



Marian Schuegraf, Ambassador of the European Union to Brazil. Picture: EEAS.

“The EU and Brazil Share Deep Cultural Ties, Values, and Even Similar Paths of Regional Integration”

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Marian Schuegraf is the Ambassador of the European Union to Brazil. During her diplomatic career, she served as German Ambassador to Colombia, Deputy Head of Mission at the German Embassy in Teheran, and Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the German Foreign Office. In leading positions at the Foreign Office in Berlin, she dealt with East Africa and Personnel. Previous postings abroad include twice New Delhi, India and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She is a lawyer by profession and studied at the University of Erlangen/Nuremberg, Germany, as well as the Université de Rennes, France.

(Source: European External Action Service)

The following is the interview given to CEBRI-Journal in March 2026.

What is the strategic importance of deeper political and economic alignment between the European Union and Brazil—particularly in the context of the EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement—in an international environment where rules and norms are increasingly being questioned or undermined?

MARIAN SCHUEGRAF: In an increasingly protectionist and transactional world, the EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement conveys a strong message of support for multilateralism. It proves the value of trading and cooperating across borders and regions, with mutual trust and respect. The EU has made a strategic choice to deepen partnerships with countries based

on shared values, and the EU-Mercosur agreement is a perfect example. The European Union has proven to be a stable and reliable partner for 77 countries through 44 trade agreements, promoting open and fair trade, based on clear, shared rules.

The EU is already Brazil’s second trading partner and leading foreign investor. Building on this solid basis, the [EU-Mercosur] agreement will allow us to establish even closer links across businesses, professional and cultural associations, civil society, scientists, think tanks like CEBRI and its counterparts, and many others in the two regions.

The EU is already Brazil’s second trading partner and leading foreign investor. Building on this solid basis, the agreement will allow us to establish even closer links across businesses, professional and cultural associations, civil society, scientists, think tanks like CEBRI and its counterparts, and many others in the two regions. The agreement offers new business

opportunities and concrete benefits for people—jobs, investment, sustainability, and civil society participation. The EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement sends a powerful and timely message—of openness, cooperation and integration. Prosperity can be shared, respecting the planet, international law, democracy, and common standards.

Turning to trade, thanks to our joint efforts, the combined flow of goods between Brazil and the EU hit a record in 2025, reaching US\$ 100 billion. And in terms of investment stock, Brazil is the fourth destination for EU foreign investment worldwide, focused on sectors that are essential for sustainable development. The second EU-Brazil investment forum later this year in Brasília, in partnership with APEX and CEBRI, will highlight this positive trend as part of our Global Gateway agenda. Last year’s inaugural edition in São Paulo, featuring European Council President António Costa, brought together more than 180 participants to discuss strategic opportunities in sustainable energy, critical raw materials, digital infrastructure, and green mobility.

The EU often pursues trade agreements not only for economic gains, but also to reinforce shared principles and values with its partners, such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. To what extent do these

normative considerations shape the EU’s choice of economic and trade partners?

MS: The EU is founded on values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy equality, rule of law, and human rights. They are laid in the Lisbon Treaty and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. They are defining our policies inside and outside the EU, and also guiding our partnerships, including economic ones.

One reason why the EU-Mercosur agreement took so long to negotiate was that, during a certain period, we were not yet fully aligned on essential issues such as deforestation and climate change. Today, the agreement is possible because of our shared commitment to values including sustainable development.

European Commission President von der Leyen confirmed: “trade can—and must—be guided by values.” One reason why the EU-Mercosur agreement took so long to negotiate was that, during a certain period, we were not yet fully aligned on essential issues such as deforestation and climate change.

Today, the agreement is possible because of our shared commitment to values including sustainable development.

We are witnessing growing policy alignment across the EU on the so-called “twin transitions” (green and digital). Within this framework, which areas do you see as having the greatest strategic potential for EU-Brazil cooperation?

MS: Indeed, EU policy aligns the green transformation, or decarbonization, and the digital transformation to foster sustainable growth, with the European Green Deal and Digital Europe Programme as framework. Within this context, EU-Brazil cooperation aims at turning converging regulatory philosophies into complementary economic strengths.

The EU-Brazil partnership focuses on the green agenda, combining EU investment, technology, and regulatory frameworks with Brazil’s immense biodiversity and renewable energy potential. To help curbing deforestation in the Amazon and other tropical forests, transition towards sustainable forest management and development, the EU is, for example, providing financial guarantees to support sustainable investments in areas such as land restoration, agroforestry systems and carbon sinks. In addition, the EU-Mercosur agreement is expected to boost socio-

bioeconomy exports from Brazil to Europe. To facilitate market access, we are already working on practical measures to support these new value chains, particularly for small and medium companies (SMEs). This includes cooperation on traceability systems, such as Selo Verde, to help ensure that Brazilian agroforestry products can be exported to the EU smoothly. European companies also play a major role in Brazil’s renewable energy sector, including electricity generation, transmission and distribution, and are increasingly exploring investments in low-carbon hydrogen and sustainable fuels.

Regarding the digital agenda, the EU and Brazil have a long-standing cooperation, which covers a wide array of topics ranging from regulation of artificial intelligence and online platforms to data governance and inclusive connectivity. A significant milestone was the recent mutual recognition of the EU and Brazilian data protection regimes as substantially equivalent, reflecting the convergence of their respective regulatory frameworks and facilitating secure international data flows. Similar efforts are made towards the mutual recognition of electronic signatures and seals. We also see great potential to advance cooperation on high performance computers and the development of large language models, focused on non-English languages, such as Portuguese and Spanish.

In addition, we are continuing the expansion of the BELLA cable—a modern deep-sea cable, digitally linking Sines in Portugal with Fortaleza in Brazil. This significantly reduces latency and increases data transmission capacity, strengthening collaboration in research, education and innovation. The ongoing expansion of BELLA, including new connections through French Guiana to northern Brazilian states such as Pará and Maranhão, will further extend these benefits by supporting digital inclusion, improving regional connectivity and enabling the development of local digital economies.

In relation to the Mercosur-EU agreement, one recurring concern is that differences in regulatory capacity and development levels may turn sustainability and technical standards into *de facto* trade barriers. How does the European Union envision supporting institutional capacity-building in Mercosur countries so that convergence of standards becomes a cooperative process rather than a source of friction?

MS: The EU does not design trade agreements with the objective of creating trade barriers. On the contrary, the EU-Mercosur agreement aims to promote sustainable growth while supporting regulatory cooperation and convergence over time. Sustainability commitments are an integral part of EU

policy, particularly under the European Green Deal, which aims to transform the EU into a climate-neutral, resource-efficient, and competitive economy while promoting similar standards globally.

The agreement will give Mercosur's industry the time necessary to modernize, grow and compete. It will also encourage good regulatory practices to remove unnecessary barriers, for example in public procurement. Many sectors in Brazil already export successfully to the EU in compliance with European standards. At the same time, cooperation and technical exchanges will be needed to ensure that Mercosur producers can fully harness the agreement's potential.

To support this process, the agreement comes with a substantial cooperation package of up to 1.8 billion euros currently under discussion with Mercosur countries. It will provide technical assistance to help roll out the agreement in practice, support strengthening SMEs, local communities, family farms, and potentially marginalized sectors of society across Mercosur.

It is encouraging to see the swift progress of ratification in Brazil and other Mercosur countries, which will help maintain momentum in Europe as well.

In a context of growing great-power competition and supply-chain fragmentation, to what extent does the EU see the

Mercosur agreement as part of its broader strategy of open strategic autonomy carried out by the EU? And how important is Brazil within this framework—not only as a trade partner, but as a political actor in shaping a more multipolar and rules-based international order?

MS: De-risking supply chains has increasingly become a necessity. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed global vulnerabilities, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine further accelerated the EU's efforts to reduce strategic dependencies, particularly in the energy sector. This has led the EU to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, improve energy efficiency and diversify its sources of supply. Similar efforts are now being extended to other strategic sectors, including critical raw materials.

[The EU-Mercosur agreement] has clear potential to help reduce dependencies in areas such as raw materials and energy. Critical raw materials are a promising example of a win-win cooperation, allowing Brazil to develop its own processing capacity and the EU to diversify sources of supply.

Although negotiations on the EU-Mercosur agreement began in a very different context, the agreement has clear potential to help reduce dependencies in areas such as raw materials and energy. Critical raw materials are a promising example of a win-win cooperation, allowing Brazil to develop its own processing capacity and the EU to diversify sources of supply.

Beyond these considerations, the EU and Brazil share deep cultural

ties, values, and even similar paths of regional integration. Building on this solid fundament, Brazil for the EU is a key partner of choice in our efforts to promote the international rule of law and a fair, balanced world order. The growing frequency and depth of EU-Brazil exchanges at all levels underlines our joint ambition to take this essential partnership to ever further heights. 🇪🇺

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