



Statement from the European Union Domestic Advisory Group of the EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement

8 July 2025

The EU Domestic Advisory Group (DAG), established under the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (EVFTA) and composed of representatives of business, workers and NGOs, met on 17 June 2025 in Brussels.

This 13th EU DAG meeting focused on the evolving relationship between the EU and Viet Nam, with discussions including representatives from DG TRADE, DG INTPA, the EEAS and MEP Saskia Bricmont. Key updates included recent administrative reforms in Viet Nam aimed at economic efficiency, the EU's ongoing financial and technical cooperation in the country – notably in the areas of climate, governance and responsible business conduct – and an initial reaction to the new Trade Union Law. The group also noted the slow progress on labour rights and the ongoing restrictions on civil society actors.

Following the meeting, the EU DAG wishes to highlight the following:

Limited perspective on Viet Nam

Despite a lack of progress on social and human rights, EU cooperation with Viet Nam is growing, including higher grants. This is creating a mixed picture and questions arise about the EU's political priorities with regard to Viet Nam.

Slow implementation of the TSD chapter

Despite assurances when the FTA was signed, Viet Nam has yet to ratify key ILO conventions five years after its entry into force, raising doubts about the FTA's legal impact.

Shrinking civic space

Effective EU-Viet Nam cooperation and implementation of the TSD chapter of the EVFTA need a healthy civic space for civil society organisations (CSOs). The EU should actively engage in opening and protecting civic space and consult CSOs to get a realistic view. However, in Viet Nam CSOs are strictly controlled, making consultation very difficult.

Need for greater stakeholder engagement on key TSD regulations

The Ministry of Agriculture and Environment should maintain the stakeholder platform for the Voluntary Partnership Agreement and expand it to the EU Deforestation Regulation, so that civil society organisations can engage with and represent small producer communities

Cybersecurity and info sharing

Social media restrictions in Viet Nam limit transparency and communication.

Global Gateway and EU initiatives

More clarity is needed on how the EU's Global Gateway affects Viet Nam. All EU DGs should incorporate human rights into their Viet Nam work.



EU Domestic Advisory Group under
the EU-Vietnam FTA

Trade union law and labour rights

Analysing Viet Nam's new trade union law is key to understanding trade union rights and constraints. Initial analysis has raised concerns over the effectiveness of the law for workers. Concerns also remain over the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour's role as the EU's trade union partner in discussions.

Handling human rights violations

Human rights cannot be addressed solely through specific formal platforms. Effective responses to violations remain a critical issue. The government also refuses to discuss the matter.

Lack of animal welfare cooperation

No cooperation on animal welfare – which may have consequences for human health – has taken place, despite existing projects on the ground that require support from both Parties.
