



Global Relations Forum

Event Report 1 | 23 September 2015

GRF-FES-ICRIER Seminar

Infrastructure and Urbanisation in India - Opportunities for the EU Brussels, 21 September 2015 Thon Hotel EU

On 21 September 2015, Global Relations Forum (GRF) co-hosted with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) a Seminar in Brussels on “Infrastructure and Urbanisation in India – Opportunities for the EU”. Panellists included H.E. Manjeev Singh Puri - Ambassador of India to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg; Dr. Rajat Kathuria - Director and CE of ICRIER; Hon. Neena Gill - Member of European Parliament and Vice Chair of Delegation for Relations with India; Sunil Prasad - Secretary General of the Europe India Chamber of Commerce (EICC); Pedro Ballesteros Torres - Principal Administrator at the Directorate-General for Energy of the European Commission and Pascaline Gaborit - Associate Resercher at GRF. The event was moderated by GRF Deputy Director and Director - Europe Gauri Khandekar.



The Panelists from left to right: Pedro Ballesteros Torres, Dr. Rajat Kathuria, Neena Gill, Gauri Khandekar, H.E. Manjeev Singh Puri, Pascaline Gaborit and Sunil Prasad.

The event underscored the need for the EU and India to establish a partnership on urbanisation inspired by EU good practises - a partnership on urbanisation was launched with China in 2012 under the umbrella of the EU-China strategic partnership. Such a platform would not only help extrapolate mutually beneficial opportunities for the EU and India but also reinvigorate the EU-India strategic partnership which has lost momentum in recent years. A number of panellists spoke of the lack of depth in the EU-India relationship. Numerous recommendations were issued regarding how the EU and India could achieve a win-win relationship through infrastructure and



H.E. Manjeev Singh Puri talks about the new opportunities between India and EU.

urbanisation cooperation especially by tapping into Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's signature project 'Make in India' which seeks to facilitate such cooperation with India's international partners. The necessity of enhancing political dialogue too in order to ensure an efficient understanding of each other and creating an integrated approach to investment opportunities in India was raised.

It was reiterated that India today has the political willingness for greater engagement with the European Union (EU) and seeks to boost bilateral investments. However, several hurdles impede the EU and India from reaching optimum levels of cooperation and strategic partnership. One of the reasons is that the EU-India FTA remains to be concluded. Second, while India has established deep levels of engagement with some EU member states such as France, the UK or Germany in the sphere of urban development and infrastructure overhaul, most of the other EU member countries like Spain, Finland, Hungary, Italy or Poland are missing out on opportunities. India too could benefit much from what these countries have to offer. A European platform therefore could correct those absences and advance the partnership between the EU as a whole and India, appreciably. The success of the EU-China partnership on urbanisation as pointed out during discussions is evidence that an EU approach works best. Common errors, misunderstandings and difficulties to enter into the Indian market were explained as the other reasons contributing to the lack of improvement and impediments to further collaboration between the EU and India.

Urban governance, sustainability, open-government, funding and rural-to-urban migration were emphasized as the biggest challenges currently facing India. India's urban development challenges, it was mentioned by a panelist, are not India's problem alone, but have an impact on the EU too. The EU has the technological know-how and experience that India needs. Initiatives such as "Capitals of culture" were proposed as an example of how experiences could be shared to build sustainable cities in India. Europe's experience in building smart cities was also highlighted as an area from which India could draw lessons. Lifting templates



Dr. Kathuria explains the urbanization challenges facing India.

however was underlined as a recipe for failure. There was general consensus that increasing investment (monetary and political) in the sphere of infrastructure and urbanisation in India would help both India and the EU-India strategic partnership achieve their potential.

The term 'urban diplomacy' was used, which the EU and India must now employ within the realm of their political engagement. Long term exchanges generating trust, exchange of best practises, appropriate financing; developing sustainable governance mechanisms; and innovation were the five preconditions identified for success in Investment and urbanization cooperation with India. Think tanks linked to EU-India relations were also welcomed as key actors and a solution to ensure coherent, integrated guidance for policy makers, practitioners and companies to attain common collaboration and projects.

India's urbanization was welcomed as a market opportunity for the EU (Indian cities already constitute around 70 per cent of India's GDP). Technological know-how and urban development expertise are the areas where the EU stands out. Deeper EU-India relations were called for by all present and the general perception was that the seminar and GRF paper – *'Towards an EU-India Partnership on Urbanisation'* revealed an area which could deliver great opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation and engagement.



The event also saw the launch of GRF Website and GRF Deputy Director and Director – Europe Gauri Khandekar's book *'The EU-India Strategic Partnership: Facing the Foreign Policy Divide'*.

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