

Follow-up Committee on International Trade responses to the Commission consultation on the Trade policy review 18 September 2020

1. Introduction

1.1. As a contribution to the Trade policy review launched by DG Trade last spring, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) wishes to put forward some recommendations adopted over the past two years to inform the next EU trade policy. These recommendations stem from EESC official opinions of the EESC sections and provide an overview of what the EESC is able to contribute at this stage. There are however areas where the EESC is not yet in a position to provide detailed input, but we will continue to feed in to the discussions during the next EESC mandate, starting in October 2020. We thus encourage Commissioner for Trade and DG Trade to continue exchanging with the EESC beyond the deadline for this specific consultation. This contribution follows the structure of the [Consultation note](#).

1.2. As a first general comment, the EESC would like to remind the Commission of its consistent approach, across its various formations, aiming at linking the respect for human and labour rights, the implementation of the SDGs, the promotion of sustainable investments in trade agreements and in business operations across the world to address the impact of growing transnational relations with multinational enterprises, which require strong industrial relations systems, effective social dialogue and collective bargaining.

2. Building more resilience – internal and external dimensions

Question 1: How can trade policy help to improve the EU's resilience and build a model of open strategic autonomy?

2.1. Civil society plays an important role in raising awareness of EU trade policy implementation. It can also flag concerns and shortcomings. The EESC, the Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs), and the wider civil society thus need to be part of any decision-making on the features of this open strategic autonomy¹.

2.2. More comprehensive trade negotiations have greater potential in turn for conflict in sensitive areas. Any such controversies must be addressed effectively. These may involve challenges to high-level standards, notably in food safety, consumer protection, decent working conditions, protecting

¹ REX/525, point 1.4 (see annex I for full reference to all opinions).

public services, or in enforcing sustainable trade rights, as covered in detail in a number of previous opinions. The EESC again emphasises that nothing in a trade agreement must be allowed to limit the public policy space of governments to regulate, as they see fit².

2.3. The EESC believes it is essential that the EU ensures the smooth and fair operation of the Internal Market and the Eurozone. One fifth of all export-related jobs in the EU¹ are based in a different Member State to that of the exporter, not least due to the growth in supply chains, the so-called "spill-over effect"³. This goal needs to cover a very wide range of separate policies, ranging from transport and energy to better integration of services, to providing a legally robust and socially protected framework for the evolution of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI). It must also include even-handed EU regulation and policies that promote conditions that help businesses to take the lead in developing and applying new technologies that maintain competitiveness, whilst ensuring growth and decent jobs as part of a fair transition⁴.

2.4. Increased trade flows will mean further increases in transport, where greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are already notably high. The EESC therefore calls both that all modes of transport become part of an enhanced sustainable and just transport policy, and that a clear policy link between trade and transport be established, not least in meeting the relevant SDG commitments⁵.

2.5. To build an open strategic autonomy, the EU must become "the best place to invest in". A first step would be to assess our leverages' capacity to promote and support investments, in industrial, energy, transport and digital infrastructure, through an enlarged connectivity approach. A common foreign direct investment scheme would provide the possibility to seize opportunities in strategic assets, such as critical infrastructure, critical technologies and security of supply of critical inputs. The EU must use the full potential of the procurement directives and effective trade defence instruments and enforce its free trade agreements to counter illicit practices, deepen regulatory convergence and promote sustainability standards, thus reducing market distortions⁶. The EU should promote best practices on how to include environmental and social criteria in public procurement⁷.

2.6. The much-heralded reform of the competition framework is greatly needed. However, the EESC is disappointed that the overhaul of the EU's competition rules has been postponed until 2021. There is no room for political manoeuvres when designing the reform; the approach should be based on global developments and not only on the single market, as has been the case so far⁸.

2.7. The coronavirus crisis should lead the EU to boost the health equipment and pharmaceutical sectors, with a view to ensuring the EU's shared sovereignty and self-sufficiency in these sectors⁹.

2.8. The EESC proposes that EU trade or economic agreements include, in keeping with WTO principles and rules, a chapter containing clauses against tax offenses, money laundering and aggressive tax planning and for cooperation between tax authorities. The EESC calls on the Commission to include it as an EU proposal in the ongoing negotiations and in the treaties already in force when they come to be revised¹⁰.

² REX/517, point 1.5.1.

³ REX/517, point 1.2.

⁴ REX/517, point 1.2.1.

⁵ REX/517, point 1.8.4.

⁶ CCMI/175, point 1.7.

⁷ REX/525, point 1.12.

⁸ INT/897, point 5.11.

⁹ CCMI/175, point 1.2.

¹⁰ ECO/408, point 1.9.

2.9. Higher standards for the publishing of reports on non-financial matters could be an important issue in trade policy. Regulation at the global level, including trade agreements, should boost transparency on the publication of non-financial information in countries such as the United States and China to ensure a level playing field for European companies¹¹.

2.10. The international use of the euro would enhance financial autonomy and provide access to finance on more favourable borrowing conditions for European businesses and governments as European financial markets would become more integrated, deeper and more liquid. It would in addition foster further intra-EU and international trade¹².

Question 2: What initiatives should the EU take – alone or with other trading partners - to support businesses, including SMEs, to assess risks as well as solidifying and diversifying supply chains?

2.11. The COVID-19 crisis has unveiled the worrying fragility and significant risks related to highly fragmented and undiversified supply chains and exposed the vulnerability of workers who keep them operational. Large-scale disruptions showcased the necessity to strengthen the reliability and resilience of global supply chains (GSCs), in particular in key regions and sectors, both within the EU internal market and with third country governments¹³. Global supply chains need to become more resilient, diversified and responsible. Stronger instruments need to deliver on a sustainable trade and investment agenda in all its dimensions. It needs to be consistent with the Green Deal and show equal ambition on the effective implementation and enforcement of labour provisions. The new EU Trade Strategy should go beyond old trade models, building a new model that is economically resilient, greener, socially sustainable and responsible¹⁴.

2.12. To better assess risks, the EESC suggests specific support to SMEs to introduce due diligence policies, including help by European cross-sectoral and sectoral social dialogue and national social dialogue¹⁵. The Commission also needs to ensure proper data collection of vulnerable supply chains, notably the risks of disruptions of economic activities and the detection of human rights violations¹⁶.

2.13. The EU trade policy should help to minimise the disruptions caused by economic shocks. This would involve a rethink of supply-chain strategies, including diversification, but also a realignment of supply chains across multiple sectors. It would also mean some form of sectoral de-globalisation with EU companies relocating their manufacturing plants (at least for essential products) within the EU to avoid supply-chain problems¹⁷.

2.14. EU companies operating globally face increasing friction and uncertainty, along with rising protectionism and ongoing tensions between trading partners. Global value chains are shrinking and we observe a generalised trend towards a return to regionalisation is occurring worldwide. There is an urgent need to reconsider investments in the EU's territory and focus on supporting businesses, especially SMEs, ensuring liquidity provision and stability in the financial sector, preserving the Single Market and ensuring the flow of critical goods. Such an objective can only be achieved through a mix of measures such as: regulations and policies applicable also to third country companies when working in the EU, infrastructure, investment in public goods (i.e. health, education, digital infrastructure),

¹¹ ECO/404, point 4.4.3.

¹² ECO/489, point 3.2.

¹³ REX/532, point 3.6.

¹⁴ REX/525, point 1.3.

¹⁵ REX/532, point 1.20.

¹⁶ REX/532, point 1.4.

¹⁷ ECO/513, point 3.4.

reciprocity in public procurement, effective trade policy, and digital independence¹⁸. European companies would indeed benefit from levelling the playing field and from fair competition, based on common minimum standards applicable also to companies established in third countries and active in the EU¹⁹.

2.15. The EESC calls for an ILO Convention on decent work in supply chains²⁰.

3. Supporting socio-economic recovery and growth

Question 3: How should the multilateral trade framework (WTO) be strengthened to ensure stability, predictability and a rules-based environment for fair and sustainable trade and investment?

3.1. Time has come for the WTO to play its role in actively promoting core labour standards and the Paris Agreement²¹. Being a member driven organisation, it however needs a champion to lead the way. As a global actor with a constitutional duty and mandate for good global governance, the EU has a crucial role to play in shaping a more efficient multilateral matrix from within²².

3.2. The EESC repeats its call for the EU, in supporting the WTO, to show global leadership in promoting rules to realise a progressive, fair and sustainable trade policy. The EU must continue to work closely with others to reform the WTO to establish rules that ensure countries respect and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here, the EU and its Member States should use their leverage and advocacy across its structures, especially covering those new areas such as trade and decent work²³.

3.3. Any new proposals for greater cohesion and strengthening of the multilateral framework should respect four guiding principles²⁴:

- Specialisation, according to which international organisations can only act in areas where their parties have given them the mandate to do so;
- respect of the decision-making procedures allowing governance bodies to act;
- internal and external transparency over any functional change; and
- evaluation: the EESC encourages the establishment of a self-assessment culture.

3.4. There is an urgent need to increase public consultation and civil society stakeholders' engagement in international organisations' standard-setting activities and policy definition²⁵. The EESC is grateful for the EC's support in increasing the voice of civil society at multilateral level, and welcomes Action 6 of the recent Ottawa Group 6-point action plan²⁶. We however call for further efforts towards the gradual setting-up of permanent dialogue processes and the EESC stands ready to act as a facilitator²⁷.

¹⁸ CCMI/175, point 2.1.

¹⁹ REX/532, point 5.3.

²⁰ REX/462.

²¹ REX/525, point 1.2.

²² REX/529, point 1.10.

²³ REX/517, point 1.4.

²⁴ REX/529, point 3.1.1.

²⁵ REX/529, point 2.2.1.2.

²⁶ Canada leads a group of WTO members, known as the [Ottawa Group](#), in order to address specific challenges to the multilateral trading system. [June 2020 Statement of the Ottawa Group: Focusing Action on Covid-19, June 2020](#).

²⁷ REX/529, point 3.1.2.

3.5. There are various improvements possible to reach an environment-friendly trading system: While remaining outside the UN system, the WTO could provide regular update to the UN Chief Executives Board CEB on achievements that would help deliver on the SDGs²⁸. A WTO climate waiver could define "climate measures": characteristics, general interest goals and criteria for WTO compatibility²⁹. An informal WTO Working Group could be set-up to prepare a WTO ministerial declaration on trade and environment for the 12th Ministerial Conference in 2021³⁰. Finally, the EU needs to work towards securing a WTO plurilateral negotiations on an Environmental Goods Agreement, closely linked to the Paris Agreement³¹.

3.6. On social sustainability, the social partners' negotiating capacity deserves greater recognition, notably the tripartite declaration of social partners at international level and the array of multinational framework³². The EESC also believes ILO should have formal observer status at the WTO, to participate officially in the WTO ministerial conferences and bodies and would contribute to integrating international labour standards in the WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism. The EESC suggests that a dedicated temporary working group between WTO and ILO secretariats be set up to develop and present guidelines by June 2021³³.

3.7. Meanwhile, the EESC is concerned about the escalation of WTO non-compliance measures and new discriminatory non-tariff arrangements, which risk imposing excessive reciprocal regulatory burdens and creating a new "normal" in global trade. The existing EU support programmes and monitoring systems should be re-evaluated, in line with EU competition rules, to support EU Member States, partners, companies and employees adversely affected by the economic crisis and trade wars and to reduce the burden on them³⁴.

Question 4: How can we use our broad network of existing FTAs or new FTAs to improve market access for EU exporters and investors, and promote international regulatory cooperation—particularly in relation to digital and green technologies and standards in order to maximise their potential?

3.8. To improve market access for EU exporters, the EU should consider reaching out to importers in trade partner countries, including via seminars, on opportunities offered by the respective FTAs and on how to apply for tariff preferences. Such outreach should be conducted in close cooperation between EU delegations, national representations and business representatives, including chambers of commerce³⁵.

3.9. The EESC welcomes the Commission's advanced work on the online portal that will integrate two databases, the Market Access Database and the Trade Helpdesk. It addresses the complexity and lack of coherence of the rules of origin and customs procedures and implementing a free, online rules of origin calculator to provide additional support for EU SMEs³⁶.

3.10. In the context of new agreements or revisions of existing agreements, improved market access needs to materialise in concrete benefits for consumers. The EESC thus calls for "a consumer-specific chapter on "trade and consumers" within the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) framework,

²⁸ REX/529, point 3.2.1.

²⁹ REX/529, point 3.2.5.1.

³⁰ REX/529, point 3.2.5.2.

³¹ REX/529, point 3.3.5.4.

³² REX/529, point 3.1.3.

³³ REX/529, point 3.2.4.1.

³⁴ CCMI/175, point 1.6.

³⁵ REX/525, point 5.7.

³⁶ CCMI/175, point 3.5.

incorporating relevant international consumer standards and strengthening cooperation on the enforcement of consumer rights"³⁷. In its reporting, Commission data needs to show a better symmetry between ambitious negotiation goals for consumers and their later implementation³⁸.

3.11. The EESC believes that the EU should ensure real reciprocity and tackle third countries' protectionism, notably on procurement markets. China is a striking example of divergence with international rules, despite its commitment to join the WTO Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) when it acceded to the WTO. The 5G issue has brought digital security into the picture, providing fertile ground for advancing towards EU digital independence. Boosting EU programmes for investment in research and innovation appears to be the most rational and rewarding approach in this regard³⁹.

3.12. The EU has the largest trade network in the world, giving bilateral trade agreements a particular important leverage that needs to be used effectively before their conclusion and throughout their implementation and enforcement⁴⁰.

3.13. Trade is not the driver of climate policy but can become a key enabler. Making the Paris Agreement an "essential element" for all future comprehensive trade agreements, meaning to suspend them in case of non-compliance, is a positive step that should be extended to cover ILO fundamental and up-to-date Conventions ratified by all EU Member States⁴¹.

Question 5: With which partners and regions should the EU prioritise its engagement? In particular, how can we strengthen our trade and investment relationships with the neighbouring countries and Africa to our mutual benefit?

3.14. It is particularly important to engage with third countries on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. In this respect, civil society engagement make a genuine difference, which is why the EESC calls for the establishment of DAG-to-DAG set-ups⁴². In cases where other mechanisms for expressing the opinion of civil society are already in place, it would be essential to keep them, as the time to create trust and appropriate working conditions requires years.

3.15. The EESC calls on all key institutional players to reconsider the links between the EU-27 and the UK, and to design appropriate measures for sectors that would suffer the most from the UK withdrawal⁴³. Many sectors would benefit from a comprehensive trade agreement. One area which the EESC has already looked into is the Carbon market issue.

3.16. The EU could use its ACP-EU Partnership Agreement as well as the EU's wider interaction with those regions to create more synergies towards achieving the SDGs. That should specifically include both targeted capacity building to support and help implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement, as well as the wider joint EU/Member State Aid for Trade strategy. This is a core contribution to, and an essential part of, the WTO Aid for Trade Initiative which is designed to enhance the capacity of developing countries to use the opportunities offered by trade agreements. SDG focused input into the WTO's sixth Global Review will be important⁴⁴.

³⁷ REX/525, point 4.6.

³⁸ REX/525, point 1.10.

³⁹ CCMI/175, point 4.4.

⁴⁰ REX/532, point 7.1.

⁴¹ REX/532, point 7.3.

⁴² REX/503, point 6.

⁴³ CCMI/175, point 4.1.

⁴⁴ REX/486, point 1.5.2.

3.17. The current situation reveals critical challenges but also promising prospects for EU-African developmental cooperation. Africa includes many of the world's 20 fastest growing economies. By 2035, it will have the largest potential workforce. A trade and investment partnership at high level, based on UHRs and sustainability, is necessary for both sides, and development must be the focus, instead of using development funds for border security⁴⁵.

3.18. The EESC welcomes the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as it strengthens trade within the continent, lessens dependencies and moves away from a solely overseas-exports-driven approach. It could be an essential first step towards a free trade area between the EU and Africa. The EESC reiterates the important role of organised civil society in the post-Cotonou agreement⁴⁶.

3.19. The EESC regrets the United States' (US) decision to introduce additional tariffs that will mainly impact agricultural and agri-food products produced in EU Member States. The effectiveness of the EU's safeguard measures for steel should be reassessed in light of the steel industry's troubled economic environment, in order to avoid further damage to domestic steel companies and to ensure a level playing field for EU businesses and workers. US steel tariffs have led to significant trade diversion of steel products from third countries, which are entering the European market in increasing quantities, in particular being used in public infrastructure construction contracts⁴⁷.

Question 6: How can trade policy support the European renewed industrial policy?

3.20. If the EU is to play a more prominent role in world trade, which is vital for EU companies and their business prospects, then it has to do much more to bring other nations back round the multi-lateral negotiations table, failing which bilateral trade will need to assume greater importance. Globalisation in a post-crisis future, has to have a level playing field in a wide range of aspects (including tax competition, compliance with labour standards, and meeting climate change targets) for global firms operating in a global marketplace. If not, then the EU risks becoming more and more vulnerable and dependent on trade skirmishes between the USA and China⁴⁸.

3.21. Europe must finance activities that meet two criteria: restoring strategic production to make Europe independent, particularly as regards health protection and responses, which provides quality jobs; and focusing on sustainable investment that is socially responsible and environment-friendly. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), just like large companies and social enterprises, could play a crucial role in restructuring the European production system⁴⁹.

3.22. A better integration and coordination of the toolbox for industrial policy together with proper governance structures should ensure that Europe delivers on its ambitions of becoming a green, digital and circular economy, while at the same time increasing its strategic autonomy and economic resilience⁵⁰.

3.23. The EESC strongly believes that the industrial policy must go hand in hand with a firm trade policy that in turn must develop strategies to secure access to raw materials.⁵¹

⁴⁵ REX/527, point 1.3.

⁴⁶ REX/527, point 1.4.

⁴⁷ CCMI/175, point 4.2.

⁴⁸ ECO/513, point 3.5.2.

⁴⁹ ECO/514, point 3.4.2.

⁵⁰ INT/897, point 5.16.

⁵¹ INT/897, point 1.6.

3.24. The EESC believes it is crucial for Europe to close the gap with the USA, China and others in certain technologies. Building our competitive advantages while financing R&D is key for becoming a world leader. Building a unified European capital market, including a European market for venture capital, is vital. Europe's industry will be digitalised or it will cease to exist. Investment in ICT sectors such as the data economy, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing must reach all regions and Member States⁵².

3.25. For the EU, the issue of asymmetrical carbon price levels should be a priority. Different options are available to mitigate this asymmetry and protect the competitiveness of European industry, including free allocation, Emission Trading System linking and Carbon Border Adjustments. The EU ETS target for 2030 and the rules of the system will be subject to a thorough review in the coming years. As this review gets underway it will be crucial to dedicate detailed attention to the key features of the EU ETS, how they impact European industry and their linkage to the trade policy⁵³.

4. Supporting SMEs

Question 7: What more can be done to help SMEs benefit from the opportunities of international trade and investment? Where do they have specific needs or particular challenges that could be addressed by trade and investment policy measures and support?

4.1. In spite of providing significant opportunities for companies, the benefits of FTAs remain largely unknown, in particular in the first couple of years after entry into force. To close these knowledge gaps, particularly amongst SMEs, the Commission and the Member States, in cooperation with the EU business community, should promote the agreements in all EU languages⁵⁴. Given that promoting trade is essentially the competence of national governments, the successful implementation of FTAs ultimately relies on the capacity, ability and willingness of individual Member States to promote bespoke trade agreements within their national business community. The EESC invites the 27 MS and the EC to commit voluntarily, and in accordance with their respective competences, to implementing specific measures and activities at home, through European Implementation Action Plans, to complement at intra-EU level the "external" implementation roadmaps set up alongside the EU's FTAs. Such Action Plans should further contribute to effective monitoring of the actual transposition of negotiated FTA commitments in the respective third country, while enabling the monitoring and benchmarking of specific measures undertaken by governments and the business community at national and regional level⁵⁵.

4.2. Services make up a large volume of modern FTA provisions, but their advantages are harder to read than tariff reductions. Here, transparency on regulatory requirements in third markets is key for facilitating trade. The upcoming merger of the EU Market Access Data Base and the Trade Helpdesk provides an opportunity to cover not only goods, but also services in a consistent way. A new portal should provide information on market access and restrictions by mode of supply for each Custom Procedure Code, as well as information on documentation, certification, licensing, testing and other requirements, by sector. Moreover, a Guide for European services exporters and investors for the EU's most important preferential trading partners for services, such as Japan or Canada, could help⁵⁶.

⁵² INT/897 points 1.7 and 1.8.

⁵³ REX/531, points 1.2.2 and 4.1.3.

⁵⁴ REX/525, point 5.6.

⁵⁵ INT/898, point 4.13.

⁵⁶ REX/525, point 5.8.

4.3. The EU is the most open public procurement market in the world and FTAs provide comprehensive rules and significant procurement market access opportunities for European companies in partner countries. Publication of third country tenders in a dedicated section of the EU Tenders Electronic Daily database would greatly enhance the ability of SMEs and others to benefit from procurement chapters. In addition, a specialised automatic translation tool in all EU languages for the tenders published could help overcome the language barrier⁵⁷.

4.4. To benefit from preferential duties under an FTA, products must comply with rules of origin (ROOs). Reducing the administrative costs incurred when applying for preferential tariffs would greatly help increasing the Preferential Utilisation Rate, particularly for low-value transactions. The simplification and harmonisation of ROOs across different FTAs would make a crucial difference to SMEs' operations. Moreover, the new approach to origin verification agreed to in the FTAs with Canada and Japan, with the importing authority determining whether products meet origin requirements, may de facto require the exporter to transfer commercially sensitive data⁵⁸.

4.5. To allow SMEs to fully reap the benefits of trade agreements, the EESC calls for SME chapters to become a standard approach in future EU bilateral trade negotiations with third countries, and for SME committees to be set up to launch initiatives for sharing information about FTAs and technical standards with SMEs and for monitoring the use of FTAs by SMEs in both the EU and the other country(/ies) party to the agreement. The EEN, as a tool for supporting SME internationalisation, should be improved, as well as cooperation and synergies with national service providers, and sectorial and national SME federations⁵⁹.

4.6. The EU should stress that taxation policies are fundamental for the SDGs as they determine the economic environment in which investment, employment, and innovation take place while providing the government with revenues for financing public spending. Additional policy alignment and credibility enhancing measures could do much to increase private investment and to close the global investment gap by stimulating capital flows from capital-intense states to developing economies with investment needs⁶⁰.

4.7. All these measures would help distribute the positive external balance of trade in goods and services more evenly across Member States and sectors.

5. Supporting the green transition and making trade more sustainable and responsible

Question 8: How can trade policy facilitate the transition to a greener, fairer and more responsible economy at home and abroad? How can trade policy further promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? How should implementation and enforcement support these objectives?

5.1. Sustainable development must become central to EU trade policy. To achieve the implementation of the SDGs and leave no one behind, the EESC calls on the European Commission, Parliament, Council and Member States to internalise the positive and negative social and environmental

⁵⁷ REX/525, point 5.9.

⁵⁸ REX/525, point 5.10.

⁵⁹ INT/898, point 4.11.

⁶⁰ ECO/494, point 1.1.

externalities of trade⁶¹. Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters in EU trade and investment agreements should be strengthened in their provisions and in their implementation and enforcement⁶².

5.2. The EESC sees it as vital that EU trade and investment policy address all significant consequences of market opening, and limit negative impacts as far as possible, including social and transitional costs. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund must, under any Multiannual Financial Framework, provide for sufficient funding to cover negative trade impacts and any limiting conditions and criteria for its application be re-examined⁶³. To better anticipate and accompany restructuring changes, effective workers' rights to information, consultation and collective bargaining are here essential for just transitions⁶⁴.

Facilitating the transition to a greener, fairer and more responsible economy

5.3. EU trade policy can drive sustainability along the global value chain, for example focusing on sustainable sourcing⁶⁵. The ILO World Commission on the social dimension of globalisation should also be reinvigorated in light of the impact of COVID-19 on Global Value Chains (GVCs)⁶⁶.

5.4. Ambitious actions need to ensure that GSCs contribute to a fairer economic and social model, based on sustainability and decent work. Actions must be consistent with international and European principles, notably in the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Labour Organization (ILO) fundamental conventions, the European Green Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights. They must form core elements of the global, European and national responses to the COVID-19 crisis⁶⁷.

5.5. The EESC has called for reviving trade flows to build on strong commitments of social and labour standards and their effective enforcement. The disruption of supply and production processes has demonstrated the importance of having occupational health and safety measures in place and effectively enforced, and to keep workers safe and healthy to supply the world with goods and services. The ratification, implementation and enforcement of ILO core conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining constitute a key gateway to ensure safe and decent working conditions, together with all ILO core and up-to-date Conventions⁶⁸.

5.6. Leverage to secure ILO ratifications remains greatest during the agreement negotiations and before their conclusion; this should therefore materialise into the signed agreement. The ratification, implementation and enforcement of ILO core conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining constitute a key gateway to ensure safe and decent working conditions, together with all ILO core and up-to-date Conventions⁶⁹. Finally, the EU should include ILO in the implementation monitoring of its Conventions under FTAs⁷⁰.

5.7. Given the enormous financial recovery measures to be undertaken in the EU and globally, the Green Deal must not be side-lined, but should become a fast track priority in the existing and future EU trade relations, to deliver a socially and environmentally just transition. Green Deal measures need to

⁶¹ SC/53, point 1.6.

⁶² REX/529, point 4.3.1.

⁶³ REX/517, point 1.5.

⁶⁴ REX/517, point 4.10.1.

⁶⁵ NAT/760, point 13.1.

⁶⁶ REX/529, point 3.2.4.2.

⁶⁷ REX/532, point 1.5.

⁶⁸ REX/532, point 3.10.

⁶⁹ REX/532, point 1.21 and 3.9.

⁷⁰ REX/525.

be addressed throughout all elements of FTAs, including the promotion of best practices of how to include environmental and social criteria in public procurement⁷¹.

5.8. Transitioning to a greener, fairer and more responsible economy means rethinking and reinvigorating the multilateral approach to agriculture. The EU is well-placed to take the lead and should avoid making major concessions in agriculture that would undermine domestic production⁷². Special attention should be paid to agricultural production in vulnerable areas⁷³. Recognising how challenging this is, we propose that all future EU trade deals incorporate the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork (F2F) and Biodiversity strategies as global standards on sustainability⁷⁴. We notably urge the Commission to ensure reciprocity of standards in preferential trade agreements, particularly regarding traceability from farm to fork⁷⁵.

5.9. In order to deal with international differences in carbon prices, a number of measures need to be considered: environmental standards that importers have to comply with, subsidies for low-carbon exports, use of trade defence instruments and steps to address carbon pricing differences in free trade agreements. The ultimate goal should be to set a global price for carbon⁷⁶. The EESC notably supports the proposals for a carbon border adjustment mechanism and calls for measures eliminating barriers to energy-efficient and low GHG emission products and promoting investments in renewable energy in trade agreements⁷⁷. It notes, however, that such a measure must balance environmental, trade and fairness concerns to avoid market distortions, triggering retaliation against EU countries and thus damaging EU industry and industrial jobs⁷⁸.

5.10. To reconcile climate and energy policies, the EESC presents several recommendations⁷⁹:

- A transparent accounting system keeping track of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions incorporated in each industrial item;
- The payment by importers of GHG emissions embodied in the raw materials, not those produced from transforming, shaping them or from the associated logistics operations; and
- An incentive scheme to encourage and reward lower GHG emissions and greater data transparency.

5.11. The issue of fossil fuel subsidies granted at national and regional levels should move higher on the EU agenda given their magnitude: up to 300 billion euro a year, which accounts for one third of the total investment for the Green Deal and leads to more proactive commitment of the EU in the emerging negotiation in the WTO on a global phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies⁸⁰.

Implementation and enforcement

5.12. The EESC has long been calling for greater ambition and increased enforceability of TSD chapters, which ought to carry equal weight to those covering commercial, technical or tariff issues⁸¹.

⁷¹ REX/525, point 3.10.

⁷² REX/517, point 1.7.

⁷³ NAT/790, point 1.2.

⁷⁴ NAT/791, point 1.7.

⁷⁵ NAT/787, point 4.3.1.

⁷⁶ INT/897, point 5.13.

⁷⁷ NAT/778, point 7.6.

⁷⁸ CCMI/175, point 3.14.

⁷⁹ CCMI/167.

⁸⁰ REX/531, point 2.5.6.

⁸¹ REX/500, point 2.4.

5.13. The EESC urges the Commission to grant the new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (CTEO) a wide range of powers, notably in the field of sustainable development. They should have adequate resourcing and base their decision-making process on timely and sound investigations, allowing recognised stakeholders to submit complaints and to participate in public hearings. When reporting to the European Parliament and Council, the CTEO should carve out a special role for the EESC and respective Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs), as well as foresee the continuous involvement of wider civil society⁸².

5.14. The EESC had recommended to further strengthen civil society monitoring mechanisms by enabling civil society actors to independently trigger investigations into TSD chapters violations⁸³. The EESC calls for a revamping of the panel mechanisms where trade lawyers, but also labour, climate or human rights experts, could investigate complaints under TSD chapters. Should such panels find violations, it should trigger a treaty State-to-State dispute settlement mechanism, with possibilities for financial penalties or sanctions, and remedies for the aggrieved party⁸⁴. Civil society actors should be able to make oral presentations in panel hearings, beyond written amicus curiae submissions. The EESC expresses concerns over the actual impact of the panel report, given that TSD chapters currently lack binding enforcement tools⁸⁵. The EESC also calls for firm progress on the CETA review of labour and environmental provisions' effective enforceability⁸⁶.

5.15. The DAGs' monitoring scope is expanding, but they should continue to pay special attention to TSD chapter monitoring. The impact of DAG recommendations needs to be considerably strengthened. The expert group with Member States on TSD, the new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (CTEO) and relevant EU institutions should establish a structured follow-up exchange with DAGs. Finally, negotiators should keep civil society informed by presenting regular information at joint DAG-to-DAG meetings⁸⁷. With the growing number of FTAs, and consequently DAGs, there is an urgent need to implement systemic solutions with adequate resources in place, both human and financial. There is no 'One-size-fits-all' solution. Any potential new approach, like regionalising DAGs, will have to guarantee their effective functioning to address challenges in the specific agreements' implementation and involve DAGs themselves in its shaping⁸⁸.

5.16. A European due diligence standard is an indispensable step to ensure the respect and enforcement of human rights and decent work in supply chains. It would contribute to the implementation of the UNGPs, the ILO Tripartite Declaration and the OECD Guidelines. It would also complement national initiative taken to reach the SDGs, notably with regard to the eradication of child labour and forced labour⁸⁹.

5.17. The EU should use the latest tools and technologies (i.e. Joint Research Centre) to monitor key issues like deforestation⁹⁰. EU trade policy needs to ensure that EU imports do not increase deforestation in non-EU trade partner countries (i.e. beef and soya imports from Mercosur countries (Brazil), beef and sheep meat imports from Australia, and palm oil from Indonesia)⁹¹. The EESC calls for greater quality and credibility of the "zero imported deforestation" labels by encouraging the convergence of tools and

⁸² REX/517, point 1.8.1.

⁸³ REX/500, point 1.7.5.

⁸⁴ REX/529, point 4.3.1.

⁸⁵ REX/525, point 1.14.

⁸⁶ REX/525, point 5.4.

⁸⁷ REX/525, point 1.5.

⁸⁸ REX/525, point 5.2.

⁸⁹ REX/532, point 8.1.

⁹⁰ NAT/791, point 3.24.

⁹¹ NAT/791, point 3.56.

the extension of existing certifications, by relying on land-use mapping by remote sensing, by supporting producers in the implementation and by strengthening controls throughout the supply chains⁹².

5.18. Monitoring and enforcement procedures need to be clear, fast, efficient and financially transparent; the costs must be shared fairly, taking into account what is affordable for small farmers⁹³. The EESC stresses that the impact on the private sector will be crucial. We thus call for a full impact assessment of the likely effects that implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement will have on EU trade and competition policy including agriculture⁹⁴.

Sustainability in future agreements or revisions of current agreements

5.19. The EESC has made several calls for a specific clause to promote the SDGs in all future mandates for TSD chapters. EU negotiating mandates should also reflect the necessary transition towards a low carbon, circular economy⁹⁵. According to the Green deal, future EU FTAs will make the Paris Agreement an essential element. It will thus allow a party to suspend the provisions of the agreement if the other party was in breach of such a provision. The EU could also require partners to reaffirm their commitments to climate neutrality by 2050 (i.e. the UK)⁹⁶. CETA Article 22.3, where parties undertake to promote economic and trade flows that will help to foster decent work and environmental protection, should be used with other trading partners (New Zealand, Australia)⁹⁷.

5.20. An important COVID-19 lesson is "policy" and "genuine" investment in sustainability. Ambitious actions need to ensure that GSCs contribute to a fairer economic and social model, based on sustainability and decent work. Actions must be consistent with international and European principles, notably in the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Labour Organization (ILO) fundamental conventions, the European Green Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights. They must form core elements of the global, European and national responses to the COVID-19 crisis⁹⁸.

5.21. Making the respect of the Paris agreement an essential element for all future comprehensive trade agreements, as announced in the Green Deal Communication⁹⁹, is a positive step that must be extended to include also the respect and implementation of ILO fundamental and up-to-date Conventions that all EU Member States have ratified¹⁰⁰.

5.22. Any investment treaty negotiated by the EU, notably with China, must contain comprehensive provisions on¹⁰¹:

- sustainable use of natural resources;
- the precautionary principle approach to human health, natural resources and ecosystems;
- the principle of public participation and access to information and justice; and
- the principle of integration and interrelationship, in particular in relation to human rights and social, economic and environmental objectives.

⁹² NAT/791, point 3.59.

⁹³ NAT/791, point 3.25.

⁹⁴ NAT/791, point 3.20.

⁹⁵ REX/517, point 1.8.2.

⁹⁶ REX/531, point 3.3.2.

⁹⁷ REX/529, point 4.3.2.

⁹⁸ REX/532 point 1.5.

⁹⁹ [COM\(2019\) 640 final](#)

¹⁰⁰ REX/525, point 5.3.

¹⁰¹ REX/529, point 4.3.3.

Question 9: How can trade policy help to foster more responsible business conduct? What role should trade policy play in promoting transparent, responsible and sustainable supply chains?

5.23. The COVID-19 crisis has unveiled the worrying fragility and significant risks related to highly fragmented and undiversified supply chains, exposing the vulnerability of workers. It is clear that GSCs need to become more resilient, diversified and responsible. Trade will have to play a key role in promoting a sustainable economic recovery allowing companies to rebuild and re-organise their disrupted value chains. However, stronger instruments need to deliver on a socially and environmentally responsible business, trade and investment agenda¹⁰².

5.24. The EU has the largest trade network in the world, giving bilateral trade agreements a particular important leverage that needs to be used effectively before their conclusion and throughout their implementation and enforcement¹⁰³.

5.25. Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) is key to realising the SDGs. European companies operating outside the EU are key drivers and enforcers of RBC. This puts the EU in a unique place to take the lead on due diligence and the EESC welcomes that the EC is following its recommendation to propose EU legislation in this area¹⁰⁴. A European due diligence standard is an indispensable step to ensure the respect and enforcement of human rights and decent work in supply chains. It would contribute to the implementation of the UNGPs, the ILO Tripartite Declaration and the OECD Guidelines. It would also complement national initiative taken to reach the SDGs, notably with regard to the eradication of child labour and forced labour. It would further contribute to establishing more reliable, sustainable and well-managed supply chains, thus increasing resilience and management effectiveness in times of crisis. This would be particularly important for example with regard to health and safety at the workplace¹⁰⁵.

5.26. It is vital for the EU and its Member States to act consistently at national, European, and international level, coordinating initiatives and closing identified gaps. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) calls on the European Commission (EC) to develop a European Action plan on human rights, decent work and sustainability in global supply chains, in agreement with the European Parliament (EP) and Council, and building on social dialogue and a multi-stakeholder approach. It must be ambitious, comprehensive and transversal to respond effectively to GSC realities. Its main objectives should be to promote responsible business conduct, to ensure the respect of human rights and EU social and environmental objectives in business activities and their supply chains, to support businesses and SMEs in adopting a responsible business conduct approach, and to ensure a level playing field for businesses¹⁰⁶. This general framework would encompass both policy and legislative initiatives.

5.27. Trade elements of the Action Plan objectives should be reflected in the new EU Trade Strategy Review. Trade and international investment agreements can help align the implementation of standards by both investors and governments. Foreign investors should be required to comply with due diligence before they can benefit from an international investment agreement. Free trade agreements (FTA) must promote best practices on how to include environmental and social criteria in public procurement, and

¹⁰² REX/532, point 1.2 and 1.3.

¹⁰³ REX/532, point 7.1.

¹⁰⁴ REX/525, point 5.12.

¹⁰⁵ REX/532, point 8.1 and 8.2.

¹⁰⁶ REX/532, point 1.8 and 1.9.

in no way limit their application¹⁰⁷. The EESC suggests linking tariff reductions to the effective implementation of TSD provisions¹⁰⁸.

5.28. In the framework of the new recovery instrument Next Generation EU and of other EU funding, the EESC suggests specific conditionality and incentives being linked to the respect for human rights, decent work and sustainability objectives in companies' activities and supply chains¹⁰⁹.

5.29. Calling on the EU and its Member States to secure more effective and binding international instruments, the EESC reaffirms its support for a UN Binding treaty on business and human rights¹¹⁰.

5.30. Both a future Action plan and the revised trade policy review should recognise the essential, different and complementary roles of the different actors in this area, notably the European institutions, Member States, international bodies, companies, social partners and stakeholders¹¹¹.

6. Supporting the digital transition and technological development

Question 10: How can digital trade rules benefit EU businesses, including SMEs? How could the digital transition, within the EU but also in developing country trade partners, be supported by trade policy, in particular when it comes to key digital technologies and major developments (e.g. block chain, artificial intelligence, big data flows)?

6.1. It is important to provide a legally robust and socially protected framework for the evolution of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI). EU policies must promote conditions that help businesses to take the lead in developing and applying new technologies that maintain competitiveness, whilst ensuring growth and decent jobs as part of a fair transition¹¹².

6.2. Regarding the digital transition an ambitious taxation agenda is more important than ever for the EU. The taxation of digital services companies will stay in the centre stage globally, the EU should work towards reaching a global solution in order to better harness the benefits of globalisation, with proper global governance and global rules. Close cooperation between the Commission, Member States and the OECD to support the development of an international solution is essential. If an international solution cannot be reached, the EU must consider proceeding on its own¹¹³.

Question 11: What are the biggest barriers and opportunities for European businesses engaging in digital trade in third countries or for consumers when engaging in e-commerce? How important are the international transfers of data for EU business activity?

6.3. The EESC calls for "any future multilateral initiative on data flows [to] fully comply with EU horizontal provisions for cross-border data flows and data protection in EU trade and investment agreements"¹¹⁴ and called on the new Commission to reconfirm this core commitment as non-negotiable¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁷ REX/532, point 1.21.

¹⁰⁸ REX/532, point 1.23.

¹⁰⁹ REX/s, point 1.18.

¹¹⁰ REX/518.

¹¹¹ REX/532, point 1.10.

¹¹² REX/517, point 1.2.1.

¹¹³ ECO/458, point 1.4.

¹¹⁴ REX/517, point 3.1.3.

6.4. Particular attention should be paid to rapidly growing collaborative economy. Firstly, it is important to state that specific tax systems are not necessary for collaborative economy businesses. Secondly, the European authorities should make every effort to establish channels of cooperation beyond Europe in order to lay down some ground rules for the digital economy, since the power of digital networks already makes it possible to manage services and exchange goods anywhere in the world, via a digital platform in a single geographic location¹¹⁵.

7. Ensuring fairness and a level playing field

Question 12: In addition to existing instruments, such as trade defence, how should the EU address coercive, distortive and unfair trading practices by third countries? Should existing instruments be further improved or additional instruments be considered?

7.1. The EESC suggests that in the event of countries engaging in unfair competition, labour conditions or sustainability standards, we should consider developing alternative dispute settlements and implementing UN online dispute resolution mechanisms. The EESC welcomes the Multi-Party Interim Arbitration Arrangement as a stopgap to maintaining an independent, two-step dispute settlement function in the WTO¹¹⁶.

7.2. More specifically, the EESC encourages the Commission to look into new approaches to labour dispute settlements that would allow for an *ad hoc* international dispute settlement panel to impose remedies on a noncompliant facility. A rapid process is already in use for EU Anti-Dumping measures and could be extended to Social Dumping. In line with the French and Dutch non-paper¹¹⁷, the EESC suggests in general for the effective implementation of TSD provisions to be linked to a staged implementation of tariff reduction¹¹⁸.

7.3. The EESC urges the Commission to speed up adoption of the White Paper on an Instrument on Foreign Subsidies, which will address distortive effects caused by foreign subsidies within the single market¹¹⁹.

7.4. Regarding trade defence instruments, the EESC welcomes the Commission's intention of using specific criteria to determine whether there are significant distortions in the market situation. The Committee notes that the respect of ILO standards and of Multilateral Environment Agreements should also be considered¹²⁰.

7.5. European actions need complementary improvements of the international normative framework to deliver global policy coherence. Achieving multilateral progress sometimes starts with ambitious unilateral action. For instance, the EESC sees the EU as uniquely placed to take the lead on due diligence, in particular with view to European companies' global leadership. The EESC calls on the EU and its Member States to deliver real progress towards more effective and binding instruments at international level, accompanied by renewed initiatives to promote the effective implementation of the existing instruments and frameworks. These have to include support for a UN Binding treaty on business and human rights and call for the establishment of an ILO Convention on decent work in supply chains¹,

¹¹⁵ ECO/434, point 1.7.

¹¹⁶ CCM/175, point 3.3.

¹¹⁷ [Non-paper from the Netherlands and France on trade social economic effects and sustainable development](#), May 2020.

¹¹⁸ REX/532, point 7.6.

¹¹⁹ INT/897, point 5.9.

¹²⁰ REX/483, point 1.5.

in line with the 2016 International Labour Conference discussion and be based on the ILO core and up-to-date Conventions and the ILO Declaration on Principles and Rights at work.¹²¹

7.6. An EU carbon border adjustment mechanism will shield EU energy-intensive companies (steel and cement, for example) from cheaper imports coming from third countries with no or weaker climate policy (no carbon market, no carbon pricing). This adjustment would re-establish a level playing field between EU companies and third country companies that could, for instance, take the form of a levy on imported goods, based on average prices in the EU ETS. Such mechanisms will help prevent carbon leakages and avoid the race to the bottom for energy-intensive industries, while protecting the competitiveness of EU industries and reducing the competitiveness of cheap carbon-intensive imports.¹²²

8. General question

Question 13: What other important topics not covered by the questions above should the Trade Policy Review address?

8.1. Greater EU internal coordination, notably with the EEAS: The EESC again strongly urges that the EEAS must become more trade aware. Trade has become an increasingly important element both geo-politically and as part of economic diplomacy, yet coverage of trade matters was notably absent from the recent [Joint Communication on EU-Asia Connectivity](#). Equally, the EESC repeats its call for a closer, more coherent and transparent cross collaboration between DG Trade and other Directorates-General, most notably DEVCO and EMPL¹²³.

8.2. To face current challenges, the EU must win sufficient internal consensus to enable it to continue to negotiate beneficial and dynamic trade agreements around the world. To do that, it needs to promote a progressive trade agenda that builds on the protection of fundamental environmental, social and consumer standards and rights¹²⁴.

Genuine engagement with civil society on trade issues

8.3. Over the years, the EESC has flagged clear areas of concerns that are not covered in the consultation paper, such as evaluation policies, data collection or civil society involvement, notably the DAGs. The EESC reminded these concerns in a recent opinion on the implementation of FTAs. The EESC demands that dialogue with civil society on trade and investment policy throughout and beyond negotiations must become far more profound and its monitoring role be strengthened. This dialogue must be developed on a basis of further transparency and continuous improvement, as negotiations and agreements become more complex, not least due to the SDGs, Paris Agreement and moves towards a circular economy¹²⁵.

8.4. Social economy organisations also have potential to be key players in helping realise the SDGs as well as the trade potential. The EESC thus points out that the social economy is prominent in the

¹²¹ REX/532, point 8.3 and 8.4.

¹²² REX/531, point 4.4.1.

¹²³ REX/517, point 1.5.5.

¹²⁴ REX/517, point 1.1.1.

¹²⁵ REX/517, point 1.6.

everyday life and productive activity of large regions of Africa, America and Asia, making a major, global contribution to improving living and working conditions¹²⁶.

Improving EU evaluation policy

8.5. The ex-ante evaluation policy needs to put greater focus on the qualitative elements of trade agreements, in consultation with civil society and the EESC. The Commission ought to consider broader sets of indicators and alternative models. On timing, it should finalise impact assessments before engaging in negotiations. The Commission should also conduct regular holistic studies looking into the global impact of trade¹²⁷. When assessing the impact of future agreements and when reporting on the implementation of existing FTAs, the EESC believes that the Commission should assess the cumulative impact of all FTAs on specific sectors (i.e. agriculture)¹²⁸.

8.6. In addition, it provided feedback on how to improve such reporting. Information is crucial for fine-tuning EU trade and investment policy and maximising its benefits. Securing and breaking down data seems the biggest challenge. The EU should thus use national data more consistently, showing the different realities per EU Member State or region, and where need be, invest in active data collection. Establishing criteria can make findings more tangible to compare. When it comes to trade and sustainable development, and in particular the situation of labour standards in countries, other data sources like the ILO need to complete the picture¹²⁹. Furthermore, the annual FTA implementation report [...] needs to enhance its informative potential and better interlink with past reports and the overall life cycle of trade evaluation policy. Sustainable impact assessments (SIA) should notably be used as sources of information. When drafting future reports, the European Commission (EC) should consult with civil society as a matter of priority¹³⁰.

8.7. The EESC believes that a more fundamental policy discussion on the role of trade and investment is essential to ensure a greater understanding of both its drivers and economic impact. EU evaluation policy needs to focus more on assessing qualitative elements of trade agreements, with the full involvement of civil society and the EESC. A broader set of indicators, with an open-minded look into alternative models, is required and impact assessments must be concluded before engaging in negotiations. At suitable intervals, too, a more holistic study of the global impact of trade should be conducted¹³¹.

8.8. Questions of methodology and timing are crucial and should be re-assessed. The used computable general equilibrium (CGE) model should be re-evaluated against alternative models and include a broader set of indicators measuring impacts on human and labour rights, climate change, biodiversity, consumers and FDI. A mere comparison of the situation with or without a trade agreement, however, falls short of the qualitative evaluation of negotiation options in particular on TSD. IA and SIA need to be concluded in a timely manner to advise negotiators and be taken into account before and during the negotiations, not presented after their conclusion.

8.9. Helping realise the SDGs, as previously recommended by the EESC in its opinion on The core role of trade and investment in meeting and implementing the SDGs, should move to the core of EU trade policy evaluation.

¹²⁶ REX/486, point 6.3.

¹²⁷ REX/517, point 1.5.4.

¹²⁸ REX/525, point 4.6.

¹²⁹ REX/525, point 4.3.

¹³⁰ REX/525, point 1.7.

¹³¹ REX/517, point 1.5.4

8.10. The EESC sees a valuable contribution in the civil society consultation for SIAs and recommends to extend it to the early process of drafting the terms of reference. The work of the EC evaluation steering group inside could further improve by involving civil society too. Consultants need sufficient independence and expertise, particularly, regarding human rights and the environmental issues.

8.11. As far as labour markets are concerned, more detailed analysis is required on potential displacement effects, the evolution of wages and job security. Concerning the economic impact, attention should be paid not only to the EU, but also to what extent trade and investment enable less-developed economies to increase their productivity and innovation. Moreover, a holistic study of the global impact of trade should be conducted at suitable intervals¹³².

Improving the international role of the Euro

8.12. One of ways the EU could ensure a level playing field would be by strengthening its integration and consolidating its role on the global scene, notably by giving the Euro a genuine external role and representation. This would strengthen the EU relative weight in international financial institutions and give it a more prominent position in international financial markets¹³³. In this review of the EU trade policy, the Commission should also pay due consideration to economic diplomacy¹³⁴.

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¹³² REX/517, points 4.4.2 to 4.4.5

¹³³ ECO/392.

¹³⁴ ECO/489.

Annex I- EESC opinions referenced in the contribution

Section on External relations (REX)

- EESC opinion on [Decent work in global supply chains \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/462, May 2016)
- EESC opinion on [Trade defence instruments – methodology](#) (REX/483, March 2017)
- EESC opinion on [The core role of trade and investment in meeting and implementing the sustainable development goals \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/486, December 2017)
- EESC opinion on [Trade and sustainable development chapters \(TSD\) in EU Free Trade Agreements \(FTA\)](#) (REX/500, July 2018)
- EESC opinion [Towards an EU-Mercosur Association Agreement](#) (REX/503, May 2018)
- EESC opinion on [The role of the EU's trade and investment policies in enhancing the EU's economic performance \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/517, January 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Binding UN treaty on business and human rights \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/518, December 2019)
- EESC opinion on the [Implementation of Free Trade Agreements 1 January 2018 - 31 December 2018](#) (REX/525, July 2020)
- EESC opinion on [EU and Africa: Making an equal development partnership a reality based on sustainability and common values \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/527, September 2020)
- EESC opinion on [A post COVID-19 emergency: the design of a New Multilateral Matrix \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/529, July 2020)
- EESC opinion on [Carbon markets: Emergence, structuring and challenges for European industry \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (REX/531, September 2020)
- EESC opinion on [Sustainable supply chains and decent work in international trade](#) (Exploratory opinion at the request of the German Presidency) (REX/532, September 2020)

Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)

- EESC opinion on [The sectoral industrial perspective on reconciling climate and energy policies \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (CCMI/167, January 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Fostering competitiveness, innovation, growth and job creation by advancing in global regulatory cooperation, by supporting a renewed multilateral trading scheme and by reducing market-distorting subsidies \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (CCMI/175, July 2020)

Section on Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO)

- EESC opinion on [A roadmap for moving towards a more consistent external representation of the euro area in international fora](#) (ECO/392, March 2016)
- EESC opinion on [Anti-Money Laundering Directive](#), (ECO/408, October 2016)
- EESC opinion on [An appropriate framework for the transparency of companies](#) (ECO/404, December 2016)

- EESC opinion on the [Taxation of the collaborative economy - analysis of possible tax policies faced with the growth of the collaborative economy \(exploratory opinion requested by the Estonian presidency\)](#) (ECO/434, October 2017)
- EESC opinion on the [Taxation in the digitalised economy \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (ECO/458, July 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Towards a stronger international role of the euro](#) (ECO/489, June 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Taxation/private investment and the Sustainable Development Goals - cooperation with the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#) (ECO/494, December 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Enhancing sustainable economic growth across the EU](#) (own-initiative opinion) (ECO/513, July 2020)
- EESC opinion on [The role of EU structural and cohesion policy in driving forward the transformation of the economy in an innovative and smart manner \(Exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency\)](#) (ECO/514, September 2020)

Section on Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)

- EESC opinion on [A New Industrial Strategy for Europe](#) (INT/897, July 2020)
- EESC opinion on an [SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe](#) (INT/898, September 2020)

Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT)

- EESC opinion on the [Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030"](#) (NAT/760, September 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Leaving no one behind when implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (SC/53, October 2019)
- EESC opinion on [Financing the Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy and the Challenges in Financing Climate Change Adaptation \(Exploratory opinion at the request of the Croatian presidency\)](#) (NAT/778, June 2020)
- EESC opinion on ["From farm to fork": a sustainable food strategy](#) (NAT/787, September 2020),
- EESC opinion on [An integrated approach for the EU's rural areas, with particular emphasis on vulnerable regions \(own-initiative opinion\)](#) (NAT/790, September 2020)
- EESC opinion on [Compatibility of EU trade policy with the European Green Deal](#) (NAT/791, September 2020)