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# Canada and the EU After the EPC Summit

What does Canada's presence at the summit mean for the future of Ottawa-Brussels relations

## About the Authors:

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Karolina is a senior at the University of Warsaw pursuing Philosophy and American Studies. Her research focuses on U.S. labour law and the philosophy of work and economy. She has presented on this at conferences and recently received a research grant to continue this work. She prefers to take on socially relevant topics, which led her to participate and earn an honourable mention in the ActEU policy writing competition. Alongside her academic work, she has gained business communication experience at Pro Science company.

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## **About the publication:**

### **3 Main Points:**

How does Canada's participation in the 2026 EPC summit reflect the evolving Canada-EU relationship? Driven by U.S. unpredictability under Trump, Canada is strategically pivoting toward the EU through deepening political, economic, energy, and security partnerships. This realignment benefits both sides: offering Canada market access and stability, and giving the EU a reliable partner for critical minerals, defence, and shared values.

### **Highlight Sentence:**

*“CETA = a free trade agreement between the EU and Canada eliminating trade barriers, upholding worker and consumer standards, and enforcing sustainability requirements on both sides.”*

### **Definition:**

European Political Community (EPC)=an inter-European forum facilitating political dialogue between governments on the political and economic future of Europe, distinct from EU membership.

### **Canada and the EU After the EPC Summit**

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### **Introduction**

The meeting of the European Political Community (EPC) on May 4, 2026, attracted significant attention for two notable reasons. First, its place, since it happened in Yerevan, Armenia. Second, the participation of Canada, represented by Prime Minister Mark Carney. Both were occurring for the first time. However, as an inter-European forum designed to facilitate political dialogue between governments on various dimensions of political and economic future of Europe, Carney's presence



at the 2026 edition made him the first non-European head of government to attend an EPC summit. António Costa, President of the European Council, even held a private meeting with Carney, [describing](#) the situation as ‘politically significant’ in his opening speech. Therefore, Canada’s participation marked an important milestone in Canada-EU relations and signaled a closer political alignment between Ottawa and Brussels. The symbolism of the event was further strengthened by its timing, as it took place only days after the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and the EU. Under the summit’s motto, “*Building the Future: Unity and Stability in Europe*,” Canada’s inclusion to the EPC seemed to open a new chapter of those relations.

This brief argues that, while it is highly unlikely that Canada will join the EU in the foreseeable future as the first non-European country to be invited into this community, the bilateral relations between Canada and the EU will continue to grow stronger. Moreover, since the relations with the U.S. have lately become less stable for both Canada and the EU, Ottawa seems especially eager to seek alternatives by engaging with Brussels on strategic terms.

### **Historical and Political Aspects of the Canada-EU Relationship**

Historically, the EU and Canada have strong bilateral relations. The Canada-EU relationship is the [oldest](#) formal partnership with an industrialized country that the EU has, dating back to 1959 when the Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy was signed between both. Canada’s historical relationship with Europe was initially shaped by its strong connections with the UK, stemming from the British colonial past and both countries’ membership in the Commonwealth. Moreover, because Canada is a member of the UN and NATO, alongside member states of the EU, the ties continued to grow stronger, further fortified by recent economic agreements.

Political cooperation between the EU and Canadian governments is [built on](#) a strong foundation of democratic values and shared history. However, recently an opposition to the U.S. transactionalism emerged as a notable field where Canada’s and EU’s interests and views align, further strengthening their partnership.



## **Economic Dimension of the Canada-EU Relationship**

The European Union is one of Canada's most important economic partners, ranking as its [second-largest](#) trading partner after the United States. The EU is also a [major](#) destination of Canada's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). For instance, EU's FDI stock in Canada was [estimated](#) to be \$194 billion in 2024, while Canada's FDI in the EU was \$297 billion that year. The bilateral support also stimulates labor markets in both Canada and the EU. Companies affiliated with the EU [opened](#) 447.000 new jobs in Canada in 2024, while Canadian companies are responsible for 275.000 new job openings in the EU member states.

This is possible because of various agreements stipulating bilateral economic relations between those two entities, especially in the economy sector. Ten years ago this cooperation was strengthened by the [Strategic Partnership Agreement](#) (SPA), which was signed by both parties in 2016. Even more recently, in 2017, the [Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement](#) came to life, which is a free trade agreement between the EU and Canada. It eliminates all obstructions to free trade between the EU and Canada, ensures a high standard for workers and consumers, and compliance with ecological requirements and sustainability on both sides of the agreement.

Given the recent uncertainty of financial markets and disturbed trade, caused partially by the U.S. inflicted tariffs and developments in the Middle East, and the growing demand for spending on various aspects connected to security, closer economic cooperation between Canada and the EU would be mutually beneficial and is likely to deepen further in the coming years.

## **Energy and Security Dimension of the Canada-EU Relationship**

Energy security, economic, and military security are closely connected and were treated as such during the EPC Summit. Canada and the EU have previously



cooperated on these topics. Recently Ottawa joined the SAFE instrument, after signing the [Security and Defence Partnership](#) (SDP) with the EU. SAFE is a loan system managed by the European Commission and a crucial part of the Readiness 2030 plan. As a result, Canada will receive beneficial access to defence mechanisms financed by SAFE, and, in return, will contribute financially to the Ukrainian defense industry. Moreover, the Canadian defence industry will have unprecedented [access](#) to the EU markets.

As per energy and food security, the [Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation Between Canada and the European Community](#) is a framework for developing the Canada-EU relationship in those matters. Canada and Europe are working towards securing supply chains and critical minerals while respecting environmental standards and sustainability requirements. This is happening partially due to the [Strategic Partnership on Raw Materials](#) (SPRM), which is also aimed at increasing cooperation in research and innovation as well as securing new trade opportunities. Canada has consequently [positioned](#) itself as a reliable supplier of critical minerals, sourced with respect towards the sustainability goals.

### **Canada's Strategic Implications**

The Canada-EU relationship takes on strategic value for both actors. This partnership is also likely to deepen in the long term. From the sole Canadian perspective, it implies to tackle the challenge posed by recent shifts in U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, Washington is Ottawa's [largest](#) investor and trading partner in terms of goods and services. Avoiding the transactionalist-prone tendency of the second Trump administration means compensating this strategic dependency. Inevitably, Brussels emerges as the perfect fallback option for economic integration while Ottawa seeks to multiply partnerships. The EU, by being the [largest](#) single market in the world, becomes a rational choice. As an industrial and resource powerhouse, Canada is also likely to play a huge contribution for European countries when it comes to raw material exports, energy production, and industrial cooperation.



Canada [undertakes](#) a geopolitical realignment and the EU matches the expectations. While still in the making, Ottawa's pivot is highlighted by the increase of strategic and security related agreements with Brussels that the SPRM, the SDP, the participation in the EU SAFE instrument for defence procurement and more recently the announcement of the [New EU-Canada Strategic Partnership of the Future](#) reinforced. The Canada-EU security integration has a promising future ahead. In the meantime, Ottawa positions itself as a trustworthy partner that is committed to security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and the High North region. This ultimately contrasts with U.S.' uncertain views over Greenland and discursive behavior within NATO.

With the latter in mind, and in addition to economic and security integration, the EU becomes for Canada a political like-minded ally that is not prone to turnarounds. The EU therefore embodies a political alternative to the U.S. that has more or less the same historical, cultural, and institutional links. In that regard, Carney's presence at the EPC signals an undergoing geostrategic alignment between Ottawa and Brussels. Canada's influence is ultimately reinforced in this part of the world, delivering benefits to Canada itself as well as to all other actors involved.

## **Conclusion**

The EPC summit in Yerevan in May 2026, marked by Carney's historic participation, symbolizes a landmark event in Canada-EU relations. While it is risky to speculate on a potential EU membership for Canada, the partnership is more likely to grow in the next coming years through deep integration across political, economic, energy, and security domains.

Given recent disruptions in global supply chains, growing geopolitical tensions and uncertainty, armed conflicts such as the war in Ukraine and Iran, alongside the progressing effects of climate change, the importance of secure and multiplying strategic partnerships is essential. Both Canada and the EU are actively engaging in



strengthening ties through existing frameworks (e.g. CETA) and newer initiatives (e.g. New EU-Canada Strategic Partnership of the Future).

This evolving alignment offers Ottawa a stable, like-minded alternative as well as the entry to the world's largest market while providing the EU with a reliable partner for critical minerals, energy, security, defence cooperation, and shared values. Ultimately, Canada's engagement offers a pragmatic geostrategic reorientation that benefits both Ottawa and Brussels. This anchoring reinforces transatlantic stability and opens a promising new chapter in Canada-EU cooperation.