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## EU AND INDIA

### EMERGING TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

**ABSTRACT**

The paper examines the potential for the EU to act as a leading actor in internationalization of higher education area based on the case of India – one of the largest higher education national systems, which has been in a process of massification and transformation. Based on the general framework of strategic cooperation between the EU and India, the paper looks at the EU’s strategies and instruments for cooperation in the area of higher education, considers the current picture and identifies enabling factors for intensification of this cooperation. It raises the question of whether the EU can go beyond bilateral relations between higher education institutions and become a collective driver of higher education cooperation between India and the European Higher Education Area, and what the barriers and challenges in developing the external dimension of the EU’s higher education policy are.

**Keywords:** European Union, strategic partnership, higher education, India

*The EU and India shall build a new strategic partnership founded on shared values and aspirations characterized by enhanced and multi-faceted cooperation.*

Joint Declaration of 2000  
First India-EU Summit, Lisbon

When we talk about the EU's external action portfolio, higher education does not immediately come to mind. The EU Treaties differentiate between the Common Foreign and Security Policy as the main platform for developing and implementing the political and diplomatic dimension and the Common Security and Defence Policy including instruments for various civilian and military crisis management instruments. In the recent years, however, there has been a process of expansion and gradual broadening of the EU external action scope, encompassing areas of supporting and limited legal competences such as higher education and culture. At the same time, academic and research cooperation as well as cooperation in the sector of higher education have been a longer and visible trend related to the growing internationalization of higher education, mobility of students and academics and structural changes in university student populations. With some of its main programs and initiatives in the area of higher education such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet, Erasmus+, Capacity Building in Higher Education, the EU has gained recognition as a leading actor on the international higher education scene. These actions gradually led to the emergence of EU external action on higher education, its incorporation under external agreements, a wider interest and focus by major actors linking it to research and innovation, and its capacity to influence significantly individual and societal development.

This paper examines the potential for the EU to act as a leading actor in internationalization of higher education area based on the case of India – one of the largest higher education national systems, which has been in a process of massification and transformation. Based on the general framework of strategic cooperation between the EU and India, the paper looks at the EU's strategies and instruments for cooperation in the area of higher education, considers the current picture and identifies enabling factors for intensification of this cooperation. It raises the question of whether the EU can go beyond bilateral relations between higher education institutions and become a collective driver of higher education cooperation between India and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), whether the potential consolidation of the EHEA can support this process, and what the barriers and challenges in developing the external dimension of the EU's higher education policy are.

Among various factors, two can be identified as triggering the process of emergence and development of external dimensions of EU higher education policy. First, it has been the Tempus program, which was initiated in the context to the enlargement policy of the EU and the EU external action towards the neighborhood after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although this program marked a certain level of 'externalization' of the EU higher education policy, it was designed to ensure democratization of Central and Eastern European countries in view of the EU enlargement process and the expectation

of their integration within the Community in relatively near future. Therefore, it can be considered predominantly an instrument targeted at emerging new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia under the EU enlargement and neighborhood policies. Second, in the early 2000s, two other EU programs were extended worldwide, mostly targeting students exchanges in the Erasmus Mundus Program and promoting knowledge and studies about the EU and its policies through the Jean Monnet Program. Importantly, this externalization of EU policies in the area of higher education was triggered by issues of global significance such as the discourse on 'knowledge economy' and the issue of global distribution of talents and brains.<sup>1</sup>

Attracting non-EU students for joint studies or spending short or longer periods of study in EU higher education institutions has come high on the priority list of EU policies in the area of higher education and research as innovation. In this sense, these particular programs can be considered a real step forward in shaping EU's position globally in the higher education sector and therefore in establishing the EU's external higher education policy as part of the external action (foreign policy) of the EU. In the years after 2003, when the Erasmus Mundus was launched, the externalization agenda became a leading principle and priority for the EU higher education policy. It represents a convincing case of the *external dimensions of internal policies* as belonging to the realm of foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> The opening of the EU higher education programs to the world represents a vision of higher education as a means of enhancing cooperation with third countries and partner countries and it is a reflection of the growing internationalization trend globally. The externalization agenda became dominant in the EU higher education policy a few years later with the inclusion of patterns of mobility for students and academic staff globally. It is justified to say that this led the way to externalization of other internal policies including policies in the area of EU supporting competence and gradual expansion of EU actorness in originally internal policy areas, such as culture.<sup>3</sup> The European Commission has appeared as an actor in designing long-term higher education measures and comprehensive programs with significant external dimensions. It is well manifested in their thematic scope covering topics and challenges in the area of teaching, quality assurance, and accreditation, linking higher education to business, development of skills relevant to the labor market, governance, innovation, excellence, internationalization, and access to education. Erasmus+ Mundus program and the spin-off of the former Tempus program, namely Capacity Building in Higher education, which specially targets Partner Countries, clearly refer to ensuring development and

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<sup>1</sup> C. Gerards, S. Schunz, C. Damro, "Opportunity, Presence and Entrepreneurship: Why the EU Acts Externally on Higher Education", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 15 March 2021, at <https://jcms.ideasoneuropa.eu/2021/03/23/why-does-the-european-union-act-externally-on-higher-education/>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>2</sup> S. Keukeleire, T. Delreux, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*, New York 2014, pp. 13, 222.

<sup>3</sup> S. Schunz, C. Damro, "Expanding Actorness to Explain EU External Engagement in Originally Internal Policy Areas", *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2019), pp. 122-140.

supporting the EU's external action in the higher education field.<sup>4</sup> The applied instruments and funding sources are additionally connected with objectives related to humanitarian aid, mainly in sustaining the priority of *special attention to least developed countries, universities in more remote areas as well as to disadvantaged students from poor socio-economic backgrounds and to students with special needs.*<sup>5</sup>

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OF THE EU

The EU's foreign policy is very much about the relationship with the major powers and actors on the international scene, most important among which are clearly the US, Russia, and China. This aspect constitutes a significant component of 'the structural foreign policy,' which is considered different from the so called 'relational foreign policy,' that is, policies towards crises and conflicts.<sup>6</sup> Keukeleire and Delreux argue that structural foreign policy has a longer perspective aiming at "shaping political, legal, economic, social, security and other structures in a given space."<sup>7</sup> They refer to the EU's enlargement policy as an example of a successful structural policy with regard to Central and Eastern Europe supporting the structural transformation in the region.<sup>8</sup> Although structural and relational foreign policies are not mutually exclusive and often are viewed as complementary and interdependent, it is interesting to see to what extent higher education has entered official instruments of strategic, long-term cooperation agenda in EU-India relations.

The external dimension of EU higher education policy constitutes a significant part of the policy design in shaping higher education institutions based on clearly defined organizing principles and focusing on producing sustainable effects. Within the general concept of the EU's foreign policy as multilevel and multifaceted, the external dimensions of the EU's higher education policy target a well-defined level with interrelations with almost all other societal sectors. Some intended structural changes are included as pre-conditions for benefiting from the designed programs, others are perceived as desirable results of the undertaken interventions. For example, the structure of tertiary education in three levels according to the Bologna process is often included as a necessary condition and prerequisite of project design, while quality assurance and improvement of skills and competences relevant to the labor market are part of the programs' objectives. Additionally, establishment of specific cooperative structures such as the joint or double Master programs can also be interpreted as an outcome

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*, 5 November 2019, p. 166, at [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/default/files/erasmus-plus-programme-guide-2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/default/files/erasmus-plus-programme-guide-2020_en.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> S. Keukeleire, T. Delreux, *The Foreign Policy...*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

in creating innovative higher education structures embodying the main principles of the EU's higher education policy as a whole. However, it is obvious that the design of the main actions in the area of higher education does not explicitly identify collaboration and cooperation in the area of higher education with the three major international powers as a clear priority. On the contrary, there are clear limitations in funding provisions and in establishing innovative and sustainable structures as a desirable outcome (for example, in the eligibility conditions for KA107<sup>9</sup>). The regionalization of the potential interventions and the availability of resources demonstrate a justification of the need and the conception of the role of EU's higher education policy interventions related to support for development where there is shortage or lack of resources and support for capacity building.

Strategic partnerships are an essential tool of the common foreign policy of the European Union facilitating international engagement on global matters. However, the Security Strategy for Europe of 2003 did not elaborate on this point apart from referring to Union's interests and values.<sup>10</sup> In the years following the Strategy of 2003, the EU has entered into strategic partnerships with ten countries in the world, including four Asian countries with India. This has enabled various levels of diplomatic relations. Park argues that the EU's strategic engagement with emerging powers in Asia followed suit of the US move to engage with Asia more affirmatively in early 1990s<sup>11</sup> but it is still rather underdeveloped or *ill-defined*.<sup>12</sup> According to Jain, *until recently, the EU's relationship with South Asia was essentially driven by trade, commerce and development aid*.<sup>13</sup> He also observes that the EU's engagement in South Asia has grown post 9/11. The strategic partnership with India is an important pillar in this engagement. It demonstrates a recognition of the growing importance of India's emerging role in world affairs in the context of a multipolarity. India and the EU have been official strategic partners since 2004 and this upgrade in the relations was preceded by the first India-EU Summit in

<sup>9</sup> These are financial, on the one hand, as international credit mobility is funded through different instruments with different resources (European Neighbourhood Instrument, Instrument for Pre-Accession, Development Co-operation Instrument, Partnership Instrument, European Development Fund). On the other hand, the available EU budget is split in 12 discrete envelopes with different weight, which demonstrates the priorities in the area. See European Commission, *Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility: Handbook for Participating Organisations*, February 2020, p. 11, at <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/default/files/handbook-erasmus-icmfeb2020en.pdf>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, *European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Brussels 2003, p. 12, at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30823/qc7809568enc.pdf>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>11</sup> S. Park, "EU's Strategic Partnership with Asian Countries: An Introductory Article for the Special Issue", *Asia Europe Journal*, vol. 17 (2019), p. 257.

<sup>12</sup> Renard remarks that this does not mean "these partnerships should be hastily dismissed." T. Renard, *The EU Strategic Partnerships Review: Ten Guiding Principles*, Policy Brief no. 2, ESPO, Brussels 2012, p. 2, at [https://www.ies.be/files/private/28\)%20Renard%20-%20Ten%20Guiding%20Principles.pdf](https://www.ies.be/files/private/28)%20Renard%20-%20Ten%20Guiding%20Principles.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>13</sup> R.K. Jain, "Preface", in R.K. Jain (ed.) *The European Union and South Asia*, New Delhi 2015, p. xv.

Lisbon in 2000.<sup>14</sup> Apart from prioritizing the partnership, this act opened opportunities for broadening the relations between the European Union and India beyond economic links (Sachdeva 2008), although they remain the core of the strategic partnership.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the strategic partnership, the approach at creating better engagement of the EU as an actor with major powers still retains limitations and ambivalence. Howorth argues that *for their part*, [major powers] *have difficulty in knowing how to understand the EU as an actor and prefer to deal bilaterally* [emphasis mine] *with its key member states*.<sup>16</sup> Further, we will see that this mode is dominant in cooperation in higher education as well. The EU Global Strategy of 2016 changes the emphasis and the format of strategic partnership is not among the main elements of the external relations toolbox.<sup>17</sup> Debating *strategic partnership*, European and Indian authors address it as a broad concept that encompasses different *contractual* arrangements<sup>18</sup> and *guiding basic principles*.<sup>19</sup> The notion refers to a certain upgrade of the relations: from cooperation agreement to strategic partnership, thus paving the way to a more effective multilateralism.<sup>20</sup> Ram argues that the dialogue India-EU has been *disproportionately centered on bilateral issues of the driving factors already mentioned and only more recently science and technology cooperation has been in the strategic partnership framework as well as some 'non-strategic' issues*.<sup>21</sup> There has been some disappointment related to the expectation that the strategic partnership would mean a natural extension of a unique bond of common values and institutions between the EU and India as the largest democracies in the world.<sup>22</sup> Keukeleire and Delreux compare agreements and action plans with EU's various stra-

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee: An EU-India strategic partnership*, 16 June 2004, COM (2004) 430 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52004DC0430&from=EN>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>15</sup> G. Sachdeva, "India-EU Economic Ties: Strengthening the Core of Strategic Partnership", in L. Peral, V. Sakhuja (eds.), *The EU-India Partnership: Time to Go Strategic?*, EU ISS 2012, Paris.

<sup>16</sup> J. Howorth, "EU Global Strategy in a Changing World: Brussels' Approach to the Emerging Powers", *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2019), p. 390.

<sup>17</sup> European External Action Service, *Shared vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, a Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, at [http://eeas.europa.eu/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>18</sup> G. Grevi, *Why EU Strategic Partnerships Matter?*, ESPO Working Paper no. 1, June 2012, p. 8, at <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2014/01/ESPO-Grevi1-JUNE.pdf?type=pdf>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>19</sup> T. Renard, *The EU Strategic Partnerships...*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> G. Grevi, A. de Vasconcelos (eds.), *Partnerships for Effective Multilateralism. EU Relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia*, Chaillot Paper 109, EU Institute for Security Studies, 5 June 2008, at [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp109\\_01.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp109_01.pdf), 22 October 2021; G. Grevi, *Making EU Strategic Partnerships Effective*, Working Paper 105, FRIDE, December 2010, at [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130706/WP105\\_Making\\_EU\\_Strategic\\_ENG\\_dic10.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130706/WP105_Making_EU_Strategic_ENG_dic10.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>21</sup> A.N. Ram, "India, the European Union and South Asia", in R.K. Jain (ed.), *The European Union and South Asia*, New Delhi 2015, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



tegic partners to a catalogue of policy domains that are on the agenda of their meetings, rather than as well-formulated strategies to pursue well-defined objectives through intensive and purposeful common actions.<sup>23</sup>

Strategic partnerships became a key element of the Indian foreign policy toolbox at approximately the same time in the late 1990s.<sup>24</sup> In the following two decades, India concluded three times more strategic partnerships compared to the EU. They clearly reflect a process of a *deepening engagement toward East and Southeast Asia*.<sup>25</sup> Half of the strategic partnership concluded between 2014 and 2017 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi are with Asia. However, a similar state of insufficient formal development characterizes the application of the concept of strategic partnership in Indian foreign policy. Jain and Sachdeva point out that they are *merely declaratory* and *politically convenient* instruments which do not entail specific obligations for the Indian government.<sup>26</sup>

The Cooperation Agreement of 1994 is the main political document setting up a framework for EU-India cooperation.<sup>27</sup> The EU-India Strategic Partnership and Joint Action Plan were launched in 2004 with some ups and downs in the negotiations process, experiencing a period of deadlocking for quite some time.<sup>28</sup> Allen argues that the EU and India can be considered strategic partners for various reasons, but their cooperation is far from strategic.<sup>29</sup> The expectation of a more intense engagement at higher levels between the EU and India was not clearly manifested. Some of the reasons for the EU's relative lack of success in developing a 'major power' dialogue with India are coded in the centrality of security issues. Despite some significant efforts to prioritize and add a security dimension to its considerable economic power and presence globally, the EU remains essentially an *economic giant and a military dwarf*.<sup>30</sup> Jain refers to two other reasons for considering the EU-India relationship ten years after the 2003 EU Security Strategy *a barren ground*.<sup>31</sup> One is the scale of the economic underpinning (compared for example to China) as trading and investment partners, which at

<sup>23</sup> S. Keukeleire, T. Delreux, *The Foreign Policy...*, p. 291.

<sup>24</sup> R.K. Jain, G. Sachdeva, "India-EU Strategic Partnership: A New Roadmap", *Asia Europe Journal*, vol. 17 (2019), p. 310.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Council of the European Union and India, *Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and the Republic of India on Partnership and Development*, 27 August 1994, at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:21994A0827\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:21994A0827(01)&from=EN), 22 October 2021.

<sup>28</sup> D. Allen, "The EU and India: Strategic Partners, but Not a Strategic Partnership", in T. Christiansen, E. Kirchner and P. Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, London 2013, pp. 571-586; E. Kavalski, "The EU-India Strategic Partnership: Neither Very Strategic, Nor Much of a Partnership", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2016), pp. 192-208; R.K. Jain, G. Sachdeva, *India-EU Strategic...*, pp. 309-25.

<sup>29</sup> D. Allen, *The EU and India: Strategic...*, pp. 571-586.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> P.P. Chaudhuri, "India, Europe and the Rise of Asia", in R.K. Jain (ed.) *India and the European Union in a Changing World*, Delhi 2014, p. 8.

that moment was about one-tenth of that of China. And second, Jain makes the point that continental Europe, including the EU, generally used to treat India as the diplomatic property of the United Kingdom. In the 16 years' strategic partnership, it is only during the past 3-4 years that consultation mechanisms and elements were intensified for a more consistent strategic partnership covering the next 10-15 years. In its 2017 Resolution on EU political relations with India, the European Parliament expressed *full support for a stronger and deeper partnership between the EU and India rooted in their powerful political, economic, social and cultural links and founded on the shared values of democracy, the respect for human rights and pluralism and on mutual respect and common interests*.<sup>32</sup> The Joint Communication of the European Commission of 2018 proposes elements for an EU Strategy covering the next 10-15 years. During a high-level summit in July 2020, the EU and India decided to strengthen further their strategic partnership and adopted A Roadmap to 2025 to guide cooperation over the next five years.<sup>33</sup> This makes the EU among the few, if not the only Indian strategic partner with which official documents in the form of joint action plans have been drawn up.<sup>34</sup>

## EU-INDIA HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

As shown and argued above, there is ground to consider that the EU and India relations within the framework of their strategic partnership are intensifying and potentially expanding including areas and sectors not specifically covered before. At this highest level of cooperation, there are indications of emerging new windows of opportunities for wider and more encompassing relations. In recent times, the European Union' external relations have expanded to areas which go beyond the portfolio of the External Affairs Services and have gained a significantly high level of visibility globally. It is argued that areas of originally internal policies have gained more prominence and have opened *a structural policy window of external opportunity*.<sup>35</sup> Keukeleire and Delreux point out that *almost all internal policies have in one way or another an external dimension*, but their framework of interest to the external dimension of internal policies does not include education and higher education in particular.<sup>36</sup> Their scholarly focus is mainly on policy areas of strong and shared EU competence<sup>37</sup> where common action is triggered

<sup>32</sup> European Parliament, *European Parliament Resolution of 13 September 2017 on EU Political Relations with India*, 13 September 2017, Strasbourg, at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0334\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0334_EN.html), 22 October 2021.

<sup>33</sup> European External Action Service, *EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025*, 15 July 2020, at [https://eeas.europa.eu/file/eu-india-strategic-partnership-roadmap-2025pdf\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/file/eu-india-strategic-partnership-roadmap-2025pdf_en), 22 October 2021.

<sup>34</sup> R.K. Jain, G. Sachdeva, *India-EU Strategic...*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> C. Gerards, S. Schunz, C. Damro, *Opportunity, Presence...*

<sup>36</sup> S. Keukeleire, T. Delreux, *The Foreign Policy...*, p. 222.

<sup>37</sup> With some exceptions as their list is not exhaustive and what they consider relevant for their study is the focus on EU research and technological development policy in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy; S. Keukeleire, T. Delreux, *The Foreign Policy...*, p. 192.



by pressing global challenges. Schunz and Damro argue that *despite the increasing importance for European integration, there remains a lack of scholarly attention to the growth of EU external action in originally internal policy areas*.<sup>38</sup> They add a focus on emerging external dimensions of fields with limited EU competence such as EU cultural and research policies and their external dimensions. In a recent article, they also ask the question of *why the EU acts externally in higher education*.<sup>39</sup> Their explanatory framework is based on the emergence of a structural policy window of external ‘opportunity’ and domestic ‘presence,’ which brings into the current of the political stream a previously absent subject to which people in and around the governments and, accordingly, the EU institutions are paying serious attention at a given moment. This can be interpreted as a change in the political stream, but the arguments and evidence that this is really the case are not sufficiently gathered.

An alternative explanatory framework could rely more on politics of attention, research into which can unveil preconditions and dynamics related to capacity and consequences of globalization processes rather than to changes in the political stream. The shift, rather a prioritization of attention, particularly in areas in which competences are limited and mainly supporting, can be triggered by the preference of political actors to expand the agenda in order to seek a balance between contentious areas of policy and decision making and areas in which support is more declarative and not central to the main political stream of action externally. In a study of the European Council as the primary agenda-setting body for the European Union for macropolitical actions, the authors show that the Council’s agenda became more diverse over time; it displayed the characteristic pattern of high kurtosis associated with abrupt shifts in policy direction but also an episodic oscillation over time.<sup>40</sup> There is a nuance of considering agenda setting processes, in particular for their diversification,<sup>41</sup> as stochastic processes dependent on conditions and constraints in prioritization of attention, on deliberate and nondeliberate actors’ preferences, and the institutions which embed political actors and whose rules constrain actors’ attention to issues within the remit of the institutions.<sup>42</sup>

The EU external engagement in the higher education followed a process of internationalization of higher education globally and in Europe, manifested in the changing profile of students’ population in major European university centers and in its being up taken as a direction of strategic development for the majority of higher education institutions. Initially, the adopted measures had the format of special programs targeting students and institutions outside the EU. TEMPUS after 1990 served for the EU

<sup>38</sup> S. Schunz, C. Damro, *Expanding Actorness...*, p. 125.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> P. Alexandrova, M. Carammia, A. Timmermans, “Policy Punctuations and Issue Diversity on the European Council Agenda”, *Policy Studies Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2012), pp. 694-88.

<sup>41</sup> Here, I refer to the deliberate use of terms like ‘kurtosis’ and ‘oscillation’ in agenda research, role of agenda in policy-making and generally in agenda-setting literature, highlighting a stochastic approach and their description, at least partially as stochastic processes.

<sup>42</sup> For example, the external aspects of EU internal policies with various degrees of EU competence and involvement.

enlargement policy, while the Erasmus Mundus of 2003/2004 was better located in a clearer external engagement with institutions in countries outside the EU without any linkage to their future membership to the EU. This process is comparable with other EU internal policy areas, which show a trend of broadening the EU external policy portfolio.

Another factor determining what issues are to be attended to in agreements and agenda-setting processes in the context of strategic partnerships is that EU internal policy experiences coincide and resonate with external events and discourses. For example, with its recent National Education Policy (NEP), the Indian government shows *a firm commitment to a further internationalization of India's higher education*.<sup>43</sup> NEP first challenge in higher education is to widen the scope of internationalization. This section of the NEP is expected to draw much attention both scholarly and politically. NEP 2020 proposes a legislative framework that permits top rated global universities to operate in India and encourages top Indian universities to set up campuses in other countries. With more than 1.5 million schools, over 40,000 colleges and close to 720 universities, India has the second-largest education system in the world after China.<sup>44</sup> This new policy direction is a significant addition, if not a game changer, to the previous model of internationalization based on mobility of students and faculty members. The NEP incorporates the expectation of growth of the higher education sector with a fast-increasing enrolment ratio (currently at 26%) reaching 50% by 2035 as per NEP projection and ensuring quality of education through its openness and enhanced internationalization. Making India more transparent for international collaboration in higher education entails addressing the fragmentation of Indian educational system with the proposal to move toward 'multidisciplinary' higher education institutions with more than 3000 student population. This objective of widening the scope of internationalization resonates with initiatives in the EU higher educational area of creating European University Alliances and enhancing the visibility and competitiveness of the European higher education area in a global perspective.

The window of opportunities, open with specific for the EU and India processes in the area of higher education, can be expected to create favorable conditions for bringing the sector into the strategic partnership agenda setting. In 2020 the EU-India high-level summit adopted a Road Map to 2025 announcing the potential and aim of strengthening cooperation in the area of education. Higher education is included in the people-to-people section, with the smallest number of points explicitly mentioning cooperation under Erasmus+ as well as its successor program. The EU's strategy on India highlights the need of enhanced higher education cooperation ensuring comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications, enhanced mobility, and development of transferable skills and competences in degree programs.

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<sup>43</sup> L.W. Van Haaften, *EU-India Relations and the Geopolitics of Higher Education*, Research Report no. 6, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Anamika, "NEP's Vision for Drawing Foreign Universities to India Requires Fine-Tuning", 4 September 2020, *The Indian Express*, at <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/national-education-policy-open-campus-6582118/>, 22 October 2021.

*As part of the EU goal to access the best talent, knowledge and resources in the world, the EU has an interest in promoting the participation of more Indian students, researchers, and higher education staff in EU programmes, in particular through Erasmus+, as well as the Research and Innovation Staff Exchange action and Global Fellowships under the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.*<sup>45</sup>

Van Haaften argues that the 2018 EU Strategy on India marks *a gradual shift behind the need for higher education cooperation*.<sup>46</sup> While in the 1990s, it was conceived within the developmental agenda and technological cooperation, in 2018 the EU's own interest gained more prominent position, in particular related to the competitiveness of the EU in global perspective and to a shared mutual interest in reciprocal mobility of talent. The rationale behind the Strategy includes the EU goal to *access the best talent, knowledge and resources in the world*.<sup>47</sup>

It could be argued that higher education is intrinsically intertwined with research and considering the more substantial chapter on research and innovation and the areas and topics the agreement prioritizes could be telling about the emerging trends. Indeed, the chapter of research and innovation of the Road Map to 2025 sets the objective of further strengthening in research and innovation, acknowledging *20 years of robust cooperation*<sup>48</sup> since the conclusion of the EU-India Agreement on Science and Technology in 2001. The analysis of the overlap and correlation between these research priorities, the curricula and cooperation in those academic fields can display some thematic emerging topics of interest and research for small and large collaborative research groups located in academic institutions which participate in various forms of cooperation. However, this analysis has little potential to provide answers to the questions this paper focuses on and more specifically reveal emerging trends in higher education cooperation within the developed and applied EU instruments in the area. On the one hand, there is a clear division in EU policies, institutions and instruments between higher education as a sector of supporting EU competence and the area of research and innovation. There are separate programs supporting higher education and research cooperation and they display significant structural differences. The instruments in the EU and their counterparts in India's policy toolbox are clearly differentiated. On the other hand, the programs supporting capacity building in higher education and higher education in general do not include specific research objectives and priorities in the form of thematic emphasis. The chapter on research and innovation refers to specific research programs, structures and instruments in the Indian context, which cannot be considered as solely and comprehensively including the whole higher education sector. India has a great variety of institutional systems in

<sup>45</sup> European Commission, *Joint Communication: Elements for an EU Strategy on India*, 20 November 2018, at [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/54057/joint-communication-elements-eu-strategy-india\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/54057/joint-communication-elements-eu-strategy-india_en), 22 October 2021.

<sup>46</sup> L.W. Van Haaften, *EU-India Relations...*, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> European Commission, *Joint Communication: Elements for...*, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> European External Action Service, *EU-India Strategic Partnership...*, p. 8.

higher education and there are also major contrasts in the quality of the universities. Research and innovation are an area of challenge to the higher education in India, as acknowledged by NEP. In principle, collaboration in research may not involve institutional cooperation in higher education. Therefore, our focus is on institutional cooperation in the area of higher education through the instruments of the specialized programs in higher education, incorporated under the Erasmus+ and similarly administered programs in the area of education.

## HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND INDIA AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

The Indian higher education context demonstrates potential and dynamics, which makes it an attractive and valuable partner for establishing partnerships for cooperation, international consortia, and fostering worldwide internationalization of higher education institutions. A brief overview of the dynamics of the development of the higher education sector demonstrates this potential. Over the last 20 years, the enrolment in higher education in Asia including India demonstrates explosive growth.<sup>49</sup> Increasing school participation rates and perceived importance of advanced education for better life prospects and career opportunities are among the main reasons along with the continuous trend of high birth rates. UNESCO defines these processes as “expanding out,”<sup>50</sup> which is demonstrated in establishing new universities, an extensive program of recruiting new faculty members, and the fast emergence of private higher education institutions. Additionally, the modernization and innovation agenda contributes to the growth of the higher education sector since universities are seen as research centers contributing to the competitiveness of the country and its place as an emerging economy globally. The need to “expand out” is clearly related to the need to prepare, hire, and provide conditions for the development of academic staff and university instructors and to ensure the capacity of teaching staff to respond to current challenges the country is facing, and introducing research-based curricula. The number of young people studying abroad has increased and similarly the academic staff recruited back to academic positions after graduation outside of India. A visible sharp rise in international student mobility has also been a result of the massification of higher education, which gradually leads to its being a mass rather than an elite experience (Fig. 1).

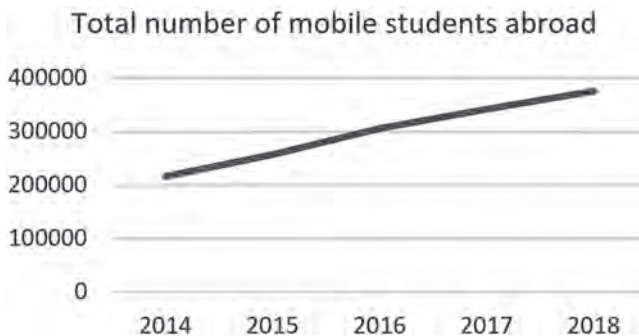
Although there is some diversification in the destinations chosen by mobile students, the top destinations remain the same with a gradual increase in the number of students after 2014. In 2018, the six top destinations were mostly English-speaking countries with the only exception of Germany: United States (135,940), Australia (73,316), Canada (34,806), United Kingdom (19,599), Germany (15,403), and New

<sup>49</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics, *Higher Education in Asia: Expanding Out, Expanding Up. The Rise of Graduate Education and University Research*, Montreal, Quebec 2014, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Zealand (11,604).<sup>51</sup> The share of other EU countries was rather low, with France and Italy at around 3,500 students, and fewer than 1,500 in most of the other countries. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, a steep climb was further observed in the number of Indian students earning abroad an international degree. Statistics of 2019, released by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, refer to 753,000 Indian students in universities abroad, which was a peak level.<sup>52</sup> Today, India is second only to China in the number of students travelling abroad for a degree. The distribution pattern is relevant to the language of instruction and the home language in the country. But at the same time, the picture of preferences of Indian students is changing. Countries like Canada and Australia have become more attractive largely because of the modifications in migration policies: the easing of visas and work permits. Europe features among the three preferred regional destinations – with North America, and Australia and Oceania – although it lags considerably behind and occupies a marginal position among the popular destination. The US remains by far most attractive – in 2018, 36% of all students went abroad to the USA, 19% to Australia.<sup>53</sup> Some sources indicate even starker rise in the number of Indian students studying abroad in 2019. For example, according to official Australian sources, the country was accommodating 68,000 Indian students in 2019.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Germany, Ireland, Latvia and a few other European countries are pointed out as emerging popular study destinations for Indian students seeking quality education.

Fig. 1. UIS data on the mobility of students, India



Source: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow#slideoutmenu>

<sup>51</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students*, at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>52</sup> IEC Abroad, *The 2020 Trend for Indian Students Studying Abroad*, at <https://www.iecabroad.com/in/blog/the-2020-trend-for-indian-students-studying-abroad/>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>53</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global Flow...*

<sup>54</sup> India Today WebDesk, "Trends for Studying Abroad in 2019: Top Courses, Top Countries and More", 20 January 2019, at <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/study-abroad/story/trends-over-seas-education-industry-in-2019-divd-1431292-2019-01-15>, 22 October 2021.

The peak levels of the Indian students' enrolment in higher education institutions abroad is explained with the structure of the population of 1.26 billion, half of which at an average age of 25 years. Although the higher education system is expanding, it has become fairly difficult to get admitted into an Indian university as more and more students are graduating from high schools with excellent grades. Top destinations remain constant as statistics shows with the US retaining its position, although there is a certain decline in the last few years. In 2019, the highest international student populations in the US by the country of origin were China (369,548 students) and India (202,014 students).

The profile of international students in the EU-27 is quite different. A more detailed analysis for the origin of students from abroad shows that for 13 of the EU Member States, the principal country of origin for students from abroad in 2018 was another Member State, which was often a neighboring country. Across the whole of the EU, China (including Hong Kong) was the most common country of origin for tertiary students from abroad in 2018, accounting for 5.2% of the total. The only other non-member country that appeared multiple times in the rankings was India, but with a number of students far behind.<sup>55</sup>

In the last 20 years, there has been action at EU level to encourage international student mobility, making EU an attractive place for talented international students and making the EU competitive with the leading international education providers. On the one hand, the action towards integration of national higher education systems, the Bologna Process and harmonizing and consolidating of the European Higher Education Area established at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen as enabling factors for international student mobility. The Erasmus Program, as already mentioned, is among the initiatives fostering student mobility from the EU and from non-EU countries. In 2020-2021, the European Universities Initiative of the European Commission is a major step in strengthening of the EHEA. All these actions as part of the internal policy in the area of higher education have gradually introduced significant external dimension.

On the other hand, there is a series of EU documents related to admissions of non-EU nationals to the territory of the Member States for study purposes and their retention in the EU for a period of time after graduation. The Council Resolution of 30 November 1994 states the desirability of exchange of international students and academics and defines some basic non-legally binding principles with which conformity of national legislation is sought. Later, in 2004 and 2005, the basis for a common legal framework was created by two European Council Directives of 2004 (2004/114/EC) and of 2005 (2005/71/EC), specifying the conditions of admissions and the specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for general purposes of study and research. Next, in 2009, the issue of retention of third-country postgraduate students came on the agenda and regulations were adopted facilitating the process in line with the specific policy to promote immigration of highly skilled persons, students and

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<sup>55</sup> Eurostat: Statistics Explained, *Learning Mobility Statistics*, 22 September 2021, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Learning\\_mobility\\_statistics#Key\\_figures](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Learning_mobility_statistics#Key_figures), 22 October 2021.



researchers (both from other EU/EEA as well as third countries). In May 2016, a new Students and Researchers Directive aiming at a further harmonization of the different national legislative frameworks on these issues was adopted (2016/801).<sup>56</sup> It contributes to clarifying the admission and residence requirements and setting out general conditions for admission. A major step with regard to students including non-EU students is that it allows them to stay at least nine months after graduation in order to look for a job or set up a business. Since the deadline for transposition of the 2016 Directive was 23 May 2018, *many policies aimed at attracting and retaining (non-EEA) students within the Member States will have been introduced recently and have not yet been evaluated.*<sup>57</sup> Summarizing the main findings on retaining third-country national students, the European Migration Network to the European Commission notes the key point that *the majority of Member States do not have a National Strategy for third-country national student retention, nor a national coordinating body for this strategy.*<sup>58</sup> The study 'Attracting and retaining international students in the EU' carried out by the EMN for the European Commission in 2018 and published in 2019 found post-study retention measures in place in the majority of Member States. It confirmed that the highest number of international students coming to the EU was from China, accounting for almost a quarter of all first study permits (118,830 permits), followed by the United States (33,000 permits), and India (32,317 permits). It also identified that *the main policy drivers for attracting and retaining international students included the internationalisation of HEIs and increasing financial revenue for the higher education sector, contributing to economic growth by increasing the national pool of qualified labour and addressing specific (skilled) labour shortages plus tackling demographic change.*<sup>59</sup>

The topic of this paper involves the issue of Brexit and the impact it might have on EU-India cooperation in higher education bearing in mind the anticipated strong Anglo-Saxon orientation of Indian higher education system and the fact that the United Kingdom is among the top destinations for Indian students.<sup>60</sup> The high performance of UK universities and their traditions of quality education are a significant factor and driver for choosing study destinations. However, data show that although the UK is among the first 5/6 study destinations, the number of students is between 12 and 5 times less than in the other top countries. Additionally, the UK's closest competitors,

<sup>56</sup> Council of the European Union, *Directive 2016/801/EU on the Conditions of Entry and Residence of Third-Country Nationals for the Purposes of Research, Studies, Training, Voluntary Service, Pupil Exchange Schemes or Educational Projects and Au Pairing (Students and Researchers Directive)*, OJ L 132, 21 May 2016, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/801/oj>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>57</sup> P. Trevena, *Post Study Work Visa Options: An International Comparative Review*, Edinburgh 2019, p. 41.

<sup>58</sup> European Migration Network Inform, *Retaining Third-Country National Students in the European Union*, 20 September 2017, p. 1, at [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/00\\_inform\\_student\\_retention\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/00_inform_student_retention_final_en.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>59</sup> European Migration Network, *Attracting and Retaining International Students in the EU*, Brussels 2019, p. 6, at [https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/ficheros/redeuropeamigracion/estudios\\_mono\\_graficos/ficheros/2019/emn\\_international\\_students\\_inform\\_final.pdf](https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/ficheros/redeuropeamigracion/estudios_mono_graficos/ficheros/2019/emn_international_students_inform_final.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>60</sup> L.W. van Haften, *EU-India Relations...*

such as the USA, Australia, but also France and Germany, all continue to grow at a faster rate in this respect than the UK.<sup>61</sup> In 2018, the number of Indian students in the UK and Germany were fairly comparable (19,599 and 15,473).<sup>62</sup> One of the effects of Brexit is, however, the post-Brexit immigration plan in 2019, which made it urgent to fill the gaps for skilled workers. A two-year post-study work scheme was reintroduced allowing international students graduating in 2021 enough time to secure a job. Moreover, if a graduate earns £30,000, they can extend the stay for another 3 years and apply for permanent residency. Post-study work schemes in force in the UK in the 2000s and their withdrawal reduced the number of Indian students coming to the UK almost by half in 2010-2011. According to the media and education consultancy companies, the potential for future employment and affordability (tuition fees) feature highest on the list of factors for choosing a study destination by Indian students.<sup>63</sup> The graduate routes open to international students, post-graduation work permit and post study work visa options are becoming an important factor in the competition of higher education institutions to attract more students.

EU programs, and particularly Erasmus+, are viewed as the main current instruments for cooperation in higher education. The Erasmus Program as the main EU program supporting higher education has been funding academic mobility and cooperation projects between European universities for over 30 years. Since 2015, Erasmus+ as the EU program for education, training, youth and sport has also included short-term mobility to Europe from other parts of the world based on interinstitutional (bilateral) partnerships with universities outside Europe, coordinated by the Program country institutions. India is a Partner Country of the Erasmus+ Program, which means that most actions, particularly in the fields of higher education, are open to India, Indian students, and Indian higher education institutions. The central focus of Erasmus+ funding for countries outside Europe is cooperation projects to improve the quality of higher education as well as mobility for individuals. The EU external actions in higher education aim largely at fostering internationalization and excellence by supporting mobility and via study programs jointly delivered and jointly recognized by higher education institutions (HEIs) established in Europe, and open to institutions in other countries of the world. It is important to emphasize that as supporting policy in the EU context, these instruments and programs have a core internal aim and are viewed as contributing to the integration and internationalization of the European Higher Education Area.

Official information shows the extent to which Indian higher education institutions have been involved in various actions under these main instruments in the area of higher education. For example, between 2015 and 2018, 290 projects were selected

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<sup>61</sup> Universities UK, *Parliamentary Briefing: An Improved Post-Study Work System*, September 2018, at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/international/international-staff-and-students/parliamentary-briefing-improved-post-study>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>62</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global Flow...*

<sup>63</sup> IEC Abroad, *The 2020 Trend for Indian...*

for funding (68-80 annually) and 1404 students and staff benefited from mobility to Europe (314-384 on an annual basis), constituting around 11% of the budget Asia of the Program 2015-2018. A report released for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Erasmus Program states that in 2017 India has passed the cap of 5000 Indian alumni of Erasmus programs.<sup>64</sup> Indian students, with 63 scholarships to study a Joint Master's degree in Europe, are the second largest beneficiary of the EU-funded Erasmus Mundus Program. Statistics for the Erasmus Mundus Masters scholarships between 2014 and 2019 make Indian student at the top position in Asia, sustaining achievements from previous periods when India was the single largest beneficiary of the Programme outside of Europe between 2004 and 2016.<sup>65</sup> However, data for Indian universities participating in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) show that only very few proposals include Indian higher education institutions as full partners. This indicates that the initiative is largely addressing individual students, while the institutionalization of the mobility and international experience of students in EU member states has not been sufficiently supported and up-taken by higher education institutions. According to the program statistics, interest and success rate in 2018 was higher. About 50 new Indian universities were involved in awarded EU-financed cooperation projects with European universities and five Indian professors received prestigious Jean Monnet grants for EU studies.

These achievements are fully in line with high-level strategic and policy decisions to strengthen EU-India cooperation in the field of education. The 13<sup>th</sup> EU-India Summit in March 2016 named education an important area of cooperation, with the goal to increase the number of Indian students and teachers studying, researching, and teaching in Europe (and vice versa).<sup>66</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Summit held in New Delhi in October 2017 confirmed the commitment. Both parties emphasized, as part of the India-EU Agenda for Action 2020, that *there was a need to work towards strengthening cooperation on higher-education, including through India's GIAN programme and the EU's Erasmus+ programme*.<sup>67</sup> Various programs are available to Indian higher education institutions for funding student exchanges and mobility, joint degrees and institutional capacity-building, teaching and research (Erasmus+, Marie Skłodowska-Curie, and Jean Monnet). The respective program on the Indian side, GIAN (the Global Initiative of Academic Networks), provides financing for European teachers to gain experience in India. There is a clear symmetry and a high level of reciprocity in setting the

<sup>64</sup> Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, "India is the Largest Beneficiary of the EU's Erasmus+ Program for Higher Education Scholarships and University Cooperations", 24 August 2017, at [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/31330/india-largest-beneficiary-eus-erasmus-program-higher-education-scholarships-and-university\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/31330/india-largest-beneficiary-eus-erasmus-program-higher-education-scholarships-and-university_en), 22 October 2021.

<sup>65</sup> European Commission, *Erasmus+ for Higher Education in India*, November 2019, at [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/india\\_erasmusplus\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/india_erasmusplus_2019.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>66</sup> European Commission, *Eu-India Cooperation in Higher Education*, 2016, at [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-india-higher-education-cooperation\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-india-higher-education-cooperation_en.pdf), 22 October 2021.

<sup>67</sup> European Commission, *Joint Statement 14th India-EU Summit*, New Delhi, 6 October 2017, at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-17-3743\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-3743_en.htm), 22 October 2021.

objectives and the scope of the cooperation framework between the EU and India with corresponding programs/initiatives prioritizing networking and creating partnerships for cooperation. This creates a context that allows to see cooperation in a larger scale going beyond bilateral cooperation with higher education institutions in one Member State of the EU. More importantly, there is a window of opportunities for shifting the emphasis from individual student's or academic staff's initiative to a wider involvement of higher education institutions in cooperation projects and networks and including cooperation initiatives with alliances, consortia and partnerships into the institutional programs and internationalization agendas of higher education institutions.

Statistical information concerning international credit mobility (ICM) of students and staff indicates an incremental increase in the interest towards the mobility scheme funded by the EU and a specific increase in the applications and the selected projects involving India (Fig. 2). However, this is not related to an increase in the share of the budget for India in the ICM regional budget for Asia. One explanation for this has to do with the amount of funding allocated to countries outside Europe.

Fig. 2. International credit mobility involving India

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Proposals received involving India	239	188	174	147	156
Projects selected involving India	210	74	80	68	68
Students and staff moving to Europe	451	314	384	322	384
Students and staff moving to India	270	257	257	186	164
Percentage of regional budget	9.9	11,4	12	10.6	12.6

Source: Erasmus+ for higher education in India, at [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/india\\_erasmusplus\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/india_erasmusplus_2019.pdf)

Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education action (CBHE) projects with duration of two to three years are aimed at modernizing and reforming higher education institutions, developing new curricula, improving governance, and building relationships between higher education institutions and enterprises. They can also tackle policy topics and issues, preparing the ground for higher education reform in cooperation with national authorities. This program is of particular relevance to the higher education modernization and expansion process in India. Between 27% and 30% of the annual global budget for CBHE projects is earmarked for Asian countries. At the start of the Program in 2015, six Indian institutions received such grants for two capacity building projects. In 2016, already 36 Indian institutions from 12 states participated in 10 different projects, partnering with 37 European universities from 18 European states. In the three-year period 2015-2017, there were 71 instances of Indian institutions participating in projects.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, a clear dynamic is seen related to

<sup>68</sup> European Commission, *Erasmus+ for Higher Education in India*, March 2018, at [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/erasmusplus\\_india\\_2017.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/erasmusplus_india_2017.pdf), 22 October 2021.

the application and selection procedures mainly due to its high competitiveness and the quality of the applications submitted. However, of all the funded projects for the past eight years (in EU countries and outside of Europe), only 6 percent had an Indian coordinator. As the table below shows (Fig. 3), in the first three years, only one project with a coordinating institution from India was funded. This correlates to the low number of projects involving India overall (in 2017, for example, the percentage of proposals with Indian institutions is 2.8% out of more than 800 applications). Statistics show better representation of Indian universities in 2017 and 2018, but still the share and the extent to which Indian higher education benefits from the CBHE program is not commensurate with its institutional potential and needs.

Fig. 3. India in projects under the Capacity building in higher education

India in CBHE projects	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Proposals received in call overall	840	887	833	736	515
Projects selected in call overall	163	147	149	147	138
Proposals received involving India	38	37	24	13	2
Projects selected involving India	12	10	5	10	2
Projects coordinated by India	3	3	0	1	0

Source: Erasmus+ for higher education in India, at [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/india\\_erasmusplus\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/india_erasmusplus_2019.pdf)

Fig. 4. India in project under the Jean Monnet Action of the EU

India in Jean Monnet	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Proposals received in call overall	1315	1255	1177	1034	879	493
Projects selected in call	285	235	238	270	260	212
Applications from India	10	9	14	3	1	2
Selected projects from India	0	3	7	2	0	1
Networks involving partners from India	0	1	1	1	0	0

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/erasmusplus\\_india\\_2017.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/asia-central/erasmusplus_india_2017.pdf)

Similar is the situation with the Jean Monnet Action. These activities fund and support worldwide academic teaching and research (Chairs, Modules and Centers of Excellence), cooperation projects, conferences and publications in the field of EU studies. It has a specific and unique goal of spreading knowledge and engaging academics in teaching about the EU and the European integration. Although not directly addressing modernization of higher education, equal access, and other challenges, it can be considered as an instrument for creating a good ground for further collaboration in the area of higher education and in particular creating and promoting the image of the EU as

a collective actor and partner in internationalization of higher education. The statistics show that the participation of Indian universities remains low, despite the fact that in 2017, the selected projects were 7 against only 1 in 2014.<sup>69</sup>

Few Indian universities benefit from the Jean Monnet Program and develop EU studies, and courses related to topics concerning EU policies, European integration and EU as a global actor are not by and large covered in curricula (Fig. 4).

## EMERGING NEW MODES OF INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Mobility will remain a cornerstone of international cooperation, but there is the need to develop models in which it is an integral part of an inter-institutional partnership, which is expected to have a greater institutional impact. The emerging trend is to introduce modes of cooperation which apply an approach to go beyond mobility in internationalization, including internationalization of curricula, a more international focus in degree programs, and internationalization 'at home.' The model of cooperation partnerships set in most EU-funded programs in education and the emphasis on networking in the corresponding instrument in India (GIAN) ensures going beyond bilateral relations in which internationalization is seen as a multidimensional, intentional process, bringing international/intercultural perspectives to learning/teaching, research, outreach, and management of an institution.

Bilateral cooperation continues to be very important, if not the most important pillar of the cooperation between India and EU Member States. Germany is among the countries with strongest exchange programs with India. The two hold regular Intergovernmental Consultations, at which strengthening of cooperation in higher education is prioritized and led to concluding an agreement on Indo-German partnerships in higher education, successfully completed in 2020 and extended for another four years in 2020.<sup>70</sup> According to official government sources, the exchange of students and young scientists has skyrocketed over the past years with an almost fourfold increase in 2017 compared to 2006.<sup>71</sup> Special campaigns are initiated, for example, the DAAD 'A New Passage to India' in 2008 with a funding of approximately EUR 4 million per year.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> DAAD India, "Indo-German Partnership in Higher Education: Strengthening academic cooperation between India and Germany (2020-24)", at <https://www.daad.in/en/2020/07/27/indo-german-partnership-in-higher-education-strengthening-academic-cooperation-between-india-and-germany-2020-24/>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>71</sup> At <https://www.bmbf.de/en/germany-and-india-partners-in-education-and-research-2212.html>, 22 October 2021.

<sup>72</sup> The initiative "A New Passage to India" (ANPtI) aims bring German and Indian students, graduates and doctoral candidates into contact with each other's world of work and research and strengthen mutual awareness of each country as a research destination; DAAD, "A New Passage to India", at <https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/a-new-passage-to-india/>, 22 October 2021.



Similar initiatives and frameworks of cooperation are effective in other EU Member States, e.g. the India-Nordic Partnership.

Van Haaften argues that *the Indian educational sector has developed a strong orientation in the direction of especially Anglo-Saxon educational space*.<sup>73</sup> He further concludes that there is a process of aligning India's higher education to Anglo-Saxon academic standards. The patterns of internationalization and some components of the new National Education Policy aiming at transforming universities into *multidisciplinary*<sup>74</sup> learning centers indicate, for van Haaften, that it draws heavily upon the concept of liberal arts education at the Ivy League colleges in the US and *reaffirms a strong orientation at the Anglo-Saxon education system*.<sup>75</sup> This conclusion can be considered only partially to cover the reality.

The data gathered<sup>76</sup> show that the Erasmus+ program and its predecessors have provided a pathway for Indian students and faculty to study and do research in European Union countries. The launch of the new Erasmus+ program in 2014 certainly gave a boost to educational ties between Europe and India, and increased the visibility and popularity of the region for European universities and vice versa. However, the EU higher education area is rather fragmented with a diversity of national tongues as main languages of instruction. There is hardly an image and perception of a unity in what is called European Higher Education Area as bearing the label of quality higher education. The tradition of bilateral institutional relations is not well accommodated in the underlying concept of EU programs in higher education which promotes partnerships, alliances between more than three higher education institutions. The benefits of this format not always easily translate into the strategies for university modernization. Therefore, higher education cooperation between the EU and India still faces the need of finding and paving new roads on the map of internationalization and establishing patterns that go beyond the traditional bilateral cooperation related to both mobility and cooperation projects. In this context, EU-funded programs could be seen as a limited resource but one that opens new windows of opportunities for cooperation in a network format, reaching beyond bilateral cooperation and multiplying modes of collaboration with institutional impact and, to a certain extent, with resonance in the higher education sector as a whole.

The current state in the higher education cooperation depends also on the perceptions of the EU in India. A recent Analysis of the Perception of the EU and EU's

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<sup>73</sup> L.W. Van Haaften, *EU-India Relations...*, p. 32.

<sup>74</sup> Van Haaften argues that 'multidisciplinary' is the absolute buzz-word in the NEP, as it is used over 70 times in the policy.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> This paper uses data collected and analysed under the EURASIA Capacity Building in Higher education project, funded by the EU and coordinated by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", involving two Indian Universities developing courses and modernizing curricula in the area European studies. The project can be innovative in setting new models of higher education cooperation with a strong emphasis on multilateral EU and India collaboration, going beyond strengthening of bilateral cooperation.

Policies Abroad with a focus on the EU's ten strategic partner countries concludes that the EU is mainly seen as an economic and trade power, and its perception as a political actor comes as the second highest rank.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, the EU is almost not visible in the areas of research, culture, and social development, where we can add education, despite the wider acquaintance with the EU initiatives in the area of higher education and their global resonance. According to various Indian analysts, there is an enormous information deficit about the EU in India and the average Indian has considerable difficulty in understanding what kind of political and economic "animal" the EU is.<sup>78</sup> The Union is seen as a key source of high technology for India's modernization and as having an immense potential for collaboration, but the outreach to academia and to young researchers should be further enhanced by engaging in wider partnership beyond bilateral relations. Despite the growing academic dialogue, there continues to be a gap between institutions and people, to a large extent as a result of the information deficit. In their study on the external perception of the EU as a global actor, Fioramonti and Lucarelli conclude that in emerging powers such as India and Brazil, *most citizens are unaware of the existence or purpose of the EU*.<sup>79</sup> Their observations show that the knowledge and approval of the EU is *highly correlated to levels of education*, with the better-educated people much more familiar with the EU and tending to evaluate it more positively.<sup>80</sup>

The Elements for an EU Strategy on India<sup>81</sup> put forward the concept of the *natural partner* as a self-reflection of EU's own role in developing the road for strategic cooperation. The natural context for this definition is the understanding that EU and India represent a modernization partnership supporting India's aim to grow in a sustainable manner. More importantly, the EU and India share a mutual interest in reciprocal mobility of talent. The current state of affairs, though, shows that the role of the EU and of the EU Member States in the internationalization of the higher education in India is relatively moderate. The last couple of years show a more visible shift of attention on both sides and an intention to build a more solid and lasting academic basis which can ensure contribution and better positioning in the internationalization of the higher

<sup>77</sup> The National Centre for Research Public Policy, NFG Research Group and Management Institute, *Analysis of the Perception of the EU and EU's Policies Abroad: Final Report*, 7 December 2015, p. 12, at [https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/showcases/analysis-perception-eu-and-eus-policies-abroad\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/showcases/analysis-perception-eu-and-eus-policies-abroad_en), 22 October 2021.

<sup>78</sup> R.K. Jain, S. Pandey, "Perceptions and Visibility of the European Union in India: A Study of the Media, Elites and Public Opinion", in J. Zajączkowski, J. Schottli, M. Thapa (eds.), *India in the Contemporary World. Polity, Economy and International Relations*, New Delhi 2014, pp. 385-406.

<sup>79</sup> S. Lucarelli, L. Fioramonti, "Conclusion: Self-Representations and External Perceptions – Can the EU Bridge the Gap?" in S. Lucarelli, L. Fioramonti (eds.), *External Perceptions of the European Union as a Global Actor*, London 2010, p. 218.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>81</sup> European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: Connecting Europe and Asia – Building Blocks for an EU Strategy*, Brussels, 19 September 2018, JOIN(2018) 31 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018JC0031&from=EN>, 22 October 2021.

education in India. The new paths for consolidating and fostering the cooperation in the area of higher education between the EU and India are to be drawn by strong institutional engagement of universities on both sides.

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