

European Think Tank Network on India and EU–India Relations

Community and Expertise on India and the Indo-Pacific in Europe (CEIPE)

Led by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), in cooperation with the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and funded by Stiftung Mercator, the Community and Expertise on India and the Indo-Pacific in Europe (CEIPE) initiative is investing in Europe's capacity to understand and engage India. As part of this effort, ECFR invites applications from European think tanks to join the research network at the heart of the project.

About CEIPE

Europe's relationship with India is entering a new phase. An EU–India free trade agreement, a deepening Security and Defence Partnership, and converging interests across trade, technology, supply chains and critical raw materials, connectivity, and the green transition make India a first-order priority for European foreign policy and central to European strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

Matching that ambition requires expertise that is coordinated, up to date, and on hand when decisions are being made. Europe's capacity falls short on each count. National and EU-level actors work from different evidence bases, specialist insight often arrives in Brussels after the moment has passed, and not enough is being done to bring on the next generation. The expertise is there; it is fragmented. Strong India specialists at national think tanks, universities and ministries rarely talk to one another, and too little of their work reaches Brussels in a form officials can use.

European capitals no longer need convincing that India matters. The harder question is what follows from it. Ambition tends to be set for the relationship as a whole, while the decisions that will actually shape it are taken file by file, in trade, technology, defence and energy, by people who rarely talk to each other and who often have no easy way of reaching those who understand how India makes its own choices. That is the gap CEIPE is designed to work on.

Beginning in September 2026, ECFR and GIGA will spend two years building and connecting Europe's India expertise — and investing in the [next generation of specialists](#) who will carry it forward.

The Think Tank Network

ECFR is recruiting up to six leading European think tanks to form the core of the CEIPE network. Together, network members will produce original research and take part in a series of high-level, closed-door roundtables among national specialists, distilling their findings into concise analysis that European officials can act on. Twice over the course of the project, the network will convene in Brussels at moments where its input can shape key elements of the EU–India agenda in real time. Across the network, six roundtables will also be held in members' home cities, each feeding into a policy memo delivering digestible, actionable input for European decision-makers.

By the end of the project, the network will have helped give European policymakers both a sharper understanding of India and a set of concrete ideas and options across the functional areas that underpin the EU–India relationship.

The Research Agenda

The six projects are meant to add up. We will select members so that their work is complementary and, between them, covers the questions we think will most shape the EU–India relationship over the next two years:

- **Trade and economic security** — implementation of the EU–India free trade agreement, market access in practice rather than on paper, supply chain diversification and critical raw materials, and the points where European and Indian economic security doctrines reinforce or obstruct one another.
- **Technology and digital governance** — semiconductors and compute, AI governance, digital public infrastructure, data flows and standards-setting — and whether Europe and India are building compatible regulatory models or drifting apart.
- **Security and defence** — the EU–India Security and Defence Partnership and what would give it substance, maritime security in the Indian Ocean, defence industrial cooperation, and India's place in European Indo-Pacific strategies.
- **Connectivity and infrastructure** — IMEC, Global Gateway and the wider contest to shape infrastructure, standards and logistics corridors between Europe and Asia.
- **Climate and the green transition** — energy transition finance, the frictions generated by CBAM and comparable measures, and where climate diplomacy can be decoupled from trade disputes.
- **India in a contested global order** — India's multi-alignment in practice, its relationships with Russia and China, its positioning in multilateral institutions, and what all of this should mean for European expectations.

No single organisation is expected to cover all of these. Applicants should indicate the one or two areas in which they would anchor their contribution. We are equally interested in work that cuts across them. And we are open to being told that we have missed something: if you think an area belongs on this agenda that is not listed above, please do make the case for it in your application.

What Network Members Will Receive

Selected think tanks will benefit from:

- **A grant of up to €60,000** per organisation to support two years of participation in the network, disbursed via a sub-contract with ECFR
- Membership in a pan-European network that brings together India specialists and the functional policy communities — trade, technology, security, climate — where European decisions on India are actually made
- A shared research agenda and editorial engagement from ECFR's Asia programme, with members shaping the agenda together and their outputs building on one another
- A seat at two high-level CEIPE conferences in Brussels, offering direct access to EU policymakers and the chance to help shape the EU–India agenda as it develops
- A platform to host and shape a roundtable on India or EU–India relations in your own city, raising your organisation's profile with local and national policy audiences
- An opportunity to publish original research and reach a wider audience, strengthening your organisation's public visibility and thought leadership on India
- Access to CEIPE's broader mapping of European India expertise and its network of funders, projects and initiatives, opening doors to further collaboration

- A direct contribution to a shared, evidence-based understanding of India that shapes European policy over the long term

What Participation Involves

Members join a collective research effort. Over the two-year project period, participating think tanks are expected to:

- Sign a sub-contract with ECFR governing the terms of the grant and the organisation's participation in the network
- Take an active part in four network meetings, held both virtually and in person over the two-year project period
- Attend and substantively contribute to both CEIPE conferences in Brussels
- Host one roundtable in their home city on a topic within the network's agenda, agreed with ECFR, and contribute to the resulting policy memo
- Publish one short piece of original research on their organisation's website, on a topic of their choosing within one of the network's priority areas

Who Can Apply

This call is open to European think tanks that are registered non-profit organisations. Applications must be submitted on behalf of the organisation and represented by a researcher at that organisation who will lead its participation in the network.

We are looking for two kinds of institutional strength and expect the network to contain both. The first is established expertise on India or South Asia. The second is depth in a functional area — trade, technology, security, energy and climate, migration — combined with enough direct experience of the India file to make that expertise useful here. Part of what CEIPE exists to correct is precisely the separation between Europe's India specialists and the functional communities where most European policy towards India is made, so we welcome applications from organisations without a dedicated India programme, provided the relevant engagement with India is demonstrable.

Grants cannot be awarded to individual researchers applying independently, or to for-profit organisations.

ECFR is looking to select six think tanks to join the network for its full two-year duration, running from October 2026 to August 2028.

How to Apply

Interested think tanks should apply by completing the application form described below, submitted on behalf of the organisation by the researcher who would represent it in the network.

Deadline

5 October 2026 at 17:00

Selection

Applications will be reviewed by ECFR against the organisation's relevance to CEIPE's aims, the strength of its expertise — whether on India directly or in a functional area central to the relationship — and the quality and specificity of the research question and roundtable proposed. We will also select for complementarity:

we want the six members to cover the agenda set out above between them. Successful applicants will be notified and invited to sign a sub-contract ahead of the network's launch.

Contact

For questions about this call, please contact Manisha Reuter, Deputy Programme Director, ECFR Asia Programme, at **manisha.reuter@ecfr.eu**.

Application Form

Applicants should provide the following information and responses via Microsoft Forms.

A. Organisation and Contact Details

1. Name of organisation
2. Legal status (confirmation of registered non-profit status) and country of registration
3. Country and city in which the organisation is based
4. Organisation website
5. Name, position and email address of the researcher representing the organisation in the network
6. Name and position of the organisation's legal representative, for the purpose of the sub-contract

B. Open Questions

Please answer the following in your own words. Suggested word limits are given for guidance.

1. Describe your organisation's relevant expertise and track record — whether on India and South Asia directly, or in a functional area where your work has engaged substantively with India. Please include relevant publications, projects or events. (max. 300 words)
2. Why does your organisation want to join the CEIPE network, and what do you hope your participation will contribute to European debates on India? (max. 250 words)
3. Which of the priority areas set out above would your organisation anchor its contribution in, and what specific question within it do you think most needs answering? Please also outline the roundtable you would propose to host, including the problem or argument you would want it to address. (max. 300 words)
4. Is there an area you think belongs on this agenda that we have not identified? If so, make the case for it. (optional, max. 150 words)
5. What channels, networks or relationships does your organisation have with policymakers, media or other stakeholders that would help the network's research and conclusions reach a wider audience? (max. 200 words)
6. What capacities does your organisation currently bring to this work (e.g. staff, expertise, existing programming), and where would this grant help you build capacity or fill gaps? (max. 250 words)