



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Trade

Directorate R - Resources, Inter-Institutional Relations, Communications and Civil Society

The Acting Director

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Call for Expression of Interest in participating in EU Domestic Advisory Groups

The European Commission's Trade department (DG Trade) is hereby launching a call for expression of interest to invite civil society organisations to become members of a Domestic Advisory Group (DAG).

DG Trade is renewing the membership of 10 EU DAGs, established under the following trade agreements¹: EU-Canada, EU-Central America, EU-Colombia/Ecuador/Peru, EU-Georgia, EU-Japan, EU-Moldova, EU-Singapore, EU-South-Korea, EU-Ukraine and EU-Vietnam². Membership of an EU DAG is valid for 2.5 years.

What is a DAG?

EU trade agreements provide a platform for policy dialogue and cooperation on trade and sustainable development (TSD) with partner countries. They contain specific provisions on TSD which call for cooperation on issues ranging from social dialogue, decent working conditions, the sustainable management of natural resources to the promotion of responsible business conduct. EU trade agreements also require the effective implementation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that each party has ratified, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Civil society has an essential role in identifying and acting on TSD priorities, specifically through cooperation and exchanges between the EU DAG member organisations and their partner organisations abroad.

¹ DG Trade is negotiating trade agreements with other countries and regions, which may in due course lead to further calls for interest setting up DAGs once those negotiations are concluded and the agreements enter into force.

² There are two additional DAGs, the membership of which is not yet up for renewal. The UK DAG will be renewed in October 2025. The Cariforum consultative committee will also be renewed in 2025 as its members, reflecting the specific arrangements under that agreement, are selected for a period of five – rather than two and a half - years.

EU trade agreements provide for the involvement of civil society in advising on the implementation of TSD chapters³ through the creation of Domestic Advisory Groups. DAGs in the EU and the partner countries bring together expertise from environmental, labour, and business organisations. The 10 DAGs renewed through this call focus on the TSD chapters of the relevant agreements.

What is the role of DAGs?

The role of the DAG is to:

- advise the EU on the cooperation priorities in the field of sustainability, and on the implementation of trade-related environmental and labour provisions of the relevant FTA. To this end, EU DAG members assess and discuss progress made in implementing trade-related environmental and labour issues. They may also discuss trade-related environmental and labour implementation issues with the other Party's DAG. In doing so, DAG members should use their personal expertise and qualifications, and input received via their organisation's networks or via business organisations, trade unions or NGOs in partner countries;
- prepare the joint meeting that takes place once a year with DAGs and civil society representatives of the EU and the other Party to the agreement. At this meeting, EU DAG members will present the outcome of their work, advising Parties on the state of play and progress of the implementation of the Parties' commitments. This joint meeting, which can be virtual or in person, takes place alternatively in Brussels and in the partner country.

EU DAGs meet two to three times a year in Brussels. Funding is available to allow a limited number of members of the EU DAGs to attend the meetings in Brussels as well as in the partner countries.

In addition to members selected by the Commission via this call, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) appoints members for the EU DAGs, ensuring balanced participation across its three groups (employers, workers, NGOs/others). This mirrors the role of its members under the EU treaties as the organised voice of civil society in the EU. Typically, the EESC nominates at least three members for each EU DAG – depending on the size and level of interest in that EU DAG.

The EESC supports the EU DAGs through its External Relations' secretariat. It coordinates the EU DAG meetings, supports EU DAG members and maintains contacts with civil society partners worldwide. It also supports some partner DAGs.

What is the selection process to become an EU DAG member?

The review and selection of candidates is carried out by DG Trade. Organisations may apply to more than one DAG.

The organisation, and the candidate(s) proposed by the organisation, are selected against the criteria set out below. The maximum size of EU DAGs, including EESC members, will be capped at 24 members. Additional candidates will need to share seats with another DAG member from the same subgroup.

³ The Domestic Advisory Group set up under the EU-UK Free Trade Agreement is currently the only DAG that can review the implementation of the entire agreement.

Candidates need to fulfil the following criteria:

- The organisation must:
 - o Be a civil society organisation⁴;
 - o Be a not-for-profit organisation;
 - o Represent or defend EU interests;
 - o Be registered in the EU Transparency Register and in DG Trade's civil society database.

- The candidate designated by the organisation must:
 - o Be an EU citizen;
 - o Have specific professional expertise or competence of at least five years or equivalent degree of competence in the policy areas covered by the trade and sustainable development chapter(s) of the agreement(s) they are proposed to cover (trade, social and labour policy, environment, gender equality, etc.);
 - o Set out in a motivation letter the three key priorities they want to promote forward as a DAG member for the agreement they are applying for.

In selecting EU-DAG members, the Commission will seek to achieve a balanced and diverse membership, representing different civil society segments. To this end, in considering applications and subsequent financing of travel expenses, should the Commission have to choose between organisations proposing candidates who are also EESC members and candidates who are non-EESC members, priority will be given to the latter.

If your organisation is interested in being part of one or several DAGs, please send your statement of interest (including: the name and contact details of your organisation; a duly motivated presentation of your organisation's interest and personal motivation in being part of a DAG; the trade agreement(s) you selected; CVs of proposed participants; and relevant experience of the candidate organisation and of the member connected to the TSD Chapters by email to Mr Didier Bloch: Didier.Bloch@ec.europa.eu at the latest on **Monday 1 May close of business**.

The EESC secretariat will eventually contact future members for a first meeting.

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⁴ EU DAG members include various types of organisations: stakeholder's representatives at European and national level as well as smaller organisations dedicated to a specific topic.

Useful links

EU transparency register:

- <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do>

Civil society database:

- https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/analysis-and-assessment/eu-trade-meetings-civil-society_en

DG Trade's website:

- https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/index_en

Definition civil society:

- https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html