 'hard power' tools. Political will and the capacity to act are key prerequisites to achieving effective 'strategic autonomy'.

Peace and security in 2021: Overview of EU action and outlook for the future

Study by Tania Laticia and Elena Lazarou et al., June 2021

The promotion of global peace and security is a fundamental goal and central pillar of EU external action, following the model of its own peace project. Nevertheless, the deteriorating security environment of the past decade has posed significant challenges. In response, the EU has been stepping up its work in pursuit of peace and security in a number of key policy areas.

Qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy: Pros and cons

Briefing by Tania Latici, January 2021

The crises and security challenges accumulating in and around the EU have added to the urgency of having a more effective and rapid decision-making process in areas pertaining to common foreign and security policy and common security and defence policy. It is in this context that the debate around the adoption of qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy has once more become the subject of policy discussions.

Religion and the EU's external policies: Increasing engagement

In-depth analysis by Philippe Perchoc et al., February 2020

Religion has been emerging as a new dimension in the EU's external policies. This paper provides an overview of the principles, institutional set-up and policies underpinning the EU's approach to religious issues in third countries. Nine case studies meanwhile serve to illustrate the important role played by religion in the foreign policies of a number of different countries worldwide.

Review of dual-use export controls

Briefing by Beatrix Immenkamp, August 2021

Certain goods and technologies have legitimate civilian applications but can also be used for military purposes; so-called 'dual-use' goods are subject to the European Union's export control regime. The regime has just been revised, mainly to take account of significant technological developments, increase transparency and create a more level playing field among EU Member States.

FOLLOW EPRS



<http://epthinktank.eu>



@EP_thinktank



european parliamentary research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



european parliamentary research service

Support for democracy through EU external policy: New tools for growing challenges

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, February 2021

The crisis of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism around the globe, compounded by the pandemic, highlight the importance of taking a more strategic and autonomous approach to supporting democracy worldwide – an objective that has previously often been balanced against other external policy aims.

The European Parliament's evolving soft power – From back-door diplomacy to agenda-setting: Democracy support and mediation

Briefing by Naja Bentzen and Beatrix Immenkamp, September 2019

Over recent decades, the European Parliament has significantly raised its profile as a credible moral force with strong focus on strengthening human rights, supporting democracy and enhancing the rule of law worldwide. Parliament can convey messages through channels that are different from, and complementary to, those employed by the EU's traditional diplomatic players.

The external dimension of the new pact on migration and asylum: A focus on prevention and readmission

Briefing by Eric Pichon, April 2021

The challenges posed by migration have put EU Member States' solidarity to the test. Building on current EU migration partnership frameworks, the new pact on migration and asylum aims to reinforce international partnerships with a view to ensuring effective returns, combating migrant smuggling more effectively, and developing legal migration channels. In the context of migration, the EU's external policy has among its objectives to help third countries tackle the root causes of irregular migration or quests for asylum.

The future of multilateralism and strategic partnerships

EPRS ideas paper by Elena Lazarou, September 2020

Beyond its internal strengthening, the EU has set the defence and reform of multilateralism as one of its key priorities under the current European Commission. This will require a more coordinated and autonomous EU foreign policy, a smart approach towards the escalating US–China rivalry, reinvigorated cooperation with major democracies, and mobilisation of the EU's foreign policy tools, widely defined.

Understanding EU financing for external action

In-depth analysis by Velina Lilyanova, February 2021

This paper aims to examine the structure of EU external financing in the 2014–2020 MFF and the agreed changes for the post-2020 period. It gives a general outline of the main financing instruments and mechanisms along with the multiple actors involved, while also underlining the complexity of the architecture and highlighting the proposed changes and main trends for the future financing of the EU's external action.

Where will the EU's Strategic Compass point?

Briefing by Elena Lazarou and Tania Latici, October 2021

As Member States encounter increasingly complex security threats, momentum to push for EU initiatives to deliver on the Union's level of ambition in defence has emerged. A process aimed at bringing clarity, guidance and incentives to complete the common security and defence policy, the Strategic Compass is a first for the European Union.

FOLLOW EPRS



<http://epthinktank.eu>



@EP_thinktank



european parliamentary research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



european parliamentary research service

On relations with third countries and international organisations:

After Cotonou: Towards a new agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states

Briefing by Eric Pichon, September 2021

After two years of negotiations, the text of a renewed partnership agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states was initialled in April 2021. The EU and the ACP states agreed on the principles for a common foundation complemented by three regional protocols.

EU-China relations in challenging times

Briefing by Ulrich Jochheim, October 2021

China has become an upper-middle income country, but the bilateral trade relationship with the EU is still characterised by considerable asymmetries. At the same time, China has been regressing in terms of human rights and has become much more assertive in the regional context. In response to these developments, the EU has changed its strategic approach considerably.

Eastern Partnership post-2020 agenda

In-depth analysis by Jakub Przetacznik and Martin Russell, December 2021

Taking into account the pandemic context and the growing pressure on democracies and multilateralism worldwide, an assertive Russia under Vladimir Putin and an increasingly influential China, the role and responsibility of the European Union – a major global champion of democracy and multilateralism – in the EaP region are growing. Against this backdrop, a new agenda for cooperation was endorsed at the EaP summit, held in Brussels on 15 December 2021.

EU-Belarus relations: State of play – Human rights situation

Briefing by Jakub Przetacznik and Martin Russell, November 2021

The worsening human rights situation in Belarus and the hijacking of Ryanair flight FR 4978 in June 2021 provoked a response from the EU. This includes a ban on Belarusian air carriers landing in or overflying the EU, a major extension of the list of people and entities already subject to sanctions, and the introduction of sanctions on key sectors of the Belarusian economy. The European Parliament plays an active part in shaping this EU response. Parliament does not recognise Lukashenka's presidency and has spoken out on human rights abuses in Belarus.

EU-Swiss trade relations and the institutional framework agreement

Briefing by Issam Hallak, July 2021

On 26 May 2021, the Federal Council of Switzerland announced that the country will not formally sign the institutional framework agreement (IFA) agreed at political level with the EU in 2018, thereby ending the negotiation process. The objective of the IFA was to create a horizontal governance framework that would have covered five major EU-Swiss trade-related bilateral agreements signed in 1999.

EU-Turkey customs union: Modernisation or suspension?

Briefing by Branislav Stanicek, December 2020

Turkey is the EU's fifth largest trading partner, while the EU is Turkey's largest. The EU-Turkey customs union came into force in 1995. Since 2016, EU-Turkey relations have suffered due to a deterioration of democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law in Turkey, in the wake of a failed military coup. A European Commission recommendation of 21 December 2016 to launch talks with Turkey on modernising the EU-Turkey

FOLLOW EPRS



<http://epthinktank.eu>



@EP_thinktank



european parliamentary research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



european parliamentary research service

customs union was halted by the General Affairs Council of 26 June 2018, which concluded that no further work in this direction should be planned.

European Union involvement in the United Nations system: Broad partnership based on shared commitment to multilateralism

In-depth analysis by Ionel Zamfir, September 2020

Over the years, the EU has become a key player in the United Nations system. It enjoys observer status in many UN bodies and is the only international organisation to have secured enhanced observer status in the UN General Assembly. The EU leverages its influence through its significant financial contribution to the UN system, through its enhanced partnerships with various entities within the UN system, and through close coordination with its Member States on positions to be defended in the organisation.

EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement: An analytical overview

In-depth analysis by Issam Hallak et al., February 2021

The TCA will constitute the cornerstone for a new future relationship between the EU and the UK, as it creates a single framework covering a wide range of areas of economic activity and cooperation, and allows for the broadening of those areas.

Harnessing the new momentum in transatlantic relations: Potential areas for common action during the Biden presidency

In-depth analysis by Tania Latici, Suzana Anghel, Piotr Bakowski, Meenakshi Fernandes, Liselotte Jensen, Matthew Parry and Marcin Szczepanski, June 2021

Focusing on three important issues on the rapidly evolving transatlantic policy agenda, this paper begins by looking at pathways towards developing some kind of 'transatlantic green deal'. It then analyses the comparative fabrics of US and European societies through the triple lens of violent extremism, the rule of law and technological disruption. Finally, the prospects for 'crisis-proofing' the transatlantic space for the future are examined by looking at defence, health security and multilateralism..

New EU strategic priorities for the Sahel: Addressing regional challenges through better governance

Briefing by Eric Pichon, July 2021

Recent events have shown that the Sahel region remains highly politically unstable. The new EU integrated strategy in the Sahel aims to strengthen action at the political level, focusing on governance mechanisms, human rights, and collaboration with civil society and local authorities, while maintaining security cooperation with states in the region.

The EU and Russia: Locked in confrontation

Briefing by Martin Russell, July 2020

Following the post-Cold War reset of the 1990s, EU-Russia relations have become increasingly tense. Responding to Russian aggression in Ukraine, the EU adopted hard-hitting sanctions. After six years of deadlock, there is still no sign of a breakthrough.

FOLLOW EPRS



<http://epthinktank.eu>



@EP_thinktank



european parliamentary research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



european parliamentary research service

The situation in Afghanistan: Essential benchmarks for EU engagement

Briefing by Beatrix Immenkamp, September 2021

The EU has expressed concerns over the composition of the Afghan interim government, noting that an inclusive and representative government – which the interim government is not – is an essential benchmark for EU engagement. The EU has made available large amounts of humanitarian and development aid and is hoping to establish a diplomatic presence on the ground in Kabul. The EU is also planning to set up a regional platform for cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbours.

Towards a new EU strategy with Africa: A renewed focus on outreach

Briefing by Eric Pichon, June 2020

In order to preserve its own economic and security interests in the face of increased geopolitical competition, the EU intends to continue to be an important player on the African continent. The EU and the AU have converging interests in a number of areas, such as the fight against climate change and the promotion of a sustainable, job-creating African economy. However, they still have to find common ground on migration, security management, and fundamental values.

Understanding EU-NATO cooperation: Theory and practice

Briefing by Tania Latici, October 2020

The European Union and NATO have gone through the most acute strategic challenges of the Euro Atlantic space together. Their history of cooperation is long and has seen both ups and downs. The materialisation of EU ambitions for strategic sovereignty, not least through multiple defence cooperation initiatives, will present a test to the resilience of EU-NATO cooperation.

eprs@europarl.europa.eu | www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank (Internet) | www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu (Intranet)

You can access this Topical Digest online at the websites below, or by scanning the QR code:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/TD_EU_in_the_world_Jan2022.pdf
<https://epthinktank.eu/topical-digests/>



FOLLOW EPRS



<http://epthinktank.eu>



@EP_thinktank



europaen parliamentaary research service



EPINFOGRAPHICS/EPRS



europaen parliamentaary research service