



India and the World

Perspectives from Northern Europe on India in world affairs. Issued on a regular basis by the Project for Nordic-India Relations at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI).

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The significance of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council

The EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) is now being constituted, ten months after it was first announced during President of the European Commission von der Leyen's visit to Delhi. Ever since the reinvigoration of EU-India ties begun in 2016 the two sides have shown political bonhomie, and the laundry list of joint initiatives is long. Yet, the wider message of whether, why, and how these two powers will strike a shared path ahead, has lacked clarity. The setting up of the TTC, in conjunction with ongoing FTA negotiations, helps to clear the picture. While a signed FTA would become foundational for the EU-India relationship going forward, the TTC is a vehicle for alignment and trust building between the two sides in domains of great significance. With the establishment of the TTC, New Delhi's "Brussels correction", and the EU's attempts to engage with India in more flexible ways, is paying dividends.

Additionally, the timing of its coming into being is also of importance. Moving towards greater self-reliance by reducing dependencies on China and Russia is in the interest of both sides at this juncture, as [Vera Kranenburg and Maaïke Okano-Heijmans](#) recently noted. [Other observers](#) in Europe are discussing whether the EU-India TTC will enable the two sides in shaping a common understanding on China. Although the gap in threat perceptions make this unlikely in the short term, one should not underestimate the impact joint capacity building could have on the formation of views in the longer term. Moreover, although the EU and India respectively work closely with the US on similar tech issues in other forums, they are both championing models for data governance and digital public infrastructure that in certain aspects differ from the US approach. Finally, it is important to also appreciate the TTC from an internal EU perspective, as innovation and the co-development of a technological edge are important pillars in individual EU Member States' bilateral partnerships with India.

What will the EU-India TTC eventually be doing? The [terms of reference](#), which were communicated during the first week of February, shows that the TTC will be co-chaired on the EU side by Executive Vice Presidents Margrethe Vestager (Commissioner for Competition) and Valdis Dombrovskis (Commissioner for Trade). It will be co-chaired on the Indian side by Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (Minister of External Affairs), Piyush Goyal (Minister of Commerce and Industry), and Ashwini Vaishnaw (Minister of Electronics and Information Technology). There will be yearly high-level meetings, ensuring continuous political attention and well trafficked files.

The TTC will initially be organised around three working groups, a narrower scope than that of the EU-US TTC, which has ten working groups. The first working group focuses on strategic technologies, digital governance, and digital connectivity. The implementation of the digital dimensions of the EU-India connectivity partnership will be part of the mandate, which also includes research, regulations, and capacity-building related to - among other things - 5/6G, AI, semiconductors, cloud systems and cyber security.

The second working group will deal with green and clean energy technologies and will be oriented towards investments, standards, and innovation. The third group will work on trade, investment, and resilient value chains. Interestingly, this group could address issues related to market access by jointly resolving trade barriers and will "promote access to critical components, energy and raw materials". The first meeting of the TTC is planned for this spring, during the Swedish EU Presidency. The meeting will help to set the tone for the TTC going forward.



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