

# Expansion of BRICS:

## A quest for greater global influence?

### SUMMARY

On 1 January 2024, BRICS – the intergovernmental organisation comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – admitted four new members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. The group's decision to open the door to new members was taken at its Johannesburg summit in August 2023, sparking a debate about its growing international influence.

According to estimates, BRICS+, as the organisation has been informally called since its expansion, now accounts for 37.3% of world GDP, or more than half as much as the EU (14.5%). However, besides an increase in economic power the new members could bring potential conflicts (Saudi Arabia/Iran or Egypt/Ethiopia) into the group, making the reaching of consensus on common political positions more difficult.

Since the new members would only contribute roughly 4% to the group's cumulative GDP, the significance of the expansion should be seen beyond the purely economic effect, in the form of greater influence for the group and for developing countries as a whole within international organisations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The EU engages with BRICS+ countries individually. For instance, it has strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, and is negotiating a free trade agreement with India. On the other hand, current conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza show the divergent approaches to security taken by the EU and BRICS+.

The European Parliament has stressed that further political dialogue with the BRICS countries is needed, including on an individual basis. In an exchange of views with European Commission representatives in October 2023, Members of the Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA) underlined the need to keep an eye on the group's expansion, especially considering the effect of a potential BRICS+ currency and the consequences for EU trade policy.



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## Introduction

The acronym [BRICS](#) denotes the group founded by the governments of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa in 2009. BRICS is home to [3.27 billion](#) people, or 41.13 % of the world's population. With China and India being the world's most populous countries, they have by far the largest population share (87 %) in BRICS.

The acronym BRIC, which did not initially include South Africa, was first coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, then head of global economic research at Goldman Sachs, who [predicted](#) the rise in economic power of Brazil, Russia, India and China in the decade to come. In 2006, on Russia's initiative, the BRIC foreign ministers started holding informal [annual meetings](#) on the sidelines of United Nations (UN) General Assembly meetings in New York. In June 2009, Russia organised the [first](#) BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg, when the group officially came into existence. The summit ended with a call for an increased role for emerging economies and developing countries in global financial institutions. Since then, the BRICS heads of state or government have been meeting annually, with each member state taking the chair for a year on a rotating basis. The group decides by consensus and does not have a permanent secretariat.

At their [second](#) summit in April 2010, BRIC leaders ushered South Africa into the group, which changed its name to BRICS to reflect the fact. In June 2016, at its [sixth](#) summit, the group launched a multilateral New Development Bank ([NDB](#)) with the [aim](#) to 'mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries' and to complement existing international financial institutions (IFI's).

After 13 years without expansion, at its [15th](#) summit held in Johannesburg on 22-24 August 2023, BRICS welcomed four new members into its ranks – Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates – and is now informally called BRICS+.<sup>1</sup> The four countries' [membership](#) kicked in on 1 January 2024. Although it received an invitation to join in, Saudi Arabia has [not yet](#) done so officially. Argentina's new President, [Javier Milei](#), withdrew his country from its planned entry into the group.

## 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg

The BRICS Johannesburg summit was held under the title 'BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism'. The heads of state or government who were present included the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, the Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, joined the summit via video link, given that South Africa as signatory of the [Rome Statute](#) of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has the obligation to arrest Putin if he sets foot on South African territory (as the ICC has issued an arrest warrant for Putin). In his capacity of summit chair, President Ramaphosa had also invited the leaders of more than [60 countries](#), mostly from the Global South, to attend. The summit culminated in BRICS leaders signing the [Johannesburg II Declaration](#).

The highlight of the 15th summit was the agreement to invite six new countries – Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – to join the group. The invitation was extended on 1 January 2024. So far, no official [new name](#) for the expanded group has been announced, and it is tentatively referred to as BRICS+ (see Figure 1).

After South Africa announced that five countries (including Saudi Arabia) had confirmed their membership, an official Saudi source said that the decision was still under consideration, as the country's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, reportedly wanted to 'study the details' before taking the [appropriate decision](#)'. Argentina, under the leadership of its new President, [Javier Milei](#), turned down the invitation, with the president [explaining](#) that his foreign policy 'differs in many aspects from that of the previous government. In this sense, some decisions made by the previous administration will be reviewed.' While he did not consider it [appropriate](#) for Argentina to join as a

Figure 1 – BRICS+



Graphic by EPRS.

full member, he [emphasised](#) his commitment to bilateral trade and investment relations with BRICS+.

Since the group's establishment, many countries have showed interest in it. [According](#) to South Africa, which chaired it in 2023, more than 40 countries had shown a willingness to join the group, and 22 had formally submitted their applications. Judging by the set of six invitees, no clear [membership criteria](#) are evident. A

spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry [said](#) that BRICS was an important platform for emerging markets and developing countries, and that the group would welcome any interested country into its family.

With the expansion to BRICS+, the group's total GDP would rise to [35.6%](#) of global GDP. While this could increase the group's influence, taking decisions by consensus in BRICS+ might prove [challenging](#) given the increased diversity of interests within the group. For instance, Egypt and Ethiopia are in dispute over the equitable sharing of the [River Nile's](#) water resources. Similarly, despite their recent [agreement](#) to resume diplomatic ties, Saudi Arabia and Iran are locked in [longstanding rivalry](#) in the Middle East, frequently finding themselves on [opposing sides of conflicts](#) (e.g. in Syria, Iraq and Yemen), in which they often employ proxy forces.

## Multilateral context

The recent expansion can be understood as a move to create a more balanced world order by giving greater prominence to the perspectives of the Global South and making them more central to global discussions. It is therefore [crucial](#) to see BRICS+ within the broader context of multilateral frameworks. While the group as such is not a member of any international organisation, its members are represented in several international organisations, but also in variations of the BRICS+ format that pursue specific objectives (e.g. BASIC, which deals with climate), financial institutions and infrastructure and investment initiatives. The EU and its Member States participate in some of these organisations and formats with BRICS+ countries, and are not represented in others (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Participation of BRICS+ and the EU in multilateral frameworks

Multilateral framework	BRICS+ members	EU Member States
<b>International organisations/Formats</b>		
United Nations	All members, China and Russia are also permanent members of the UN Security Council	All Member States; France is also a permanent member of the UN Security Council
WTO	All members, except Ethiopia and Iran	All Member States
OECD	None	All Member States (except Bulgaria, Croatia, Malta, Romania, Cyprus)
G7	None	Italy, Germany, France, EU (observer)
G20	All members, except the United Arab Emirates and Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia through the African Union	Italy, Germany, France and the EU
G77	All members except Russia	None
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)	Russia, China, India and Iran	None
Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	Russia	None
<b>Variations of BRICS format</b>		
BRICS Plus	All members	None
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India and China	None
IBSA	India, Brazil and South Africa	None
<b>Financial institutions</b>		
New Development Bank (NDB)	All members, except Ethiopia, Iran and Saudi Arabia	None
World Bank	All members	All Member States
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)	All members	All Member States (except Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia)
<b>Infrastructure and investment initiatives</b>		
	Participating BRICS+ members	Participating EU Member States
Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)	All members, except Brazil and India	17 EU Member States
Global Gateway	Brazil, South Africa and Egypt	EU
India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)	India, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates	Italy, France and Germany
14+1 Initiative	China	Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

Source: compiled by the author.

## Variations of the BRICS format: IBSA, BASIC and BRICS Plus

As mentioned above, the BRICS countries engage in cooperation through [variations](#) of the BRICS format, including the IBSA Dialogue Forum, BASIC, and BRICS Plus. The [IBSA](#) Dialogue Forum was established in 2003 by India, Brazil and South Africa to address global governance reforms, WTO negotiations, climate change and terrorism, based on shared values and goals for global institutional responsibility. BASIC, comprising Brazil, South Africa, India and China, was formed in [2009](#) to address climate issues in [alignment](#) with G77- and developing countries' interests. South Africa's involvement in IBSA and BASIC has been [perceived](#) as strategic diplomacy that contributed to its inclusion in BRICS. China's proposal to create a BRICS Plus cooperation platform in 2017 was aimed at enhancing cooperation with emerging markets and developing countries, potentially expanding BRICS' sphere of influence. After the decision on BRICS' expansion in 2023 was taken, China [proposed](#) to rename the group to BRICS+. However, this name is not yet official and is likely to be confused with the BRICS Plus cooperation platform.

## BRICS in organisations of which the EU is not a member

BRICS countries engage in international organisations and forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation ([SCO](#)) and the Eurasian Economic Union ([EAEU](#)). Founded in 2001 by several Asian nations, the SCO [focuses](#) on regional development and on security issues such as terrorism, separatism and extremism. The EAEU, established by several post-Soviet states – Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan – functions as a free trade area to enhance competitiveness and cooperation. Recently, the EAEU has collaborated more closely with the SCO and BRICS, [proposing](#) initiatives such as a universal payment system and independent global institutions, with the aim of fostering integration and [dialogue](#) among the three organisations.

## EU and BRICS+ in the multilateral context

### United Nations (UN)

The 2023 [Johannesburg II Declaration](#) emphasised the BRICS' intention to enhance cooperation within the UN General Assembly, which in the past had found expression in the BRICS countries' way of voting. In [2011](#), for instance, when all then BRICS countries were UN Security Council members, they voted identically on numerous resolutions, showcasing a shared stance on [security](#). BRICS countries have also been [sceptical](#) about sanctions in the context of climate change negotiations, about policies concerning Iran and Syria, and about the response to Russia's war against Ukraine.

In 2014, Brazil, China, India and South Africa abstained from voting on a UN General Assembly resolution in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity following Russia's annexation of Crimea, thereby [challenging](#) the EU's stance on global security. However, their unity was less pronounced in later [resolutions](#), particularly regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, where India, China and South Africa abstained, while Brazil voted in favour.

The BRICS+ countries also exhibited solidarity when addressing [calls](#) for intervention against Israeli actions in the context of the Gaza crisis. South Africa initiated a [case](#) against Israel at the International Court of Justice, alleging it had committed violations under the Genocide Convention. In a UN [resolution](#) for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, all BRICS+ members supported it, with only India and Ethiopia abstaining. In contrast, EU Member States showed greater division, with some voting against or abstaining from the ceasefire resolution.

### World Trade Organization (WTO)

The IBSA countries - India, Brazil and South Africa - have actively [engaged](#) in multilateral trade since the establishment of the GATT in 1948, advocating for developing countries' interests in negotiations. Their involvement [continued](#) in the WTO, which China joined in [2001](#) and Russia in [2012](#). With the exception of Ethiopia and Iran, all BRICS+ countries are WTO members.



BRICS countries have cooperated in WTO negotiations, rejecting developed countries' proposals, particularly about agriculture, as seen in the 2003 Cancun Ministerial Conference. Brazil, India, China and South Africa (often referred to as BICS) have collaborated on [joint proposals](#), especially in agriculture-related negotiations and discussions on non-agricultural market access ([NAMA](#)).

In the negotiations on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights ([TRIPS](#)), BICS members [led efforts](#) related to the areas of public health and biodiversity. However, Brazil, India and China pursued different approaches to the implementation of the agreement.

Since 2008, [conflicts](#) between developed and developing countries in WTO negotiations have centred on [zero-for-zero](#) tariffs proposals. BICS nations have insisted on voluntary participation in sectoral negotiations, opposing mandatory involvement and emphasising that sectoral initiatives should complement general tariff cuts, as outlined in the 2005 Hong Kong Declaration.

EU–BRICS+ relations in the WTO are marked by efforts focused on dispute settlement (there is a total of 110 [cases](#)), with the EU filing 34 complaints against BRICS+ countries, this number being comparable to its complaints against the US. BRICS+ countries have filed 16 complaints against the EU. However, both sides agree on the need to reform the WTO and restore its dispute settlement system. On 8 February 2024, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) urging substantive reform of the WTO in view of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference ([MC13](#)) in Abu Dhabi.

## International financial institutions (IFIs)

The BRICS countries formed their alliance with the [primary aim](#) to increase the influence of emerging economies and developing countries in global financial institutions, particularly in light of their [criticism](#) towards the Bretton Woods institutions such as the [World Bank](#) and the IMF for their outdated rules and inadequate representation.

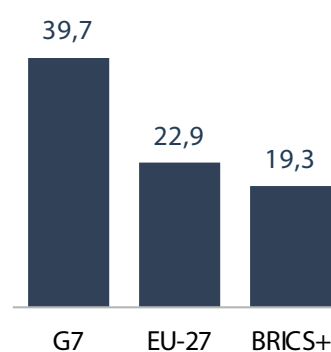
Despite BRICS+ having a larger combined GDP than either the G7 or the EU, its capital share and [subsequent](#) voting influence within institutions such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development ([IBRD](#)) remain significantly smaller (as each member country's voting power is weighted on the basis of its financial contribution to the World Bank) (see Figure 2). On the other hand, India and Brazil were the [largest recipients](#) of IBRD loans in 2023, yet contributed just [5 % of the capital](#).

To address these issues, BRICS established the New Development Bank ([NDB](#)) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement ([CRA](#)) in 2014. The NDB provides loans for infrastructure and sustainable development, with an equal distribution of voting shares among BRICS members. The CRA ensures mutual support during currency crises.

Additionally, the BRICS countries are involved in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank ([AIIB](#)), initiated by China in [2013](#). The idea of a BRICS credit rating agency ([CrRA](#)) was proposed in 2018 but [was not taken up](#) due to a lack of consensus among members.

BRICS+ countries back the idea of '[de-dollarisation](#)', that is, reduced dependence on the US dollar in trade. Accordingly, some countries, such as [Iran](#), [Russia](#) and [China](#), have already finalised agreements to trade with each other in their local currencies instead. While there have been [discussions](#) about a common BRICS+ currency, [experts](#) view this as a distant possibility, especially now that the alliance has been enlarged. On the other hand, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, has concluded bilateral [swap agreements with all BRICS+](#) countries with the exception of Iran and Ethiopia; these arrangements are intended to facilitate local currency usage in

Figure 2 – Distribution of voting power within the IBRD, 2023 (in %)



Data source: [IBRD](#).

trade and can also be used to address central bank foreign exchange reserve shortages during times of crisis.

### Infrastructure and investment initiatives

The BRICS+ countries, along with the EU and its Member States, are engaged in various infrastructure and investment initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the [Global Gateway](#), the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and the China–Central and Eastern European Countries Cooperation ([China-CEEC](#) Cooperation).

The BRI, launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in [2013](#), aims to connect major Eurasian economies through infrastructure, trade, and investment. While most BRICS+ countries (and a few EU Member States), have been [involved](#) in the BRI, some, such as Brazil and India, have not.

The EU's Global Gateway, initiated in 2021, is seen as [an alternative](#) to the BRI and focuses on mobilising investment, including in [BRICS+ countries](#) such as Brazil, India, South Africa and Egypt.

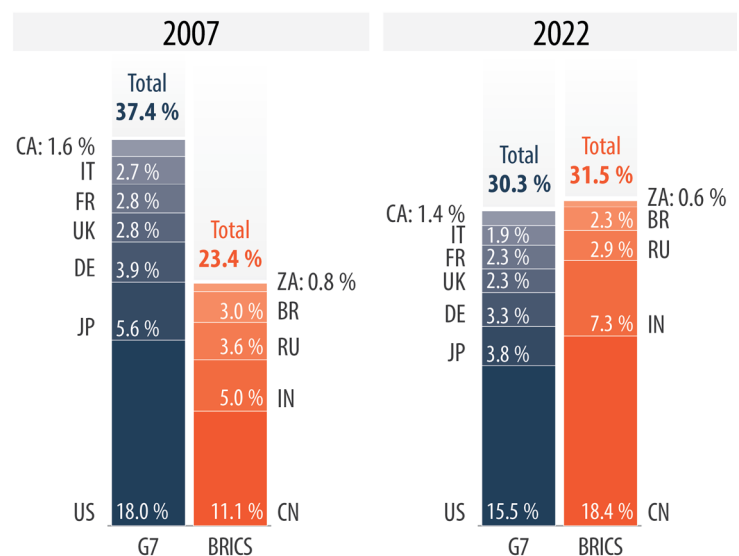
In recent years, both the EU and India have considered the strengthening of their partnership a [priority](#), as evidenced by initiatives such as the IMEC, aimed at enhancing economic connectivity and trade relations between India, the Middle East, and European countries. This project, seen as an [alternative](#) to the BRI, has garnered support from [various non-EU countries](#) and EU ones, which speaks of its [strategic importance](#). This priority is also reflected in negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) and the establishment of a trade and technology council (TTC). Additionally, the [China-CEEC](#) Cooperation, launched in 2012, initially included [16](#) central and eastern European countries and later expanded to [17](#) with Greece's inclusion. However, recent departures have resulted in its rebranding as the [14+1](#) initiative, reflecting ongoing shifts in cooperation dynamics.

### BRICS and the Group of Seven (G7) and Group of Twenty (G20)

Since 2014, when Russia was [excluded](#) from the G8, the G7 has been an international forum consisting mainly of major industrialised nations, the world's key economies. With the significant economic growth witnessed by BRICS countries – more particularly China and to a lesser extent India – in recent decades, their combined GDP is now larger than that of the G7 (see Figure 3). According to a [Chinese official](#), this economic weight is supposed to strengthen BRICS+ 'collective voice in the world', which some observers interpret as the group's aspiration to ['dethrone'](#) the G7.

If Saudi Arabia decides to join BRICS+, the G20 would include six of the 10 BRICS+ members. In September 2023, the African Union (AU) joined the G20 as its 21st member, providing involvement for new BRICS members Egypt and Ethiopia through their AU membership. BRICS countries actively participate in the G20 through [joint statements](#) expressing their collective stance on G20 deliberations. Moreover, with the G20 presidency having been held by India in 2023, being held by Brazil in 2024 and to be held by South

Figure 3 – G7 and BRICS: GDP in purchasing power parity in 2007 and 2022 (as a % of world GDP)



Note: G7 countries are Canada (CA), France (FR), Germany (DE), Italy (IT), Japan (JP), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). Brics countries are Brazil (BR), China (CN), India (IN), Russia (are you) and South Africa (ZA).

Data source: [IMF](#).

Africa in 2025, this means that it will be in the hands of BRICS members for three consecutive years. The themes chosen by the Indian and Brazilian presidencies also reflect the BRICS priorities, among them the [reform of the global governance institutions](#). Nevertheless, the absence of the Russian and Chinese presidents at the [latest G20 summit](#) in New Delhi in September 2023 has been [interpreted](#) as a potential sign of these countries' desire to diminish the significance of the G20, especially given BRICS' expansion.

## EU–BRICS+ relations

The EU as a whole does not have formal relations with BRICS or the expanded BRICS+ as a group. There is also no dedicated BRICS policy or strategy targeting the group as a whole. This is due to [major differences](#) among the BRICS countries and the nature of the BRICS format. However, the EU has bilateral and interregional agreements and partnerships with the individual members.

## Political relations

The EU initiated formal partnerships with each of the five original BRICS members in the mid-1990s through various agreements (see Table 2). However, geopolitical developments have de facto deprived some agreements from political or practical relevance, particularly in the cases of [China](#) and [Russia](#).

Table 2 – EU partnerships with BRICS countries

Country	(Strategic) partnerships	State of play
Brazil	<a href="#">Framework Cooperation Agreement</a>	In place since 1994
Russia	<a href="#">Partnership and Cooperation Agreement</a>	Effective from 1997, subject to annual extensions
India	<a href="#">Cooperation Agreement</a>	In place since 1994
China	<a href="#">Trade and Cooperation Agreement</a>	In place since 1985
South Africa	<a href="#">Trade and Development Cooperation Agreement</a>	Signed in 1999, in force since 2004

Data source: European Commission.

The EU's political relations with the new BRICS+ countries vary. The European Commission [aims](#) to sign a strategic partnership agreement with Egypt. Furthermore, it has launched strategic partnerships with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Relations with Ethiopia are based inter alia on the [Cotonou Agreement](#), with recent [concerns](#) over human rights abuses prompting EU action. The Iran Nuclear Deal significantly shapes [EU-Iran relations](#). Despite collaborative efforts over the past 4 years to save the deal, there have been challenges.<sup>2</sup>

## Trade relations

The EU has no free trade or investment agreements with the BRICS+ members (see Table 3). An exception are its [association agreement](#) with Egypt and economic partnership agreement (EPA) with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which South Africa is a member. The EU is negotiating agreements with India and Mercosur, the South American economic and political block, of which Brazil is a member together with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.



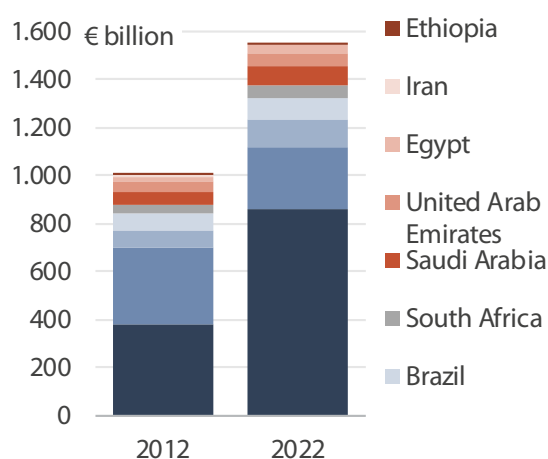
Table 3 – EU-BRICS+ bilateral and interregional free trade agreements (FTAs)

Country	FTA	State of Play
Brazil (Mercosur)	<a href="#">Mercosur Association Agreement</a>	Agreement in principle (2019)
Russia	none	none
India	<a href="#">free trade agreement, investment protection agreement and geographical indications agreement</a>	Negotiations started in 2007, then paused in 2013 before restarting in 2022
China	<a href="#">comprehensive agreement on investment (CAI)</a>	Agreement in principle (2020), on hold
South Africa (SADC EPA)	<a href="#">economic partnership agreement</a>	Provisionally applied since 2016
Egypt	<a href="#">association agreement</a>	In force since 2004
Ethiopia (ESA)	<a href="#">economic partnership agreement</a>	Negotiations started in 2004, then paused until further notice in 2011
Iran	none	none
Saudi Arabia (GCC)	free trade agreement	Negotiations started in 1990, but have been suspended since 2008
United Arab Emirates (GCC)	free trade agreement	Negotiations started in 1990, but have been suspended since 2008

Data source: [European Commission](#).

In terms of trade, the four new members and Saudi Arabia hold less importance for the EU than the original four plus one, if only due to their population and market size. Their combined contribution to total EU trade in goods in 2022 is approximately 3 %, a stark contrast to the nearly 25 % share held by the original five BRICS members. EU trade in goods with BRICS+ including Saudi Arabia rose by 35 % from 2012 to 2022 to a trade volume of almost €1 6 billion in 2022 (see Figure 4). However, this is mainly due to the huge increase (by 55 %) of trade with China, which is also by far the largest economy in the group.

Figure 4 – EU-BRICS+ trade in goods



Data source: [Eurostat](#).

Over the past decade, the EU has also witnessed a significant surge in [trade in services](#) with BRICS+ countries, including with Saudi Arabia, with the total value nearly doubling from €132 billion in 2010 to €252 billion in 2021. The proportion of EU trade in services with BRICS+ countries in relation to the total extra-EU trade in services grew from [8.3 %](#) to [12.5 %](#) over the same period. This is again mainly due to China, which was responsible for almost [5 %](#) of extra-EU trade in services in 2021.

On a global scale, the BRICS+ group is a marginal source of outward [foreign direct investment](#) (FDI). China, the largest contributor among the BRICS+ countries, accounts for just 7 % of total global outward FDI in 2022. While the importance of BRICS+ as a source of

outward FDI has been growing impressively – by 235 % between 2011 and 2021 (BRICS) – the EU remains the [largest source](#) of outward FDI.

## European Parliament position

As early as 2012, in a [resolution](#) on EU foreign policy towards the BRICS and other emerging powers, Parliament called for enhanced cooperation between the EU and BRICS, including in terms of partnerships with individual BRICS countries, more particularly with those that genuinely share and respect democratic values, on all matters of international concern. While the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) recognised that BRICS maintains a relevant economic dimension, they saw the group as essentially political. This is, for instance, reflected in the BRICS coordination in the UN Security Council in 2011.

In the [recommendation](#) of 13 December 2023, Parliament recommended that the Council and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) 'respond adequately to China's efforts to build alternative international organisations, including the BRICS group of countries, by ensuring better coordination among the EU Member States and intensifying partnerships with like-minded partners around the world'. Moreover, in the [resolution](#) of 28 February 2024 on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy, Parliament highlighted the need for the EU and its Member States to increase dialogue and cooperation with some BRICS+ members to counter Russia's malign actions and China's rising global influence.

According to the HR/VP's [reply](#) to a parliamentary question of 18 October 2023, the Commission monitors BRICS and its expansion, but it also sees the group's 'ability to promote consistent and convergent action in international fora' as limited.

Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA) held an exchange of views with the Commission on BRICS' expansion on 24 October 2023. In the course of the [debate](#), MEPs stressed the need to keep an eye on the effect of a potential BRICS+ currency and the consequences for EU trade.

Parliament engages with the individual BRICS+ countries in dedicated delegations and through inter-parliamentary meetings (see Table 4).

Table 4 – European Parliament's engagement with BRICS+

	EP delegation (year of creation)	Latest inter-parliamentary meetings (total number)
Brazil	<a href="#">D-BR</a> (2014)	<a href="#">July 2022</a> (4)
Russia	<a href="#">D-RU</a> (1997)	<a href="#">January 2013</a> (15)
India	<a href="#">D-IN</a> (2007)	<a href="#">March 2023</a> (14)
China	<a href="#">D-CN</a> (1979)	<a href="#">May 2018</a> (41)
South Africa	<a href="#">D-ZA</a> (1994)	<a href="#">October 2023</a> (27)
Egypt (Mashreq countries)	<a href="#">DMAS</a> (1979)	<a href="#">September 2022</a> (13)
Ethiopia (Pan-African Parliament)	<a href="#">DPAP</a> (2009)	<a href="#">December 2022</a> (11)
Iran	<a href="#">D-IR</a> (2004)	<a href="#">September 2018</a> (7)
Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Arab Peninsula)	<a href="#">D-ARP</a> (1979)	<a href="#">November 2021</a> (4)

Source: compiled by the author.

## Stakeholder views

The debate surrounding BRICS' expansion and its potential impact on global affairs is multifaceted and influenced by differing perspectives. On one hand, proponents [argue](#) that the inclusion of additional countries in BRICS+ could provide a platform for the Global South to assert its interests and [challenge](#) traditional Western dominance in global affairs. They point to the combined economic strength of BRICS countries, which surpasses that of the [G7](#), and some argue that this collective economic weight could serve as a [counterbalance](#) to what they perceive as Western hegemony.

Moreover, they point to the sheer size of the BRICS+ bloc, both in terms of population and GDP, which speaks of its growing significance on the world stage. As the group's economic weight increases, it may be able to exert greater influence on those shaping global agendas and policies, particularly regarding development issues affecting the Global South.

However, sceptics raise [concerns](#) about the potential challenges of cohesion within the expanded BRICS bloc. The inclusion of countries with varying political, economic, and social interests could lead to internal tensions and hinder the group's ability to reach consensus on key issues. The resulting fragmentation may [undermine](#) the effectiveness of BRICS+ as a unified force for change and limit its ability to translate economic strength into meaningful global influence.

Ultimately, the trajectory of BRICS+ and its impact on global dynamics will depend on how effectively its members navigate internal differences, forge common ground and leverage their collective strengths to advance shared objectives on the global stage. While the expansion offers opportunities for greater representation and diversity in global governance, realising its full potential will require concerted efforts to overcome challenges and foster meaningful cooperation among member states.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Until an official new name is announced, the expanded group will be referred to as BRICS+.
- <sup>2</sup> The EU is concerned about the acceleration of Iran's nuclear programme in violation of the agreement and the country's reluctance to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and has therefore imposed sanctions on it. In December 2022, EU Member States reaffirmed their commitment to, and continued support for, the full and effective implementation of a restored agreement. The European Parliament has adopted several resolutions critical of human rights violations in Iran, most recently in March 2023.

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