

Global Mobility Department

Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the EU:

What Global Mobility means for Indian Investment and Talent in Greece

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I. Introduction

The EU and India concluded negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (“FTA” or “Agreement”) on 27 January 2026. While the European Commission has published the negotiated texts for transparency, they remain subject to legal revision and final execution.

Dubbed the “mother of all deals”, the Agreement offers significant opportunities for Greece. As highlighted by both the Indian Minister of Commerce and Industry, and the Greek Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Greece is uniquely positioned as a strategic hub for trade and investment between India and the EU.

Beyond boosting bilateral trade, the FTA creates a robust framework for joint ventures by securing clear mobility pathways for key talent – such as intra-corporate transferees (herein referred to as “ICT”) and contractual service suppliers – while upholding national border sovereignty. The FTA’s mobility provisions will not, however, displace domestic law: they are to be delivered through the existing Greek framework, principally the Immigration Code (Law 5038/2023 as amended and currently in force) and Directive 2014/66/EU on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer, as transposed.

II. The mobility architecture of the FTA

Chapter 8 of the Agreement, “Trade in Services”, along with its Annexes 8-A on Entry and Temporary Stay of Natural Persons, cover temporary movement connected with the supply of services. The relevant categories are business visitors, intra-corporate transferees, contractual service suppliers, independent professionals and, for entry into the European Union, short-term business visitors.

The commitments are carefully qualified. They apply in sectors included in the parties’ schedules and remain subject to the terms, limitations, conditions and

qualifications stated there. In addition, Chapter 8 expressly preserves each party's authority to regulate entry and temporary stay and confirms that requiring a visa does not, by itself, nullify the benefits of the chapter. In other words, natural persons must comply with the domestic immigration law of each party to the Agreement.

Business visitors and short-term business visitors

The text contemplates entry for business visitors without a work permit or comparable prior approval procedure, subject to the applicable schedule. For short-term business visitors entering the EU, permitted activities and conditions remain decisive: they must not sell goods or services directly to the public, receive remuneration from within the EU on their own behalf, or perform services under a local customer contract except where the schedule expressly permits it. Careful activity analysis will therefore remain essential; a "business visitor" label cannot safely be used for productive work.

Intra-corporate transferees and family members

For managers, specialists and trainee employees transferred within a corporate group, the FTA builds on the EU framework established by Directive 2014/66/EU and its national implementation in Greece under the Immigration Code (art. 53-58). The negotiated text requires decisions on complete ICT applications as soon as possible and no later than 90 days, and it extends the existing EU family-member treatment to qualifying Indian ICT transferees. In practice, group structure, prior employment, assignment terms, role classification, remuneration, insurance and regulated-profession requirements will continue to determine eligibility.

Contractual service suppliers and independent professionals

Annex 8-A also covers qualifying personnel who enter temporarily to fulfil a services contract, and qualifying self-employed professionals. The commitment not to impose numerical quotas or economic-needs tests is potentially significant, but it is not economy-wide: it operates only for scheduled sectors and subject to the conditions and qualifications in the final schedules. Greek immigration routes, consular formalities and sector-specific rules will remain central to the deployment strategy.

III. Operationalizing Annex 8-A and Annex 8-B

The practical implementation of Annex 8-A (Entry and Temporary Stay of Natural Persons) and 8-B (Professional Services) is not happening in a geopolitical vacuum. It is being driven by the development of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (herein referred to as "IMEC"). During his landmark visit to Athens in late June 2026, India's Minister, Piyush Goyal, explicitly framed Greece as India's primary and most trusted "strategic gate" to the European market.

With the IMEC serving as the physical multimodal blueprint (spanning maritime, rail and digital networks), Annex 8-A and 8-B act as the regulatory software necessary to run this hardware. By streamlining corporate mobility and establishing mutual recognition frameworks for professional qualifications, the FTA is intended to make it easier for joint ventures in critical sectors such as logistics, maritime transport, renewable energy, and infrastructure to be staffed without avoidable administrative delay. As Minister Goyal highlighted during his meetings with Greek officials, the goal is to double India-Greece bilateral trade to USD 4 billion by 2030, a target that is heavily reliant on the smooth cross-border movement of specialized engineers, project managers and ICT experts.

IV. Bridging the Qualification Gap

Under Annex 8-B, the focus shifts from mere physical entry to the qualitative integration of professional services. Historically, Indian professionals in high-value sectors (such as engineering, construction, and digital technology) faced protracted, bureaucratic processes regarding the recognition of their academic and professional credentials in Greece. Articles 8.13 and 8-B.3 address this head-on by establishing a clear mechanism for the negotiation of mutual recognition agreements.

The distinction is important: the FTA itself does not automatically recognize Indian degrees, licenses or professional titles in Greece. Greek competent authorities may continue to require the qualifications applicable where the service is supplied. The Annex does, however, encourage temporary, limited or project-specific licensing or registration based on home-country licensing or professional-body membership, where feasible and without an additional written examination

V. Structured Mobility Planning: The key to a successful entry in the Greek Market

The EU-India FTA and the IMEC framework mark a monumental shift in global commerce. Yet, even the most robust trade deal risks falling short of its full economic potential if cross-border execution is hampered by restrictive mobility frameworks and administrative friction.

The key to a successful business expansion into the Greek market (and subsequently into the EU market) is the right and pro-active preparation. Companies should not wait for the Agreement to enter into force to prepare. Early mobility planning requires companies to:

- Classify each traveller by actual activity: meetings and negotiations, installation, project delivery, management, specialist work or independent professional services. Everything that follows depends on getting this step right.
- Select the optimal immigration route: identify the correct permit type and timeline — Schengen business visa, national visa, ICT permit, family permits, or another residence-and-work category — and build such timeline into the project plan.
- Verify corporate and assignment eligibility: confirm that group structure, prior employment history, job descriptions, remuneration packages and

host-entity obligations all meet the applicable requirements.

- Audit regulated-profession requirements and determine whether recognition, registration or project-specific licensing is needed.
- Coordinate immigration with employment, posted-worker, social-security, tax, payroll and permanent-establishment analysis.
- Build contingency time for document legalization, translations, consular appointments and authority processing times.

Greece's position as India's primary gateway to the European Single Market creates a compelling case for faster and more predictable procedures.

By deploying the statutory mechanics of the Immigration Code and capitalising on Greece's position as the European anchor of the IMEC, Greece can transform policy into competitive advantage. Reducing procedural bottlenecks is the crucial catalyst required to turn a trade deal into a thriving, high-speed commercial corridor - solidifying Greece's role as the definitive bridge between India and Europe.

Koutalidis Law Firm, through its dedicated Global Mobility Department, is closely monitoring all developments relating to the Agreement and stands ready to assist with every aspect of your market entry, from initial risk assessment and mobility planning to permit applications and ongoing compliance.

Citations

¹ See <https://www.weforum.org/stories/trade-and-investment/india-eu-mother-of-all-trade-deals-what-to-know/>

² See <https://www.forbesgreece.gr/oikonomia/4001215/piyush-goyal-i-ellada-mporei-na-exelixthei-se-stratigiki-puli-tis-indias-pros-tin-europi> (in Greek)

³ See <https://www.capital.gr/arthra/3976752/i-sumfonia-ee-indias-i-prosfati-episkepsi-tou-ellina-prothupourgou-sto-neo-delxi-kai-oi-prooptikes-gia-tin-ellada/> (in Greek)

⁴ See <https://retail.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/india-greece-discuss-stronger-trade-investment-and-supply-chain-cooperation-piyush-goyal/132086097>

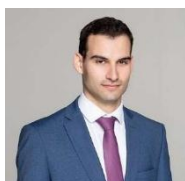
KOUTALIDIS | LAW FIRM



Dr. Ioannis D.
Kaptanis
Partner
gkaptanis@koutalidis.gr



Ilias V. Betzios
Senior Associate
ibetzios@koutalidis.gr



Alexandros F.
Patrikios
Associate
apatrikios@koutalidis.gr

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