

2. EAM Visit to Europe – International & Relation

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's first official visit for 2026 began in Europe, with a visit to Paris and Luxembourg, against the backdrop of major shifts in global politics.

India–Weimar Triangle Engagement– Strategic Context

In Paris, India's External Affairs Minister participated in the India–Weimar Triangle Foreign Ministers' meeting, engaging with counterparts from France, Germany, and Poland. The Weimar Triangle, launched in 1991 at Germany's initiative, was originally designed to–

1. Promote reconciliation between Western and Eastern Europe after the Cold War
2. Integrate Poland into European political structures alongside France and Germany

India's participation marks

1. The first-ever invitation of a non-European country at the Foreign Minister level
2. Formal recognition of India as a critical geopolitical actor in Europe's strategic calculus

This engagement signals Europe's acknowledgment that Asian and Indo-Pacific dynamics are inseparable from European security and prosperity.

Expanding India–Europe High-Level Engagement

India is set to host several top European leaders, including

1. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz
2. French President Emmanuel Macron
3. Senior leadership from the European Union

These visits underline

1. India's transition from a transactional partner to a strategic pillar of Europe's external relations
2. Europe's growing interest in anchoring long-term partnerships beyond the US-centric security architecture

India–EU Relations– Evolution and Political Cooperation

India–EU relations date back to the early 1960s, making them among India's oldest institutionalised partnerships. The 1994 Cooperation Agreement expanded engagement beyond trade to political dialogue.

Key milestones include

1. 2000– First India–EU Summit, institutionalising annual leadership-level engagement
2. 2004 (5th Summit, The Hague)– Relationship elevated to a Strategic Partnership

Political cooperation today spans

1. Foreign policy consultations
2. Counter-terrorism
3. Climate diplomacy
4. Multilateral reform

Economic and Trade Cooperation – The EU is India's largest trading partner in goods. Key trade figures (2023–24)

1. Total bilateral trade– USD 137.41 billion
2. 17% of India's exports go to the EU
3. 9% of EU exports are destined for India

The proposed India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) aims to cover

1. Goods and services
2. Investment protection
3. Intellectual property and geographical indications

Both sides are working towards announcing the FTA during the visit of EU leaders to India around Republic Day, highlighting renewed political momentum.

Other Key Areas of Cooperation

Water, Energy, and Research

India–EU Water Partnership (2016)

1. Focuses on sustainable water management
2. Enhances policy, scientific, and technological collaboration

2020 Nuclear Cooperation Agreement–

1. Between India and European Atomic Energy Community
2. Covers R&D in peaceful uses of nuclear energy

Trade and Technology Council (TTC)

The India–EU Trade and Technology Council, established in 2023, serves as–

1. A platform for coordination on trade rules
2. Technology standards
3. Supply-chain resilience
4. Security-related technologies

TTC aligns India–EU cooperation with global debates on

1. Semiconductor ecosystems
2. Trusted digital infrastructure
3. Technology governance

India's Two-Tier Engagement Strategy with Europe

Engagement with the EU as a Bloc – Regular summits and ministerial dialogues. Strategic discussions on

1. Trade and investment
2. Climate change
3. Digital governance
4. Security and foreign policy

Bilateral Engagement with Key European States – Deepening strategic partnerships with

1. France (defence, Indo-Pacific)
2. Germany (manufacturing, green transition)
3. Nordic countries (innovation, clean tech)
4. Eastern Europe (connectivity, defence)

Factors Shaping Contemporary India–Europe Relations

Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Autonomy – The return of war to Europe via the Russia–Ukraine conflict has

1. Shaken Europe's security assumptions
2. Revived interest in strategic autonomy

India

1. Seeks a multipolar world order
2. Diversifies partnerships beyond the US, Russia, and China

US Policy Uncertainty – The unpredictability of US commitments during the Trump era exposed Europe's vulnerabilities. Europe increasingly values–

1. India's strategic stability
2. Democratic credentials
3. Long-term reliability as a partner

Trade, Connectivity, and Supply Chains – India–EU FTA and Investment Agreement are seen as anchors of the relationship.

India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC)

1. Offers strategic connectivity alternatives
2. Enhances logistics, energy trade, and digital links
3. Reduces overdependence on China-centric supply chains

Technology and Digital Sovereignty – Shared interest in treating digital technologies as public goods
India can leverage Europe's strengths in

1. Deep tech
2. Semiconductors
3. Advanced manufacturing

Cooperation supports

1. Digital public infrastructure
2. Data governance frameworks

Defence and Indo-Pacific Cooperation – Europe remains a key arms supplier to India. India seeks

1. Joint development
2. Co-production
3. Technology transfer

Europe increasingly views the Indo-Pacific as central to global stability. India collaborates with France and Germany to promote Free, open, and rules-based maritime order

Challenges in India–EU Relations

Divergence on the Ukraine War – Europe expects stronger Indian criticism of Russia. India maintains strategic autonomy and neutrality, prioritising national interest.

Terrorism and Pakistan – India expects the EU to take a firmer stance on

1. State-sponsored terrorism
2. Accountability of Pakistan

Trade and Regulatory Frictions – Slow progress in FTA negotiations. EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) poses cost challenges for Indian exports. Stringent EU norms on

1. Data privacy
2. Digital taxation
3. Environmental and labour standards

Normative and Perception Issues – EU's prescriptive stance on human rights is viewed by India as interference. Media stereotypes and limited public awareness in Europe constrain people-to-people ties.

Way Forward

Fast-track FTA and Investment Protection Agreement to unlock trade and supply-chain integration. Deepen defence cooperation through co-development and co-production. Expand mobility and education partnerships for students, researchers, and skilled professionals. Build resilient and trusted supply chains, reducing China-dependence. Leverage **IMEC** for trade, energy, and digital connectivity. Strengthen people-to-people ties through tourism, media engagement, and cultural exchanges

Conclusion

The External Affairs Minister's first official visit of 2026 to Europe signals a strategic recalibration. Europe is no longer peripheral but a central pillar of India's foreign policy. Conclusion of the FTA would–

1. Create a major transcontinental trade corridor

2. Integrate defence, technology, and supply chains

The engagement reaffirms India's vision of a multipolar world order, grounded in

1. Strategic autonomy
2. Issue-based partnerships
3. Non-subordinated global engagement

Source- https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/2026-to-see-upswing-in-india-eu-relationship-jaishankar-in-luxembourg/article70484984.ece#google_vignette

