

EU-Cuba Agreement

Until recently, Cuba was the only Latin American country to have no bilateral agreement with the EU. Since 1996, EU relations with Cuba had been governed by an EU Common Position, which made cooperation, and conclusion of any bilateral agreement, conditional on visible progress in terms of democracy and respect for human rights. The EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA), signed in 2016, provides a first legal and institutional framework to normalise EU-Cuba ties. The European Parliament is due to vote on giving its consent to the PDCA in the July plenary session.

Background

The 2008 [shift](#) in Cuban leadership from Fidel to Raúl Castro, who was more [receptive](#) to reforms, provided fresh impetus to renewing the EU's relationship with the island. Accordingly, EU-Cuba [political dialogue](#) and [development cooperation](#) resumed the same year. EU Member States gradually normalised their bilateral relations with Cuba and international consensus in favour of lifting of US sanctions steadily broadened, culminating in a UN General Assembly resolution of October 2016, adopted with unprecedented, almost complete [unanimity](#). Against this backdrop, in 2014 the Council of the EU approved negotiating directives for PDCA talks. After seven rounds of talks, the PDCA was [signed](#) in December 2016. Cuban [exiles](#) and [dissidents](#) have been [disappointed](#) by the lack of concrete measures to spark a democratic transition in Cuba.

Main features of the PDCA

The [PDCA](#) replaces the ad hoc dialogue and piecemeal cooperation under the EU [Common Position](#), which was [repealed](#) in December 2016. It has a [three-pillar structure](#): political dialogue, cooperation and sectoral policy dialogue, and trade and trade cooperation. While the PDCA aims to [create](#) a more predictable and transparent business environment for economic operators, it does not establish a free-trade area between the parties or cover investment protection. It is perceived as a platform through which bilateral trade and investment ties can expand further. The PDCA formalises the EU-Cuba [human rights dialogue](#) launched in 2015 and a human-rights clause allows for suspension in case of non-compliance with the provisions on human rights.

European Parliament position

The rapporteur for the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), Elena Valenciano (S&D, Spain), prepared a draft [recommendation](#) and an accompanying [draft motion](#) for a resolution. The rapporteur recommended that the Parliament give its consent to the conclusion of the PDCA, as it 'is a highly sophisticated, necessary and appropriate instrument which will provide a framework for the relations that the EU and its Member States already maintain with the Republic of Cuba'. The draft emphasises the high strategic value of the EU-Cuba relationship. It further recognises Cuba's high level of shared commitment with the EU in a wide range of fields, and its efforts to transpose the UN fundamental principles on human and labour rights into its own legislation. It also calls on Cuba to ratify the UN human rights conventions still pending. It states that the PDCA will favour better political dialogue and bilateral cooperation as well as joint action in multilateral fora. Finally, it highlights that the PDCA will facilitate Cuba's access to 2014-2020 EU programmes and EU support for Cuba's economic and social modernisation strategy.

In the AFET [meeting](#) of 20 June 2017, the recommendation was [adopted](#) with 57 votes in favour, 9 against and 2 abstentions. The opinions of the Committee on Development ([DEVE](#)) and International Trade ([INTA](#)) were also both supportive of giving consent to the conclusion of the PDCA.

Recommendation on EP consent: [2016/0298\(NLE\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Elena Valenciano (S&D, Spain). See also our '[International Agreements in Progress](#)' briefing.

