

Dear Readers,

January has set the tone for what promises to be a landmark period in EU-India cooperation. Within just a few short weeks, the pace and depth of diplomatic and strategic engagements have signalled that 2026 could be a defining year for the partnership. From the inaugural Weimar Triangle + India meeting in Paris to the visit of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to India, the month has been marked by a steady cadence of high-level engagement – each building toward a moment of strategic significance.

This momentum culminated in New Delhi with the presence of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa at India's Republic Day celebrations. Their second visit to India in two years coincided with the conclusion of negotiations on the EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA)—hailed as the “mother of all deals.” This milestone marked the growing strategic convergence between Europe and India, anchored in mutual values and shared priorities.

Together, these developments reflect far more than a packed diplomatic calendar. They reaffirm India's emergence as an indispensable strategic partner for the European Union – across trade, technology, sustainability, and global governance.

In this edition of The Brief, we bring you key highlights from across the partnership, including updates from the Digital Chai Chat, recent high-level visits, and ongoing programme activities. We also invite you to tune into the inaugural episode of our new podcast Tech-à-Tête, where experts reflect on what 2026 holds for the EU-India digital partnership.

Finally, we are preparing a special edition of the newsletter dedicated to the upcoming AI Impact Summit 2026, which will provide early insights into planned side events, delegation visits, and opportunities for meaningful engagement between EU Member States and their Indian counterparts. If you are a Member State planning to attend, please do get in touch with us at: digitalpolicydialogue.eu-india@giz.de

Thank you for reading The Brief and for your continued engagement with our work. We are grateful for your support and look forward to sharing further insights and opportunities from across the EU-India digital cooperation landscape in the months ahead.

Warm regards from Delhi,

Özlem Buran
Head of Secretariat,
EU-India Digital Policy Dialogue, GIZ India

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EU-India Free Trade Agreement

[India-EU Summit 2026 Concludes with Breakthrough in Free Trade Agreement Negotiations](#)
27.01.2026 | European Commission

The 2026 India-European Union Summit, held in New Delhi on 27 January, marked a historic moment in the strategic partnership between the two regions. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa attended the Summit as Chief Guests for India's Republic Day celebrations, reflecting deepening political and economic ties.

A major highlight of the Summit was the announcement that negotiations for the long-awaited India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) have been concluded. The agreement aims to deepen economic integration between two of the world's largest markets and is expected to boost trade, investment, and technology cooperation.

Leaders also reaffirmed their shared commitment to a rules-based global order, sustainable development, digital cooperation, and green transition. The discussions underscored convergence across sectors such as climate resilience, digital infrastructure, semiconductors, mobility, and education.

The successful conclusion of the FTA negotiations is expected to unlock new opportunities for businesses and solidify India's position as a strategic partner for the EU in the Indo-Pacific. The next steps will involve ratification processes on both sides, with implementation expected to drive long-term growth and innovation. The Summit concluded with optimism for deeper cooperation and multilateral engagement in 2026 and beyond.



Latest Project Developments

Podcast Launch - Tech-à-Tête

We are excited to launch Tech-à-Tête, a new podcast by the EU-India Digital Policy Dialogue, exploring how Europe and India are shaping their shared digital future. In our first episode, ***"Talking Tech Diplomacy - Europe, India, and the Digital Future,"*** host Purva Soni speaks with [Amaia Sanchez Cacicedo](#), Non-Resident Senior Fellow for the Asia Programme at Institut Montaigne, and [Shyam Krishnakumar](#), Co-Founder of The Pranava Institute. In this conversation, Amaia and Shyam explore where EU and India's digital transformation and strategies collide, align, and what

realistic, pragmatic digital cooperation could look like in the coming years. Tune in to this debrief ahead of the EU-India Summit in January 2026.



Tech-à-Tête

Talking Tech Diplomacy: Europe, India, and the Shared Digital Future

DIGITAL POLICY DIALOGUE

GUEST SPEAKERS

HOSTED BY

Shyam Krishnakumar,
Co Founder,
The Pranava Institute

Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo,
Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Asia Program,
Institut Montaigne Paris

Purva Soni
Secretariat of the EU-India
Digital Policy Dialogue

This conversation offers a overview and examines the broader geopolitical and geo-economic forces shaping EU-India digital cooperation. In the coming year, we look forward to exploring the specific sectoral and technological dimensions of this partnership. So stay tuned!

Listen now on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#).



DIGITAL POLICY DIALOGUE

Digital Chai Chat

Digital Chai Chat | 20 January 2026

The first Digital Chai Chat of 2026 was held alongside the EU Commercial Counsellors Meeting, chaired by Mr Petros Sourmelis, Head of Trade and Economic Affairs Section at the EU Delegation to India and Bhutan. Representatives from 16 EU Member States (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, and Slovakia) attended, along with colleagues from, IndiaAI Mission, and Federation of European Business in India (FEBI).

Mr. Khushal Wadhawan, Manager – Policy at IndiaAI Mission, presented an overview of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, detailing the participation of over 100 Heads of Government and global CEOs, as well as key events such as the GPAI Council Meeting, Leaders' Plenary, CEO Roundtable, and AI Exposition. Mr. Alok Kesari, Director – Policy Advocacy and Trade Facilitation at FEBI, shared plans for an EU Business Roundtable and CEO networking dinner, with confirmed participation from senior leadership at Schneider Electric, SAP Labs, Ericsson, Philips India, and Airbus.

Ms. Veronika Liskova from the EU Delegation to India and Bhutan confirmed the upcoming visit of Executive Vice-President Henna Virkkunen, alongside members from DG CNECT and the EU AI Office, with dedicated sessions and stakeholder engagements planned under the EU-India Digital Policy Dialogue umbrella. The session enabled timely coordination ahead of the Summit and encouraged Member States to engage proactively in nominating speakers, involving CEOs, and requesting bilateral meetings.

In The Works

Special Preview: EU–India Cooperation at the AI Impact Summit 2026

Preparations are underway for a special edition of The Brief dedicated to the [India AI Impact Summit 2026](#), scheduled to take place in New Delhi this February. This upcoming issue will provide

updates on planned side events by the Secretariat of the EU-India Digital Policy Dialogue, activities led by EU Member States, and confirmed delegation visits.

It will also highlight speaker opportunities, stakeholder engagement formats, and coordination mechanisms to support the effective participation of EU Member State delegations.

👉 To coordinate your country's engagement, please reach out to our AI lead Ms. Tanea Bandyopadhyay at tanea.bandyopadhyay@giz.de

Team Europe Spotlight

India and Germany Sign 2026–27 Work Plan to Advance Digital Cooperation

16.01.2026

Following Chancellor Merz's visit to India—and the signing of a Joint Declaration of Intent between Germany and India to deepen cooperation in telecommunications and digital transformation—the Indo-German Digital Dialogue entered its next phase with the formal adoption of a new two-year Work Plan.

From 15–16 January, Secretary S. Krishnan and Joint Secretary Ajit Kumar of MeitY led a high-level delegation to Germany for the Annual Meeting of the Indo-German Digital Dialogue, co-hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Digital Transformation and Government Modernisation (BMDS). The visit included engagements with TU Dresden, GlobalFoundries, and Infineon Technologies, reinforcing cooperation in digital skilling and semiconductor ecosystems.

In Berlin, Secretary Krishnan and State Secretary Luise Hölscher signed the 2026–27 Work Plan, outlining continued collaboration in four priority areas: internet governance and data ecosystems; emerging technologies like AI and telecom; electronics and semiconductors; and digital business partnerships.

The visit also featured a Business Roundtable on AI-enabled manufacturing and a strategic roundtable on digital sovereignty and international partnerships, co-hosted by Bertelsmann Stiftung. These discussions reaffirmed the commitment of both governments to a trusted and forward-looking digital partnership.



News Update

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar to visit France, Luxembourg to deepen strategic, bilateral engagements

04.01.2026, Times of India

In early January 2026, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar embarked on a six-day official visit to France and Luxembourg to deepen diplomatic, economic, and strategic cooperation with key European partners. In Paris, Dr. Jaishankar met with senior French leadership and reaffirmed the long-standing India–France Strategic Partnership, highlighting shared interests on global and regional challenges.

He also addressed the French Ambassadors' Conference as Guest of Honour. In Luxembourg, engagements with top officials, including Prime Minister Luc Frieden and Deputy PM Xavier Bettel, focused on expanding collaboration in financial services, technology, and innovation, underscoring India's continued commitment to strengthening ties with the European Union. Foreign Minister Dr. Jaishankar also attended the Weimar Triangle meeting in Paris held on 7 January 2026.

Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference Highlights India's Inclusive AI Vision

07.01.2026, Press Information Bureau India

The State of Rajasthan hosted the Regional AI Impact Conference as a key lead-up event to the India AI Impact Summit 2026. With participation from national and state leadership, the event launched the "YUVA AI for All" literacy programme aiming to train one million youth, unveiled Rajasthan's AI/ML Policy 2026, and signed MoUs with Google, IIT Delhi, and NLU Jodhpur to advance ethical and scalable AI adoption.

PM Modi Engages with Top Indian AI Start-ups Ahead of India AI Impact Summit 2026

08.01.2026, Press Information Bureau India

On 8 January 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a roundtable with 12 AI start-ups selected under the Foundation Model Pillar of the upcoming India AI Impact Summit 2026. Representing sectors such as healthcare, multilingual LLMs, engineering simulations, and generative AI, the start-ups highlighted India's growing leadership in AI innovation. The Prime Minister emphasised the need for ethical, inclusive, and locally relevant AI models and reaffirmed the government's full support to foster an enabling ecosystem.

German Chancellor Merz's First Official Visit to India Marks Milestone in Strategic Partnership

12.01.2026, PM India

Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz paid his first official visit to India from 12–13 January 2026, accompanied by a high-level delegation including 23 leading German CEOs. As his first visit to Asia as Chancellor, the trip underlined Germany's recognition of India as a key Indo-Pacific partner. The visit commemorated 25 years of the India-Germany Strategic Partnership and 75 years of diplomatic relations. The visit culminated with the signing of Joint Declarations of Intent in critical areas such as defence industrial cooperation, semiconductors, green hydrogen, critical minerals, telecommunications, and skilled mobility.

European Commission Proposes Digital Networks Act to Modernise EU Connectivity Framework

21.01.2026, European Commission

The European Commission has adopted the Digital Networks Act (DNA) to modernise EU connectivity rules, boost investment, and enable secure, next-generation infrastructure. Replacing four legal acts, the DNA introduces a "Single Passport" for cross-border operations, spectrum reforms, and mandatory fibre transition plans—supporting AI, cloud, and space innovation while strengthening resilience across Europe's digital ecosystem.

Davos 2026 Spotlights Diverging Visions for AI Governance

21.01.2026, Digiwatch

AI dominated discussions at Davos 2026, with leaders from Microsoft, DeepMind, Anthropic and others debating its future. While some, like Elon Musk, envisioned a world reshaped by automation, others called for restraint, urging safeguards and realistic expectations. Concerns around equity, infrastructure gaps, labour disruption, and global governance frameworks took centre stage—highlighting AI's pivotal role in shaping the global future.

Telangana Launches Aikam to Advance Scalable and Responsible AI Deployment

26.01.2026, Digiwatch

At Davos 2026, Telangana launched Aikam, an autonomous body to drive large-scale, responsible AI deployment. Backed by public datasets, an AI Fund-of-Funds, and global partnerships, Aikam aims to make Telangana a global AI hub. The state also introduced the RAISE Index to benchmark ethical AI practices across the lifecycle, emphasising transparency, governance, and public trust.

France Goes All In on Digital Sovereignty with 'Visio' Rollout

France will transition all public servants to 'Visio,' a sovereign video platform, by 2027—replacing Zoom, Teams, and other US tools. Developed by DINUM and hosted on French infrastructure, Visio reflects France's push for digital sovereignty, data control, and cost savings. The move marks a concrete policy shift towards reducing foreign tech dependency in public administration.

WhatsApp Designated as VLOP Under EU Digital Services Act

27.01.2026, Digiwatch

The EU has officially classified WhatsApp as a Very Large Online Platform (VLOP) under the Digital Services Act. The designation, triggered by WhatsApp surpassing 51 million monthly EU users, places the platform under enhanced regulatory scrutiny. WhatsApp must now address disinformation risks and strengthen protections for minors, with compliance required by mid-May 2026.

Women In Tech - Prof. Dr. Payal Arora



Payal Arora is a Professor of Inclusive AI Cultures at Utrecht University and co-founder of Inclusive AI Lab, a Global South driven tech initiative and FemLab, a feminist futures of work initiative.

She is a leading digital anthropologist with two decades of user experiences in the Global South to help shape inclusive AI enabled designs and policies. Payal is the author of 100+ journal articles and award-winning books including "The Next Billion Users" with Harvard Press. Forbes named her the 'next billion champion' and the 'right kind of person to reform tech.' She has been listed in the 100 Brilliant Women in AI Ethics 2025 and won the 2025 Women in AI Benelux Award for her work on Diversifying AI.

Her new book with MIT Press "From Pessimism to Promise: Lessons from the Global South on Designing Inclusive Tech" has been longlisted for the 2024 Porchlight Business Book Awards and the Silver Medalist for the 2025 Axiom Book Award under the Emerging Tech/AI category.

200+ international media outlets have covered her work including the Financial Times, Fast Company, Wired, BBC, The Economist, and Tech Crunch. She has consulted for the public and the private sector including UNHCR, Spotify, KPMG, Adobe, IDEO, Google, and GE and sits on several boards including for UN EGOV, and LIRNE-Asia. and calls Amsterdam her home.

Upcoming Events

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, taking place in New Delhi from 16–20 February, will convene global leaders from government, industry, academia, and civil society to accelerate progress on responsible, inclusive, and human-centric AI. Organised under the IndiaAI Mission, the Summit will feature a Leaders' Plenary, Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) meetings, CEO roundtables, research symposia, and the launch of key strategic frameworks. With participation expected from over 100 countries, the Summit aims to strengthen international AI governance, foster global collaboration, and spotlight India's leadership in deploying AI for public good.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Meet Our Team

At the heart of the EU–India Digital Policy Dialogue is a team working quietly but strategically to connect dots across continents, policies, and people. In this new section, we take you behind the scenes to meet the people driving the Dialogue forward. From policy coordination to programme design, each team member brings a unique perspective and commitment to digital cooperation—so you know who to reach out to, and for what, as we continue building this partnership together.



Purva Soni is a Communications and Policy Intern at the Secretariat of the EU-India Digital Policy Dialogue. She manages the Secretariat's social media presence, monthly newsletter (The Brief), and newly launched podcast Tech-à-Tête. She also supports stakeholder engagement, content development, and strategic communications across the Secretariat's broader initiatives, while assisting advisors with on-ground coordination and outreach.

Purva is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Public Policy at the Hertie School in Berlin, where she is specialising in digital governance, economics, and data-driven policymaking. She brings prior experience in strategic communications, student leadership, and international project work, with a strong interest in technology policy, digital public infrastructure, and multilateral engagement.

She is passionate about advancing human-centred digital development that is fair, conscious, sustainable, and rooted in interests of future generations.

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IMPRINT

Published by the
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

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On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Digital Transformation and Government
Modernisation and the Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan New Delhi, January
2026