

Delegation for relations with India (D-IN)

Summary of activities during the 2009-2014 parliamentary term

EU-India bilateral relations have been dominated by the on-going negotiations of an **EU – India Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, albeit these ran into rough waters soon after they were launched in 2007. The negotiations now address sensitive areas such as **tariffs, services, procurement, sustainable development, investment and geographical indications**. The perception is that if market access elements on services and tariffs were to be solved, other parts of the FTA would also fall into place.

The EU aims at a comprehensive, ambitious agreement, and its key requests remain unchanged: **improved market access in goods** (e.g. cars/car parts, wines and spirits) **and services** (e.g. insurance, banking); **meaningful provisions for public procurement**; and **clauses on sustainable development and human rights**. The **human rights clause** foreseen for the FTA would be taken from the EU-India Cooperation Agreement. The FTA will oblige both parties to implement the core labour standards of the International Labour Organisation in an effective way. The form and content of the **sustainability clause** is still under discussion, as India has previously opposed including such clauses in trade agreements. In May 2011 Parliament adopted a resolution stating that an FTA would be beneficial to both sides and that the scope should be all-encompassing – reducing tariffs on goods, opening markets for services and investment, dismantling non-tariff barriers and including an ambitious sustainable development chapter.¹

India's key offensive interest is the services sector, and the country is also keen to achieve data protection adequacy, an issue that the EU does not wish to see on the FTA negotiation agenda. A recurrent issue raised by the Indian interlocutors was the threat posed to small-scale Indian farmers – particularly in the dairy sector – by 'subsidised' European agriculture. While India remains committed to finding solutions, this is not easy as this, in some cases, requires changes in laws and regulations.

The delegation has also discussed several **human rights issues**, such as the **situation of women** in India, **caste-based discrimination** and the **death penalty**, and has exchanged views with civil society organisations on these matters.

Following the tragic case of the gang rape and murder of a 23 year-old woman in Delhi in December 2012, the subject of **violence against women** has taken a prominent place on the delegation's agenda. The case has shocked India and sparked a debate about the treatment of women in the country, with calls for tougher rape laws. In January 2013, Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the Indian authorities to take a series of actions to tackle gender-based violence.² While the delegation acknowledged efforts to tackle the problem of **caste-based discrimination** (e.g. of Dalit communities) through legislative measures, it emphasised the need for a better implementation at grass-root level, and for greater awareness of the problem by the public administration, the judiciary and the police.³ The delegation has also been

¹ European Parliament resolution of 11 May 2011 on the state of play in the EU-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations (Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0224).

² European Parliament resolution on violence against women in India (Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0031).

³ European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2012 on caste discrimination in India (Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0512).

active in calling for an end to the **death penalty** in India, raising the issue during a 2013 visit to India and writing several letters to H.E. Mr Manjeev Singh Puri, the Ambassador of India to the EU.

In addition to these matters, the delegation has discussed **issues of strategic importance**. The EU and India are strategic partners since 2004, sharing common values and interests (such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law and market economics) and facing similar challenges (security, climate change and energy). Despite the lack of substantial progress in this partnership, and the failure to agree on a narrowed-down and manageable set of strategic priorities, the delegation has underlined the untapped potential of this partnership. In this regard, it has discussed issues such as **climate change** and **energy security**, in particular **renewable sources of energy**, considering India's enormous potential in the field of **solar energy**. It has called for joint projects on **research and technological development** and pointed out the positive role of the Erasmus Mundus Programme.

Finally, the delegation has considered the possibilities of strengthening **security cooperation** with India, notably in the field of **maritime security**, in recognition of the problem of **piracy** and the importance of freedom of navigation in international waters both for the EU and for India. Other areas of possible cooperation are **counter-terrorism**, **cyber security** and **crisis management**. This is in response to concerns regarding China's growing influence in South and South-East Asia and the possibility of future instability in the wider region, particularly in Afghanistan.