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# Global Gateway: Advancing EU- India Priorities in the Indo-Pacific

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## Introduction

As the Indo-Pacific becomes the centre of Sino-American competition, the EU is recalibrating its strategy in the region. A key instrument in this ambition is the Global Gateway, the EU's flagship connectivity strategy aimed at offering sustainable, transparent, and values-based infrastructure partnerships around the world. The Global Gateway reflects the EU's strategic intent to position itself as a reliable partner, offering an alternative to coercive or opaque infrastructure initiatives. In this context, India with its growing economic clout and strategic relevance, has emerged as a pivotal partner. Recent developments, including the European Commission's landmark visit to India in February 2025, affirmed a deepening of EU-India ties and a shared commitment to "raise the partnership

## Key Takeaways

**Converging objectives:** India and the European Union (EU) may not be fully aligned strategically, but they share converging objectives in the Indo-Pacific. The EU's Global Gateway initiative and India's regional connectivity ambitions share a commitment to a rules-based and inclusive approach. Positioned at the centre of the Indo-Pacific, India is a natural partner for the implementation of the European Global Gateway in Asia, collectively offering an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

**Existing institutional frameworks:** India and the EU are already advancing their connectivity agenda through established frameworks, including the EU-India Strategic Partnership Roadmap (2020), the EU-India Connectivity Partnership (2021), the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (2021), the Global Gateway (2021) strategy, and the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (2023). Going forward, these provide a solid framework and institutional basis for coordinated action and strategic coherence while incorporating past experiences.

**Sectoral synergies in connectivity priorities:** The EU and India share common priorities across key sectors, including digital connectivity, clean energy and green mobility, transport infrastructure, and people-to-people linkages. This alignment not only strengthens the foundation for joint initiatives but also enhances the potential for impactful, long-term engagement in the region.

## Policy Implications

As India and the EU seek to advance their partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, the Global Gateway framework offers a valuable platform to address key challenges, such as financing constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and perception issues, especially in smaller regional states. Collaboration and coordination enable India to establish a partnership to scale up its connectivity ambitions while enhancing its regional image. Simultaneously, the Global Gateway enables the EU to leverage India's contextual expertise and diplomatic capital to operate more effectively in politically complex areas in the Indo-Pacific region.

The recent agreement between India and the EU to pursue trilateral cooperation in third countries presents a promising framework for aligning their efforts in the Indo-Pacific. This approach allows both actors to jointly support connectivity and infrastructure projects in partner countries, enhancing their strategic presence in the region. Given their differing operational standards and development approaches, this agreement provides an opportunity to coordinate efforts in order to harmonise priorities, bridge capability gaps, and create more coherent and complementary interventions. It also helps mitigate any duplication of efforts in connectivity priorities.

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to a higher level...to jointly address global issues, foster stability, and promote mutual prosperity.”<sup>2</sup> It also called for deeper cooperation under India-EU partnerships in areas such as connectivity.

Despite long-standing diplomatic ties, recent years have seen a deepening of EU-India cooperation, driven by rising trade volumes and evolving geopolitical dynamics. This evolving partnership is also grounded in shared economic interests and in the desire to diversify supply chains, bolster digital and physical infrastructure, and foster energy and climate resilience. Key developments include the launch of the EU-India Connectivity Partnership (2020), the launch of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (2023), the recent revival of negotiations on a free trade agreement, and collaboration on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), all reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening strategic and economic partnerships. Furthermore, these collaborations provide platforms to coordinate efforts on connectivity, critical technologies, and secure supply chains.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, taking this partnership further, the EU and India also agreed to develop triangular cooperation for development projects in third countries using “innovative, market-based mechanisms” in sectors including digitalisation and connectivity, clean energy and green mobility, sustainable agriculture and nutrition, water and sanitation infrastructure, education, health, and social protection and women’s empowerment.<sup>4</sup>

This policy brief explores how the Global Gateway can be effectively leveraged to foster strategic synergy between the EU and Indo-Pacific partners, with a focus on India. It examines opportunities for aligning connectivity priorities, reinforcing regional stability, and advancing a shared vision for sustainable development.

## The Global Gateway and India’s regional connectivity: ambitions and framework

The EU’s Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, launched in September 2021, identifies the region as important to the EU’s prosperity and security.<sup>5</sup> It sets out seven strategic priorities—sustainable prosperity, green transition, ocean governance, digital partnerships, connectivity, security and defence, and human security—through which the EU seeks to deepen its engagement and partnerships with the region. The strategy’s implementation has taken multiple forms, including the pursuit of free trade agreements, such as with India, strengthened political and economic ties with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the establishment of Security and Defence Partnerships with key partners like Japan and the Republic of Korea, and the promotion of sustainable connectivity through initiatives like the Global Gateway.

2 Ministry of External Affairs. (2025, February 28). Leaders’ statement: Visit of Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and EU College of Commissioners to India (27–28 February 2025). Government of India. Retrieved June 15, 2025, from <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/39112/Leaders+Statement+Visit+of+Ms+Ursula+von+der+Leyen+President+of+the+European+Commission+and+EU+College+of+Commissioners+to+India+February+2728+2025>

3 Tapping into the Momentum: The EU-India Trade and Technology Council. <https://in.boell.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/tapping-into-the-momentum-the-eu-india-trade-and-technology-council.pdf>

4 European Commission. (2025, June 11). EU and India agree to develop trilateral cooperation [News release]. International Partnerships Directorate-General, European Commission. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-and-india-agree-develop-trilateral-cooperation-2025-06-11\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-and-india-agree-develop-trilateral-cooperation-2025-06-11_en)

5 European Commission. (2021, September 16). Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (JOIN(2021) 24 final). High Representative Of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication\\_2021\\_24\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf)

Launched in December 2021, the European Union's Global Gateway is a strategic initiative designed to enhance global infrastructure and connectivity through sustainable, inclusive, and values-driven partnerships. Emerging from the recognition that connectivity is not merely about physical infrastructure but also about strategic influence, the Global Gateway represents the EU's ambition to become a more geopolitical actor. It aims to mobilise up to €300 billion in public and private investment by 2027 to support infrastructure development around the world, particularly in developing and emerging economies.<sup>6</sup>

The initiative's origins are rooted in both the EU's internal reflection on its global role and the external pressures posed by growing geopolitical and geo-economic competition, especially in the face of China's expansive BRI. In this context, the Global Gateway emphasises key principles of sustainability, transparency, good governance, and respect for democratic values. Unlike the BRI, which has often been criticized for fostering debt dependency and opaque contractual arrangements, the EU's approach promises to prioritize accountable financing, social and environmental safeguards, and strategic autonomy for partner countries.<sup>7</sup> This values-based model's declared aim is not only to build trust with third countries but also to ensure long-term resilience and mutual benefit in the partnerships it fosters.

The initiative targets several priority sectors that are critical for economic development and strategic resilience. These include digital infrastructure (such as secure data networks and satellite communications),

clean energy (including renewables and energy transition technologies), transport and maritime logistics (to secure supply chains), as well as social sectors like health and education. By investing in these areas, the EU aims to support partner countries in achieving sustainable growth, aligning with its own Green Deal and digital transition objectives. The Global Gateway currently includes 255 projects spread across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Balkans and Türkiye, Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood.<sup>8</sup>

In the South Asian region, the projects are limited and concentrated in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh (Table 1).

## India's connectivity priorities and Indo-Pacific outlook

India's connectivity vision is grounded in a triad of foreign policy frameworks, including the Neighbourhood First, Act East, and the recent, Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR) policies, that support India's Indo-Pacific vision. Together, these emphasise the importance of strengthening regional linkages for economic integration, strategic stability, and geopolitical balance. The Act East Policy, an evolution of the 1990s Look East Policy, focuses not just on strengthening ties with ASEAN but also enhancing connectivity through infrastructure, trade, and people-to-people exchanges, especially across India's

6 European Commission. (n.d.). Global Gateway Overview. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stron-ger-europe-world/global-gateway\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stron-ger-europe-world/global-gateway_en)

7 McBride, J., Berman, N., & Chatzky, A. (2023, February 2). China's massive Belt and Road Initiative. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>

8 Directorate-General for International Partnerships. (n.d.). Global Gateway projects. European Commission. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/global-gateway-projects\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/global-gateway-projects_en)

Table 1: Global Gateway Projects in South Asia

Country	Global Gateway Area of Partnership*	Project Name	Team Europe Members Involved
Bangladesh	Climate and Energy	Bangladesh Renewable Energy Facility: Development of solar and wind power energy	Denmark; Netherlands; Sweden; France; EIB**; Germany; European Commission
Bangladesh	Digital	Connectivity Revolution: Transforming Lives in Bangladesh	Finland; European Commission
Nepal	Climate and Energy	Green Recovery in Nepal (post pandemic)	Finland; Germany; European Commission
Nepal	Education and Research	Quality Education for All in Nepal	Finland; European Commission
India	Climate and Energy	Urban infrastructure and renewable energy - India package	-
India	Digital	EU-Africa-India Digital Corridor (Countries: Djibouti; Ethiopia; Somalia; Tanzania; Kenya; India)	Italy; EIB; European Commission

Note: \*Specific areas as identified under Global Gateway | \*\*EIB – European Investment Bank

Source: European Commission

eastern and north-eastern borders.<sup>9</sup> In parallel, India's Indo-Pacific vision which is centred on the principles of freedom of navigation, inclusivity, and rules-based order, underscores the need for resilient supply chains and cross-border infrastructure that link South Asia with the wider Indo-Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

Despite this outward-looking vision towards the wider Indo-Pacific region, India's connectivity projects are mainly concentrated in its immediate neighbourhood. Just in the last decade, India has established both physical (land, maritime, and energy infrastructure) and digital connectivity linkages with neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Myanmar, with approximately 70% of India's development budget focussed on infrastructure connectivity projects.<sup>11</sup> These investments are not only economic or political in nature, but they are also strategic. Much like the Global Gateway, India's efforts are partly driven by the imperative to provide credible alternatives to China's BRI in its neighbourhood, which has made inroads across the region.<sup>12</sup> With Bhutan as the only exception, all of India's neighbours are signatories to the BRI, making India's connectivity outreach a critical tool for regional influence and balance.

New Delhi has raised concerns over BRI's lack of transparency, unsustainable debt practices, and sovereignty issues, especially in projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which runs through disputed territory.<sup>13</sup> In response, India has sought to build credible alternatives through its own bilateral efforts, and by working with partners like Japan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and via multilateral engagements such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), to create transparent, financially viable, and inclusive infrastructure models. Japan, for instance, is engaged in building Bangladesh's first deep seaport at Matarbari, which will further link via multimodal connectivity to India's northeast region, where both India and Japan are engaged in building rail and road infrastructure, respectively.<sup>14</sup> With the UAE—a new development partner in the region—India has recently been engaged in building an energy hub in Sri Lanka's Trincomalee.<sup>15</sup> The IMEC corridor, too, forms a crucial part of India's connectivity strategy towards the west, while enabling land connectivity routes to the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asian regions. Recently, India's foreign Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar highlighted the potential of IMEC as an 'Atlantic to Pacific' corridor with India as the hub.<sup>16</sup>

9 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2023, July 28). Question No. 1456: India's Act-East Policy. In Lok Sabha (Unstarred question no. 1456). <https://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/36927/QUESTION+NO1456+INDIAS+ACTEAST+POLICY> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2023, July 28). Question No. 1456: India's Act-East Policy. In Lok Sabha (Unstarred question no. 1456). <https://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/36927/QUESTION+NO1456+INDIAS+ACTEAST+POLICY>

10 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2018, June 1). Prime Minister's keynote address at Shangri-La Dialogue [Speech delivered at IISS Asia Security Summit, Singapore]. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>

11 Xavier, C., & Sinha, R. (2020, August). When land comes in the way: India's connectivity infrastructure in Nepal (Brookings India Impact Series 082020-01). Brookings Institution India Centre. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/When-land-comes-in-the-way\\_M-1.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/When-land-comes-in-the-way_M-1.pdf)

12 Xavier, C. (2020, January). Sambandh as strategy: India's new approach to regional connectivity (Policy Brief No. 012020-01). Brookings Institution India Center. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/sambandh-as-strategy-indias-new-approach-to-regional-connectivity/>

13 PTI. (2023, October 16). India to skip China's Belt and Road Forum for a third time. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.india-times.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-to-skip-chinas-belt-and-road-forum-for-a-third-time/articleshow/104466383.cms?from=mdr>

14 The Financial Express. (2025, April 22). Japanese firms to build Bangladesh's first deep-sea port in Matarbari. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/japanese-firms-to-build-bangladeshs-first-deep-sea-port-in-matarbari>

15 TOI News Desk. (2025, April 5). India, UAE, Sri Lanka sign MoU to develop energy hub in Trincomalee in pushback against China's influence. Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-uae-sri-lanka-sign-mou-to-develop-energy-hub-in-trincomalee-in-push-back-against-chinas-influence/articleshow/120015141.cms>

16 Ministry of External Affairs. (2025, February 4). Remarks by External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar at IIC Bruegel Seminar, New Delhi. Government of India. [https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/38964/Remarks\\_by\\_External\\_Affairs\\_Minister\\_Dr\\_S\\_Jaishankar\\_at\\_IIC\\_Bruegel\\_Seminar\\_New\\_Delhi\\_February\\_04\\_2025](https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/38964/Remarks_by_External_Affairs_Minister_Dr_S_Jaishankar_at_IIC_Bruegel_Seminar_New_Delhi_February_04_2025)

This diversification of partnerships is particularly important considering recent political and geopolitical developments in India's neighbourhood. New Delhi's connectivity ambitions face challenges ranging from political divergences with Bangladesh, to instability in a fragile Myanmar, and a functional yet stagnant relationship with Nepal, marked by the absence of recent high-level exchanges. Against this backdrop, India must increasingly rely on like-minded partners to advance its regional connectivity initiatives.

Another key dimension of India's regional connectivity strategy is the focus on regional and subregional groupings such as the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) initiative and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). India also launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the International Solar Association (ISA) to provide platforms to operationalise India's regional connectivity through energy grids, multimodal transport corridors, digital infrastructure, and coordinated border management. India has also sought partnerships through such platforms. For instance, at the IPOI, Japan co-leads the Cooperation on Maritime Trade, Transport and Connectivity pillar.<sup>17</sup> These initiatives and platforms align well with the Global Gateway initiative's objectives and might offer a structured avenue for cooperation and coordination on infrastructure development across the Indo-Pacific.

## Convergences

The Global Gateway initiative, while largely focused on India in the Asia and the Pacific region,<sup>18</sup> presents

a timely opportunity for deeper alignment with India's own regional connectivity agenda in South Asia and the Bay of Bengal region. Located at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, India can serve as a critical partner in expanding Global Gateway's geographic footprint, while the EU can contribute its financial and regulatory strengths to complement India's on-ground expertise and strategic location in the Indo-Pacific.

Both India and the EU position their connectivity strategies as alternatives to China's BRI, emphasising transparency, sovereignty, sustainability, and good governance. The Global Gateway explicitly rejects opaque financing and coercive dependencies, aligning with India's concerns over unsustainable debt and sovereignty violations. This shared normative framework creates strong alignment for joint projects in the Indo-Pacific, starting with India's neighbourhood.

Furthermore, in terms of sectoral priorities, India and the EU both emphasise digital infrastructure, transport and maritime logistics, energy transition, and supply chain resilience. India's regional focus on countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar overlap with EU's ambitions to expand its strategic footprint in the Indo-Pacific via the Global Gateway.

Lastly, the EU's commitment to mobilizing €300 billion through a blend of public and private investment under the Global Gateway complements India's regional development assistance model. There is scope for synergy through co-financing mechanisms, such as blended finance, trilateral cooperation, or partnerships under multilateral initiatives like the G7's Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII) and IPOI. This will also support India's shift from a predominantly 'grant' financing mechanism to greater private sector involvement through concessional

17 Luthra, G. (2024, September 9). As it completes five years, it's time to take the IPOI to the next level. Expert Speak. Observer Research Foundation. Retrieved June 20, 2025, from <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/as-it-completes-five-years-it-s-time-to-take-the-ipoi-to-the-next-level>

18 Global Gateway used the categorisation 'Asia and the Pacific' for the region. See more: [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/global-gateway-projects\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/global-gateway-projects_en)



credit. Through this, both actors are well-placed to jointly finance high-impact, bankable projects in the region that are aligned with international standards on transparency, sustainability, and local ownership.

## Divergences: challenges to the Global Gateway

Despite its ambition to position the EU as a credible geopolitical actor, the Global Gateway faces several critical challenges, particularly when implemented through partnerships like the one with India. At the heart of these challenges lies the ambiguity in strategic direction and institutional fragmentation. While the Global Gateway aspires to project the EU's values through sustainable and transparent infrastructure, it lacks a unified operational framework and is hampered by overlapping initiatives under the "Team Europe" umbrella.<sup>19</sup> This results in a patchwork of national and EU-level projects without clear branding or leadership, reducing coherence and weakening its impact, especially when compared to China's highly centralised BRI.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the bureaucratic complexity of the EU's funding architecture further constrains the initiative's capacity to deliver. The blending of financial instruments, grants, guarantees, and loans, while conceptually appealing, often leads to implementation delays. This complexity is compounded by the cautious investment posture of European financial institutions, which are risk-averse and slow to mobilise capital in fragile or strategically contested environments.<sup>21</sup> This under-

mines the EU's ability to act quickly and decisively in a competitive connectivity landscape where speed, scale, and visibility are crucial. For India, an emerging power with massive infrastructure needs, this slow and risk-averse approach is a weak counterpoint to China's faster-moving BRI projects.

Similarly, India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific cooperative framework lack a clearly defined operational structure and remain largely project-specific rather than being guided by a long-term strategic vision. This gap becomes especially evident in addressing complex challenges such as connectivity through Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal region. Despite its growing ambitions, India's bureaucratic capacity has limited its ability to deliver large-scale infrastructure projects, especially when compared to China. For instance, while China is constructing major ports across India's neighbourhood, India's contributions have largely been limited to smaller terminal developments.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, this limited institutional and diplomatic bandwidth has hindered India's ability to successfully implement trilateral or triangular cooperation frameworks in the region. Engaging with the EU's intricate bureaucratic mechanisms adds another layer of complexity.

Lastly, strategic divergences and normative frictions pose challenges to the EU-India partnership. While both sides share common goals, such as promoting resilient supply chains, digital sovereignty, and a multipolar Indo-Pacific, India is careful to maintain strategic autonomy and a diversified foreign policy. Its ties with Russia, concerns over "Western normative agendas", and preference for sovereignty in regulatory

19 Directorate-General for International Partnerships. (n.d.). Team Europe Initiatives. European Commission. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives_en)

20 Teevan, C., Bilal, S., Domingo, E., & Medinilla, A. (2022, June). The Global Gateway: A recipe for EU geopolitical relevance? (Discussion Paper No. 323). ECDPM – European Centre for Development Policy Management. <https://ecdpm.org/application/files/4616/5779/4869/Global-Gateway-recipe-EU-geopolitical-relevance-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-323-2022.pdf>

21 Behrens, A., & Egenhofer, C. (2024, September–January 2025). Disentangling Global Gateway: From Team Europe to the World (CEPS Task Force report). Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS). <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-task-forces/disentangling-global-gateway-from-team-europe-to-the-world/>

22 Sinha, R. (2024, December 13). Building bridges across the Indian Ocean: Australia–India cooperation for port development. United States Studies Centre. <https://www.usssc.edu.au/building-bridges-across-the-indian-ocean-australia-india-cooperation-for-port-development>

matters sometimes clash with the EU's emphasis on human rights, environmental standards, and good governance, even when it comes to infrastructure connectivity. For example, in strategically sensitive areas such as the Himalayas, India may be hesitant to fully align with Western-led initiatives if they appear to constrain its autonomy or provoke China.<sup>23</sup>

## Opportunities for partnership

For India and the EU to effectively partner for connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, both need to adopt a flexible, pragmatic, and coordinated approach that aligns strategic interests with actionable outcomes. Considering lessons from the past, there is reason to be cautious about a trilateral partnership between India, EU, and a beneficiary country for connectivity. Before aiming for large-scale cooperation, New Delhi and Brussels need deeper engagement through dialogue, sharing of viewpoints, and greater mutual understanding. The first and essential step is consultations and conversations, which has often been overlooked. Instead, both sides have repeatedly skipped ahead to the most challenging stage: pursuing cooperation without first building a strong foundation.

This section outlines the priority sectors where India and the EU can cooperate and the mechanisms on how to cooperate.

### Priority Sectors

**Transport corridors:** India's infrastructure projects

in its neighbourhood (immediate and extended to Southeast Asia via the Bay of Bengal) require a corridor-based approach that can facilitate faster movement of goods and people in the region. The EU-India Connectivity Partnership provides a pre-existing institutional framework that can be expanded to support cross-border logistics and infrastructure quality standards in the Bay of Bengal region.

**Digital infrastructure:** India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), exemplified by Aadhaar, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and the Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWIN), offers a scalable, inclusive, and cost-effective governance model, while the EU contributes strong regulatory expertise in data protection and privacy.<sup>24</sup> Together, they are well-positioned to co-develop trusted and interoperable digital ecosystems. The EU-India Trade and Technology Council has initiated joint work in critical technologies, including semiconductors, AI, and digital governance, with a focus on Global South partnerships.<sup>25</sup> Extending these efforts to South Asia—for instance by extending the EU-Africa-India Digital Corridor to Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka—could expand the reach of the Global Gateway.

**Green energy:** India's ambitious goals in solar and green hydrogen align well with the EU's strengths in climate finance and sustainable technologies. The EU, its Member States, and the European Investment Bank are together one of the biggest contributors of public climate finance to developing economies, with approximately €23.04 billion in 2021.<sup>26</sup> Leveraging this, the Global Gateway's green financing and blended finance tools can support India's transition. Joint pilot

23 Marjani, N. (2024, October 3). India–EU cooperation on Global Gateway can check China's BRI strategy in the Himalayas. ISDP Voices. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.isdp.eu/india-eu-cooperation-on-global-gateway-can-check-chinas-bri-strategy-in-the-himalayas/>

24 Watson, E. (March 22, 2024). The India Stack as Potential Gateway to Global Economic Integration. ORF Issue Briefs. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-india-stack-as-a-potential-gateway-to-global-economic-integration>

25 Kathuria, R. & Sánchez-Cacicedo, A. (May 2025). Tapping into the Momentum: The India-EU Trade and Technology Council. Policy Brief Series on India-EU Relations. Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS). <https://in.boell.org/en/india-europe-relations>.

26 European Commission.(n.d). International Climate Finance. European Commission: Climate Action. [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/international-action-climate-change/international-climate-finance\\_en#:~:text=provide%20grant%20funding%20directly%20to,with%20loans%2C%20covering%20different%20regions](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/international-action-climate-change/international-climate-finance_en#:~:text=provide%20grant%20funding%20directly%20to,with%20loans%2C%20covering%20different%20regions)



projects, such as solar mini-grids, hydrogen hubs, and electric mobility, can be launched in India's northeast and island regions of the Indo-Pacific to enhance regional resilience. For this, the EU and India, along with other countries, can also rely on the International Platform on Sustainable Finance that aims to scale up the mobilization of private capital for environmentally sustainable investment.<sup>27</sup>

## Mechanisms for India-EU coordination aligning Global Gateway with regional connectivity

### **Establish a joint project prioritization mechanism:**

Both India and the EU need to prioritize key projects in the region, particularly the high-impact connectivity projects within India and its neighbourhood, in sectors such as digital infrastructure, energy, and maritime logistics. This could be done under the ambit of the EU-India Connectivity Partnership or the trilateral coordination mechanism. This will enable both New Delhi and Brussels to coordinate efforts (division of responsibilities) and avoid duplication. For instance, in port development projects, India could leverage its strength in capacity building, while the EU leverages its expertise in port planning and construction.

### **Leverage complementary strengths through institutional coordination:**

To maximise impact, India and the EU should bridge institutional asymmetries by aligning their respective strengths—India's regional presence, political relationships, and implementation capabilities with the EU's expertise in regulatory standards, sustainable

financing, and project governance. For instance, in cross-border energy connectivity projects, India could lead on-ground coordination, stakeholder engagement, and project execution, while the Global Gateway contributes by structuring green finance, ensuring compliance with the principles of the environmental, social, and governance, and embedding transparency mechanisms. While led by the Ministry of External Affairs in India, the involvement of other relevant line ministries will be important for institutional coordination.

### **Mobilise private sector participation:**

India and the EU should actively develop blended finance instruments and co-investment platforms to attract private capital, drive innovation, and scale infrastructure delivery through public-private partnerships (PPPs). Leveraging the EU's Global Gateway investment guarantees and India's growing infrastructure pipeline, both sides can de-risk large-scale projects and crowd in private sector participation. For instance, India's largest container port, the Jawaharlal Nehru Port, and Belgium's Port of Antwerp Bruges, jointly run a Port Training and Consultancy Foundation.<sup>28</sup> The EU and India could expand this to the Indo-Pacific region, by focussing on training of port officials from smaller island states.

### **Leverage regional platforms for joint implementation:**

India and the EU should utilise regional groupings like BIMSTEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as operational platforms to implement sustainable connectivity and maritime security initiatives. Aligning Global Gateway priorities with the 2025 BIMSTEC–IORA Memorandum of Understanding

27 European Commission. (2021, November). International Platform on Sustainable Finance: Factsheet. [http://finance.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/international-platform-sustainable-finance-factsheet\\_en.pdf](http://finance.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/international-platform-sustainable-finance-factsheet_en.pdf)

28 Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust & Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center. (n.d.). JNPT–Antwerp Port Training and Consultancy Foundation. <https://www.jnptantwerpporttraining.com/>

can help identify actionable opportunities for co-financing and co-implementation.<sup>29</sup> For instance, in enhancing coastal infrastructure and disaster-resilient logistics chains in the Bay of Bengal, India could contribute through local capacity building and execution, while the EU offers technical assistance, regulatory alignment, and sustainable financing. Such collaboration would not only amplify regional and sectoral impact but also demonstrate the Global Gateway's adaptability to local settings.

Ultimately, for the Global Gateway to succeed, especially in India and its neighbourhood, it must become more than a policy label. It must evolve into a strategic, flexible, and project-driven framework that balances values with pragmatism. Without streamlined governance, increased political will, and a deeper understanding of partner priorities, the initiative risks underdelivering in one of the most consequential geopolitical theatres of the 21st century.

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29 Indian Ocean Rim Association & Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. (2025, April 3). Signing of Memorandum of Understanding between IORA and BIMSTEC [Press release]. <https://www.iora.int/sites/default/files/2025-04/Press%20Release%20-%20SIGNING%20OF%20MEMORANDUM%20OF%20UNDERSTANDING%20BETWEEN%20IORA%20AND%20BIMSTEC.pdf>

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