

2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the  
**EU DAG under the**  
**Free Trade Agreement between the EU and New Zealand**  
28 January 2026, 09:30-12:30

## Main takeaways of meeting

1. The second meeting of the EU Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) under the EU–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement focused on the state of play of implementation, strategic exchanges with New Zealand counterparts and the European Commission, and the identification of priorities and working methods for the year ahead as well as for the rest of the mandate.
2. The exchange with the New Zealand Ambassador to the EU confirmed the strong political commitment on both sides to open and rules-based trade, supported by a long-standing bipartisan consensus in New Zealand and a shared interest in strengthening trust-based partnerships in a more fragmented global trading environment. The Ambassador highlighted the positive trade effects observed since the entry into force of the FTA (with growing bilateral exchanges and increased business engagement), while acknowledging the existence of regulatory irritants, notably regarding the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). He stressed the importance of proportionality, dialogue and avoiding unnecessary cost burdens for consumers and producers, and underlined the value of DAGs in ensuring democratic oversight and societal buy-in.
3. Members exchanged with the Ambassador on issues including: the interaction between EU sustainability-related measures and operators; maritime decarbonisation and the potential development of green shipping corridors (including the need for a just transition and avoiding negative impacts on island economies dependent on shipping); multilateralism and World Trade Organization reform; trade in services and digital trade (including the role of large global digital players); and the role of SMEs and support structures for them. Members also raised the role of the Sustainable Food Systems chapter, cooperation opportunities for farmers facing increasingly similar environmental and cost pressures, and the FTA's approach to animal welfare cooperation.
4. The update from the European Commission confirmed that implementation of the FTA is proceeding smoothly, with the next round of specialised committee meetings being organised in spring 2026, including those on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), SPS, and Trade in Goods. The Commission underlined a pragmatic approach to implementation and noted that agendas and meeting reports are expected to be published online. The Commission noted that it still remains to be seen when the next Trade Committee meeting will be organised. Concerning the Civil Society Forum, the operational guidelines were adopted at the Trade Committee meeting in October 2025.
5. On the TSD track, the Commission indicated that exchanges with New Zealand on agenda topics are beginning and that, after a broad agenda in the previous year, the intention is to focus on more targeted areas of mutual interest. An intersessional TSD Committee meeting is planned for early March, with topics expected to include trade and forests (including the EUDR) and climate-related matters. The Commission also flagged progress on the targeted FTA amendment to reflect the ILO upgrading safety and health at work to fundamental principles and rights at work, with the endorsement process in New Zealand reportedly approaching completion.

6. Members stressed the importance of structured engagement with the New Zealand DAG, including preparing for a future DAG-to-DAG meeting and ensuring consultation on agendas and work programmes (including for the Civil Society Forum). Members underlined the value of moving from broad topic lists to focused, actionable inputs that can feed into the relevant institutional calendar.
7. In camera discussions allowed the EU DAG to agree on a method for setting priorities for 2026. Members recognised that the consolidated list of proposed priorities was extensive and agreed to focus on a limited number of shared and cross-cutting issues, with volunteers taking the lead on preparing inputs for future meetings and liaising with New Zealand counterparts to identify shared interests. Three initial work strands were earmarked for follow-up: green shipping corridors, the roadmap on ILO conventions, and sustainable food systems. The EU DAG also acknowledged its potential guiding role vis-à-vis the newly established New Zealand DAG and the importance of preparing concrete inputs ahead of joint exchanges.
8. Overall, the meeting confirmed the positive momentum of the EU–New Zealand FTA, the central role of civil society in its implementation, and the need for focused, pragmatic and cooperative engagement in the year ahead.