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INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF THE EU-INDIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Part 1: Introduction

A continuous engagement with the youth in Europe and India should not be underestimated. Educational, extra-curricular and training opportunities offered today are an investment in the future of the EU-India strategic partnership (Šime, 2021) and its capacity to meet expectations. It is an opportunity to enlarge the pool of those who will 'walk the talk' in the years to come.

The EU has developed a considerable diversity of instruments and initiatives for youth and extended the accessibility to the young Indians. However, when compared to the overall young population of India, the first-hand familiarity with Europe is rather limited. The students coming to the EU is one of the most telling examples in this respect (Mehdi, Chaudhry, Joshi, & Tomar, 2019, 18). Earlier observations that "a deficit of understanding is affecting both sides" (Ferenczy, 2020, 2) clarifies why a continuous engagement with wider audiences, including young generations, is important. Therefore, additional initiatives for youth engagement should be considered to ensure a more widespread (direct) exposure of young Indians and Europeans to the key topics and experts working with the EU-India Roadmap to 2025.

There are several good practices of online and hybrid educational, extra-curricular and training opportunities. Those should be taken into consideration as promising forms how to convey the topics of the EU-India Roadmap in an interactive, visually and content-wise appealing manner that would match the particularities of the daily routines of young Europeans and Indians. The subsequently elaborated examples do not idealise the young generations as living a utopian life free from commitments. Young Europeans and Indians aged 18-35 are goal-oriented individuals who are already preoccupied with either intense learning schedules or daily internship or employment duties. While online and hybrid education, extra-curricular and training opportunities can save an individual's time dedicated to the planning of travel arrangements and embarking on the envisaged journey to a specific geographical location, these activities should be compatible with routine errands and schedule of the academic calendar and regular working hours, including traditional out-of-office options.

The subsequent section outlines some of the good practices. It takes inspiration from the latest findings on online and hybrid learning and training. Due to the brief format of this policy paper, the list is far from exhaustive. The suggested enhanced youth outreach dimension of the EU-India Roadmap should be seen as an integral part of the existing panoply of the internationally accessible offer of educational, extra-curricular and training opportunities. Since India and the EU share membership of a variety of organisations, forums and institutions, the suggested enhanced youth outreach dimension of the EU-India Roadmap should be also modelled as an impressive offer that would be able to attract attention amidst the alternative opportunities.

Part 2: Analysis

A massive open online course (MOOC) is one of the most flexible means how to offer opportunities to acquire more in-depth expertise in a self-paced manner. In Europe, MOOCs are

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[1] The views expressed in this policy paper are those of the author and may not reflect those of the Latvian Association of Political Science.

valued as a way to extend the outreach and to enhance internationalisation and prestige (Tømte, Laterza, Pinheiro, & Avramovic, 2020). It remains to be explored whether, following the logic of 'prestige mobility' of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and going beyond the social media ecosystem (Manor & Pamment, 2019), MOOCs and other online learning opportunities will give rise to the study of 'prestige mobility' of universities and other advanced learning centres.

Technology savvy self-disciplined learners reach good results in their pursuit of professional development (Tømte & Gjerustad, 2020, 261).[1] Thus, the 'online turn' holds the potential to offer new valuable empirical material on pedagogical techniques well beyond the traditional classroom.[2] Perhaps digital encounters would contribute to the creation of research networks that would contribute to the 'collaboration capital' (Tolochko & Vadrot, 2021) on both sides of the strategic partnership. Irrespective of the technical modalities, the human-centred approach to this form of digital connectivity should be prioritised (Okano-Heijmans, 2020, 3). One way how to properly address this aspect would be the invitation of guest speakers from the research programme "Enlightenment 2.0" coordinated by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission to discuss the research publications of this programme (Lewandowsky et al., 2020; Mair et al., 2019).

Good practices of earlier fruitful collaborative engagements across a broader consortium of educators and institutions are two MOOCs on the tourism management at UNESCO World Heritage Sites[3] and the European Science Diplomacy Course[4]. The latter accommodates a growing interest in a practice that, following the observation of Mauduit and Gual Soler (2020, 2), remains outside the traditional career tracks in science and international relations. The EU-India relations have some commonalities with this fluidity of science diplomacy. There is a vast array of young professionals that would benefit from a more comprehensive learning opportunity about the EU-India relations and how their work fits into a broader landscape of dynamics characterising this strategic partnership.

Following the established practice of the EU to organise participatory outreach campaigns on the occasions of the notable treaty anniversaries, the EU-India summits should be considered as promising occasions when to launch youth consultations in the EU and India to explore how the high-level guidance resonates among future generations. The first EU youth summit "Your Europe – Your future" organised on the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaty on 24-25 March 2007 with a sequence of national dialogues preceding the European gathering, as well as the Robert Schuman Prizes for the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community deserve attention.

Just like Rome consultations in 2007, a youth side event of the upcoming EU-India summits would help young generations to develop their participatory capacities. Instead of just perusing through the freshly published PDF documents, it would offer a more interactive exposure to the summit outcomes. Such a participative experience should not be underestimated in terms of helping as one of the cumulative efforts, along the lines of Melman (2020), to mould positive public opinion towards European integration as well.

Part 3: Conclusions and Way Forward

The EU-India encounters should offer young Europeans and Indians opportunities to master certain diplomatic skills, such as active listening (Saint-Geours, Taylor, & de Vienne, 2020; Šime, 2020), at the initial stages of their higher education, academic or professional careers.

The recommendations are not directed towards creating a community of practitioners and scholars. As the exploration of science advice and research networks demonstrates, there is no shortage of enthusiasm for such mushrooming (Akerlof et al., 2019, 10; Lyons, Lips, & Obonyo, 2021). The recommendations aim at bringing together young talent with diverse specialisations from the existing expert circles to cross-fertilise, meaning, to discuss the EU-India relations in a comprehensive manner and learn from each other.

Additionally, these recommendations should be praised for encouraging capacity building. The suggested events are envisaged to be accessible to interested youngsters who do not have a relevant centre of expertise in the vicinity or face other constraints to participate in similar in-person activities.[5] It is an overall attempt to increase the literacy, expertise and ownership of the EU-India strategic partnership by offering learning, training and networking opportunities for young Europeans and Indians who seek to develop their policy savviness.

Three recommendations:

1) **MOOC on the EU-India strategic partnership with a focus on the Roadmap to 2025**: There should be no shortage of extra-curricular training opportunities for young Europeans and Indians. Offering a free MOOC that assembles a consortium of specialised institutions should be also seen as a capacity building exercise made available to everyone who wishes to contribute to the EU-India strategic partnership in a targeted and well-tailored manner. There is a myriad of specialised initiatives and partnerships waiting to be discovered among thus far seldom addressed audiences in various corners of Europe and India. MOOCs on UNESCO world heritage and science diplomacy prove that the EU hosts versatile coordinators of such tasks. Additionally, the first call for short policy papers of the EUPOP India TTTI featured several prominent scholarly voices of the EU-India relations. It should be explored whether some of them would be willing to contribute their expertise to the suggested MOOC.

2) **EU-India Youth Summit as a side event of the EU-India Summit**: Direct exposure to participatory experiences and interactions with peers from different cultures and backgrounds is an opportunity to hone soft skills and acquire new insights into the multifaceted dynamics that various young minds prioritise for the future of the EU-India relations. Additionally, youth summit would help to strengthen the intergenerational dialogue and identify commonalities and divergences in the priorities tabled by seasoned high-level experts and emerging professionals and academics. The Rome Treaty youth consultations in 2007 and Robert Schuman Prizes are just two examples that prove that the EU is experienced and well equipped to convene such a summit and make most of this consultative process.

3) **Thematic and horizontal focus on strengthening digital democracy and responsible participatory processes**: While embracing the opportunities brought by the COVID-19 guided 'online turn' in education and training, the complex character of knowledge and knowledge generation, interactions characteristic to democratic societies, as well as risks associated with its unfolding in the digital space should not be neglected. Proper training and awareness-raising efforts would help the 'online turn' to become an opportunity for vibrant and well-managed intellectual encounters. The participants of the EU-India strategic learning and training opportunities should be informed about these crucial aspects of the informational environment to which they are being introduced and encouraged to masterfully navigate. "Enlightenment 2.0" findings shared by the EU experts might be helpful in this respect. The issues addressed by this programme cut across many thematic areas of the EU-India Roadmap. It should be treated as a horizontal component relevant to a variety of young experts and their gatherings.

All three recommendations are addressed to both the EU and Indian side and higher education and research institutions willing and technically ready to host the suggested gatherings.

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[1] One aspect that requires caution and management of expectations about the effectiveness of MOOCs is the earlier reported lack of thorough understanding "how learning outcomes are translated into new practices or behaviours" (Tømte & Gjerustad, 2020, 261).

[2] One example of the analysis of a traditional classroom case would be a study on the use of a clicker (Egelandsdal & Krumsvik, 2019). Following the most recent publications, the 'online turn' comprises a vast array of topics, such as learning analytics (Singh & Mørch, 2018, 59), blended learning (Dziuban, Graham, Moskal, Norberg, & Sicilia, 2018; Kannan et al., 2020), smart learning (Agbo, Oyelere, Suhonen, & Tukiainen, 2021), blended-smart learning (Chen, Zou, Xie, & Wang, 2021, 22) and the understudied fully online flipped classroom (Hew, Jia, Gonda, & Bai, 2020, 2-3), perhaps virtual reality-based learning as well (Pathan, Rajendran, & Murthy, 2020).

[3] The courses produced by the UNESCO-UNITWIN Network "Culture, Tourism, and Development" deserve attention. Further information online: https://www.unescochair.usi.ch/activities-2/moocs/tourism-management-at-unesco-world-heritage-sites

[4] The course is produced by the Horizon 2020 funded project "Using science for/in diplomacy for addressing global challenges" (S4D4C). Further information online: https://www.s4d4c.eu/european-science-diplomacy-online-course/

[5] Among one of the considerations should be the divergence of socio-economic developments between India and Europe that can have an impact on the availability of resources for education and training among young generations. While there has been an increase of income inequalities in Europe, it is comparatively much milder than in India (among others) (Vandemoortele, 2021, 139).

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