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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Republic of India on a comprehensive framework of Cooperation and Mobility

Delegations will find attached the signed copy of the above-mentioned document as received from the Commission services.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA ON A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION ON MOBILITY

The mobility between the Republic of India (hereinafter 'India') and the European Union (hereinafter 'the EU'), hereinafter individually referred to as the 'Participant' and jointly referred to as the 'Participants', has expanded steadily, strengthening economies, tourism, and people-to-people ties.

The Participants acknowledge the importance of further promoting effective pathways for mobility to foster research and innovation, address skill gaps, mitigate labour shortages and promote economic growth and competitiveness, and are committed to manage migration effectively in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, that serves both India and the EU's prosperity.

The Participants recall that India and the EU have a deep and long-standing relationship, building on more than thirty years of the India-EU Cooperation Agreement of 1994. This Memorandum of Understanding builds on the priorities and components of the respective migration policies and strategies of India and the EU, and expands on existing initiatives and frameworks between the Participants, including the EU-India Strategic Partnership established in 2004 and the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility signed in 2016 and renewed joint commitments under the "Towards 2030: A Joint India-European Union Comprehensive Strategic Agenda".

This Memorandum of Understanding acknowledges that while EU Member States retain competence to determine volumes of admission of third-country nationals for work purposes, the EU has established a comprehensive legal framework for certain categories of third country nationals, notably highly skilled workers, students and researchers and seasonal workers, regulating the conditions for their entry and stay in the EU. In parallel, it recognises the international obligation to readmit own nationals that have no right to stay on the territory of the other Participant and aims to facilitate cooperation in this regard.

1. Objective

1.1 The Participants herewith intend to establish a comprehensive framework of cooperation on mobility and are signing a Memorandum of Understanding ("the Memorandum") for this purpose.

1.2 The aim is to foster research and innovation, address skill gaps, mitigate labour shortages, promote economic growth, alongside supporting the trade and investment framework. The Participants recognise the need for a comprehensive framework of cooperation on mobility for certain categories of citizens from both sides, to reduce barriers and facilitate mobility by streamlining migration procedures, promoting fair recruitment and exchanges of information as well as raising awareness on existing opportunities, in line with applicable domestic laws.

2. Facilitation of Mobility

2.1 Participants underline their intention to facilitate the mobility of highly skilled workers, students and researchers and seasonal workers between India and the EU. Such mobility should respect the framework of applicable domestic laws and be without prejudice to EU Member States' competence in

this regard, including when determining volumes of admission of third-country nationals for work purposes.

2.2 To encourage the mobility of the categories mentioned above, and in line with the applicable domestic laws and within their respective fields of competence, the Participants reaffirm their intention to take concrete steps to facilitate access to immigration procedures for highly skilled workers, students and researchers, and seasonal workers.

3. Seasonal workers

3.1 For the purposes of this Memorandum, a seasonal worker is a worker who retains her/his principal place of residence in India and stays legally and temporarily in the territory of an EU Member State to carry out an activity dependent on the seasons, under one or more fixed term work contracts concluded directly between that worker and the employer established in that EU Member State.

3.2 Participants declare their wish to work on further facilitating the mobility of seasonal workers from India to the EU, further streamlining of recruitment procedures, and on reinforcing cooperation to ensure the protection of seasonal workers' rights against labour exploitation when facilitating their mobility, in line with the applicable domestic laws.

4. Students and researchers

4.1 The Participants could explore possibilities to facilitate the conditions of entry and stay of students and researchers, in particular those registered with approved research or higher education institutions, and those studying or conducting research under programmes funded by both Participants, in line with the applicable domestic laws. Both Participants intend to encourage the mobility of researchers and doctoral candidates with an appropriate hosting agreement or contract in line with applicable domestic law.

4.2 Within the framework of, and in line with, applicable legislation, Indian nationals may be issued an authorisation in the form of a long-stay visa or a residence permit for the purpose of study for at least one year, or for the duration of the studies where this is shorter, in accordance with the rules set in applicable domestic laws. Within the framework of, and in line with, applicable legislation, Indian nationals may also be granted an authorisation in the form of a long-stay visa or a residence permit for the purpose of research for at least one year, or for the duration of the hosting agreement where this is shorter, in accordance with the rules set in applicable domestic laws. The authorisation for the purpose of study or research may be renewed, in accordance with the rules set in applicable domestic laws.

4.3 Within the framework of, and in line with, applicable legislation, India may issue the EU Member State students a long-stay visa bearing the word "Student" valid for the duration of their studies or for a maximum period of 5 years, whichever is earlier. India may issue a "research visa" valid for the duration of the research or university-level teaching activities.

4.4 The Participants express their intention to keep each other informed about existing programmes and funding opportunities for students and researchers, and to ensure that adequate and regularly updated information is made publicly available.

4.5 The Participants express their intention to allow researchers to teach, in addition to their research

activities, and allow students to work outside their study time, for at least 15 hours per week, in line with applicable domestic laws.

4.6 Participants also express their intention to allow students and researchers who successfully complete their research or studies the possibility to stay for a period of at least nine months, in order to seek employment or set up a business on the territory of the State that firstly issued their authorisation to stay for purposes of study or research, in line with applicable domestic laws.

5. Highly skilled workers

5.1 Within the framework of, and in line with applicable legislation, highly qualified Indian nationals, notably young professionals, residing outside the territory of an EU Member State or already residing in the territory of an EU Member State as holder of a valid residence permit or long-stay visa, may apply for an EU Blue Card, i.e. a resident permit for the purpose of highly qualified employment.

6. Skills Development and Vocational Education and Training

6.1 Participants intend to explore joint and respective actions to facilitate cooperation to support skills development and vocational education and training, notably by: sharing information on their vocational education and training systems, holding regular dialogues between the Participants on Education and Skills to discuss existing challenges, best practices and upcoming opportunities, leverage exchanges with employers to determine current and future skill needs of the industry, promote exchanges between trainers of both the Participants in the vocational education and training systems, and facilitating access to training opportunities including apprenticeship, internship opportunities, in house/on the job training, language training, and pre-departure orientation.

7. Skills, Experience, Educational and Qualification Recognition

7.1 Participants express their intention to exchange information, including in the context of Education and Skills Dialogues between the Participants, on their respective skills, experience, educational and qualification frameworks and recognition systems, and to undertake steps to facilitate assessment of comparability and transparency of skills, experience and qualifications at all skills levels.

7.2 Participants further express strong interest in facilitating mutual understanding of each other's recognition frameworks for regulated professions. The EU intends to support India's understanding of the EU recognition systems, particularly by engaging with relevant bodies in the EU Member States, as appropriate, and providing information on the recognition of third-country qualifications in the EU, when feasible.

7.3 Participants express their intention to promote demand-driven skills development including to optimise the employability of migrants in formal labour markets in countries of destination and in countries of origin upon return, as well as to ensure decent work in labour migration.

8. Cooperation on migration management

8.1 Participants express their intention to cooperate on migration management, including on countering irregular migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, building on the existing cooperation and existing frameworks, notably the Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility. The Participants express their intention to fully cooperate on return and readmission of irregular migrants, including on the identification of nationality by the competent authorities by means of the most appropriate and efficient procedures, on the timely issuance of travel documents, on readmission requests, and on return operations, without prejudice to their international obligations, within the scope of their responsibilities and in accordance with their domestic laws. Both Participants envisage to monitor the implementation of these commitments in the framework of a regular dedicated dialogue in the context of the Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility and to explore the possibilities for negotiating a Readmission agreement.

9. Exchange of information

9.1 In addition to exchanges foreseen elsewhere in the Memorandum, Participants express their intention to exchange information on the conditions for entry, residence and work for highly skilled workers, seasonal workers, and for students and researchers. Participants also express their intention to exchange information on their labour markets, including in relation to job opportunities, labour shortages and skills gaps.

10. Implementation

10.1. A Joint Working Group comprising representatives from both Participants will be established to monitor the implementation of this Memorandum and exchange on implementing arrangements necessary for its application. The Joint Working Group would meet regularly, at least once a year, as part of the annual High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility or as necessary at the request of either Participant. The agenda and the composition of the Joint Working Group would be set for each meeting by mutual consultation.

10.2 In this context, all aspects related to the implementation of this Memorandum will be discussed, including issuance of visas.

10.3 The EU will collaborate with India to set up a pilot European Union Legal Gateway Office focusing, to start with, on the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, with a view to provide information on, and support for, the mobility of workers, researchers and students to the EU in this particular sector. The main objectives and features of the pilot European Union Legal Gateway Office in India with respect to the ICT sector are included and described in an Annex to this Memorandum of Understanding. The pilot European Union Legal Gateway Office may be expanded to other areas.

11. Final considerations

11.1 The Memorandum reflects only the political intentions of the Participants within the applicable

legal framework and does not create legal obligations or rights on either Participant under international or domestic law. It will be based on voluntary cooperation and does not result in any financial implications for either Participant. Its implementation will be without prejudice to agreements or other forms of cooperation concluded between the EU Member States and India.

11.2 EU Member States may be invited to participate in activities carried out under this Memorandum of Understanding, in line with its objectives and within their respective competences.

11.3 The Memorandum is valid for a period of 7 years from the date of its signature. Unless discontinued by either Participant, this Memorandum is automatically renewed for similar successive periods.

11.4 This Memorandum may be discontinued in writing by either Participant subject to three months prior notice served through diplomatic channels. This should not affect the commitments made before the discontinuation of this Memorandum, unless otherwise agreed by the Participants.

11.5 This Memorandum may be modified by the mutual written consent of the Participants.

12. Signatures

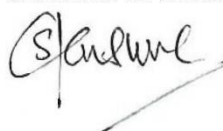
IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, being duly authorised by the respective Participants, have signed this Memorandum.

Signed at New Delhi, on 27 January 2026, in two originals in English.

FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION



FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF INDIA



Annex - Pilot European Legal Gateway Office in India

This Annex outlines the main objectives and features of the pilot European Legal Gateway Office in India ('Gateway Office pilot'), as set out in Section 10 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Republic of India on a comprehensive framework of cooperation on mobility.

Objectives

The Gateway Office pilot will be a one-stop hub to provide information and support the movement of workers, researchers and students to the EU in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, with the following main objectives:

- Providing easier access and facilitating legal migration of Indian workers, students and researchers to the EU and its Member States in the ICT sector;
- Complementing and giving more visibility to the existing initiatives between India and the EU and its Member States in the ICT sector;
- Making the ICT opportunities in the EU and Member States more visible and attractive to the Indian workers, students and researchers;
- Raising awareness and providing guidance to Indian candidates regarding legal migration pathways in the ICT sector, including guidance on the recognition of qualifications.

Implementation

The Gateway Office pilot will include three interconnected components: (1) a **digital tool**, as a single online entry point and resource hub for Indian candidates for mobility in the ICT sector; (2) an **EU Gateway Office in India** as the operational hub in India aimed to build partnerships, facilitate stakeholder engagement with both Indian and EU stakeholders on the ground and implement a range of outreach and awareness-related activities in major ICT regional clusters across the country; (3) an **EU Support Office** to ensure coordination with the EU and its Member States' national initiatives, including alignment with EU policies, as well as engagement with EU stakeholders and employers.

The overall **duration** of the pilot European Legal Gateway Office is currently foreseen to be approximately 26 months.

Governance

To support governance and strategic direction, an **Advisory Board** will meet on regular basis. The Advisory Board will be composed of the European Commission, EU Delegation in India, interested EU Member States, and Indian stakeholders (both public and private). The Advisory Board will function as a space for sharing updates, dialogue, collaboration, reflection and insights for improving the services of the Gateway office pilot in India.