

## EU-India relations: MEPs call for stronger ties between the world's two biggest democracies

**In a report adopted on Tuesday, MEPs emphasised the need to tap into the potential of EU-India relations, calling for both parties to work together on geopolitical challenges.**

On Tuesday (results announced on Wednesday), MEPs on the [Foreign Affairs Committee](#) adopted a set of recommendations for the European Union on improving its bilateral partnership with India in view of the upcoming EU-India Leaders' meeting in Porto on 8 May.

The text agreed by MEPs states that while the EU and India, as the world's two largest democracies, and as strategic partners, share strong political, economic, social and cultural links, bilateral relations have not yet reached their full potential and require increased political engagement.

It also highlights India's rising regional and geopolitical influence, as the country has strengthened its position as an economic and military power, and rapidly grown as an important trading partner for the EU.

Against the backdrop of heightened global risks and mounting great-power competition, MEPs call on the European Union to continue improving and deepening the EU's relationship with India as a strategic partner. This includes working together to promote a shared vision of a rules-based world order in multilateral settings, reinforcing international security, fostering connectivity, fighting climate change and enhancing global economic stability.

Members also called for a modernisation of the institutional architecture, including a stronger parliamentary dimension.

### Trade and sectoral partnerships

The report advocates closer value-based trade relations between the EU and India, and the need to work together on reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Furthermore, the value of sectoral partnerships is emphasised, with regard to support for environmental goals, public health and the fight against COVID-19, private and public investment, connectivity, data protection and digital services.

### Conflict prevention, peace and regional stability

The text further notes that the EU is following closely the situation in Kashmir and reiterate its support for stability and de-escalation between India and Pakistan. MEPs call on the EU to renew its efforts for rapprochement and restoration of good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan, based on principles of international law.

They also expressed concern at the deteriorating relationship between India and China, and the role of China's expansive policy and substantial military build-up in the area. MEPs reiterate their support for peaceful dispute resolution, the need for constructive and comprehensive dialogue, and the upholding of international law on the India-China border.

### Human rights concerns

At the same time, Members have expressed concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in India, echoing comments by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and several UN Special Rapporteurs. This includes reports that human rights defenders and journalists in the country lack a safe working environment. There are also concerns about the difficult situation faced by Indian women and minority groups, caste-based discrimination, as well as the closure of Amnesty International's India offices after its bank accounts were frozen over an alleged violation of India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), a law three UN Special rapporteurs have asked to be amended.

The report also voices alarm regarding India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is fundamentally discriminatory in nature against Muslims and dangerously divisive.

The text was approved by 61 votes in favour, 6 votes against, with 4 abstentions. For all the details of the report, which addresses many different policy areas, it will be available in full in due time [here](#).

### Quote

"India and the EU, as the world's largest democracies, have all the possibilities to build a better planet. To fulfil our potential, we need to be more ambitious in our cooperation on preventing climate crises, promoting human rights, building connectivity, sustainable trade and defending a multilateral international order. With this report, we seek to advance a stronger commitment to our mutual values and to a strategic partnership that will benefit Europe, India and the world beyond", said rapporteur [Alviina Alametsä](#) (The Greens/EFA, Finland) after the vote.

### Next steps

The report will now be submitted to a vote in the European Parliament as a whole in plenary.

## Further information

More on EU relations with India (European External Action Service)

Study: “Assessing the potential impact of an EU-India trade agreement” (2020)

EPRS briefing: “EU-India: Trade prospects” (2020)

EPRS briefing: “EU-India: Cooperation on digitalisation” (2020)

EPRS briefing: “EU-India: Cooperation on climate” (2020)

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