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**REX Work Programme**

*(October 2020 – April 2023)*

# **MAIN OBJECTIVES AND POLITICAL PRIORITIES**

The general objective of the EESC's Section for External Relations (REX) is to express the views of organised civil society on all aspects related to the **EU's external action and on the Common Foreign Policy** of the EU.

In practice, this concerns the EU's foreign policy at large, focusing on four major pillars: **enlargement, trade, neighbourhood**, and **development.** The REX section aims to promote a context which favours the activities of civil society organisations, to establish and improve direct contacts with civil society organisations and to support and strengthen civil and social dialogue in non-EU countries and regions.

This work is increasingly framed by the many international political and economic agreements concluded by the EU with third countries.

The REX section will pay continuous attention to the **priorities established by the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council** in order to ensure consistent and supportive action by organised civil society.

This work programme focuses in more detail on the first full year of its implementation, i.e. 2021, in order to illustrate the type and number of activities REX organises in any given year. In geographical and thematic terms, the REX section will prioritise horizontal issues related to: 1) the **Western Balkans**; 2) **international** **trade**; and 3) **Africa** as part of the ACP; beyond these priorities, UK, Asia trade integration and other parts of the world will be closely monitored.

Travelling activities will have to take into account the current COVID-19 pandemic; accordingly, videoconferences should be utilised as much as possible.

# **CONSULTATIVE WORK**

The section's consultative work (opinions and information reports) will be consistent with the work planned by the different REX standing groups, the section's institutional obligations, the Commission Work Programme, the requests of the Council presidencies, the Commission and the European Parliament and the EESC president's international programme. Specific attention will be given by REX opinions to:

* the ongoing revision of EU trade policy;
* developments in the EU's Neighbourhood Policy;
* the implementation of the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
* the implementation of fundamental rights and the rule of law;
* the evaluation of the EU's enlargement strategy;
* the Global Strategy for the CFDP;
* the revision of the Cotonou Agreement (the new OACPS);
* global supply chains;
* the monitoring of implementation of EU instruments for development cooperation by the various REX standing bodies;
* the trade dimension of the resilience and recovery process linked to the COVID-19 crisis;
* priorities of international organisations.

# **EXPECTED NEW WORK**

* As of 1 January 2021, the REX section will become responsible for **EU-UK relations**. Following the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) agreed on 24 December 2020, the corresponding institutional setting (a Domestic Advisory Group) will be established, in which the REX Section will actively participate.
* The REX section will closely monitor all developments as regards the new EU-US **Transatlantic** Agenda and possibilities for strengthening transatlantic civil society dialogue.
* Within the Neighbourhood Policy, the REX section will take further steps towards the full establishment of the EU-Armenia civil society platform under the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement. The section will be requested to join the Advisory Groups, in the framework of the trade agreements being concluded with Morocco[[1]](#footnote-1), Tunisia[[2]](#footnote-2) and Jordan[[3]](#footnote-3) in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
* In terms of candidate countries, within the context of Stabilisation and Association Agreements (AAs) and the expected start of EU accession negotiations, we plan to relaunch meetings of the EU-**North Macedonia** Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee and establish an EU-**Albania** Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee.
* The Free Trade Agreement between the EU and **Singapore** entered into force on 21 November 2019, and between the EU and **Vietnam** on 1 August 2020. Subsequently, as in other "new generation" FTAs, civil society organisations will be involved in monitoring the implementation of the Trade and Sustainable Development chapter, and EU Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs) will be set up on the EU side, for the Singapore FTA in November 2020 and for the Vietnam FTA in early 2021.
* Depending on the progress of the Association Agreement with **Mercosur**, the EESC could be given a mandate to establish new civil society monitoring mechanisms. A request to set up a JCC within the modernised EU-**Mexico** Association Agreement could be received.
* The section might be requested to pay special attention to specific **horizontal issues** concerning the external dimension of internal EU policies, such as migration and asylum policy, respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights, the energy union and energy imports, the social and solidarity economy, sustainable development and the Green Deal, EU and international standards and their bearing on agricultural and food imports, and inequalities. Special attention will be given to the external dimension of the post-COVID-19 recovery strategy.
* The REX section is committed to support the EU in delivering the European Green Deal and the broader Sustainable Development Goals. Climate change, decarbonisation and the new start for the Paris Agreement with the US coming back into it will top the REX section agenda. We will thus continue to make "greening" policy recommendations wherever relevant. We will promote this Green Agenda with our partners, using our networks to explain the EU's ambitions and to look for avenues of collaboration. The REX section will organise a major event in 2021 on how relations with partners' civil societies can help deliver the European Green Deal and contribute to greening objectives worldwide.

# **WORK PROGRAMME OF THE DIFFERENT REX STANDING BODIES**

# **International trade**

# This new EESC and REX section term begins at what could be a decisive moment for international trade: the reform of the WTO towards more sustainability and efficiency, the review of the EU trade policy, the early review of the 15-point action plan on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters, the new EU Chief Trade Enforcement Officer and fresh tools, not to mention the UK becoming a third country and the change of US administration. All of this in a hopefully post-COVID-19 recovery. Expectations are high and the challenges manifold. The REX section will seek to raise the views and concerns of civil society in all these areas. It will also work towards communicating more effectively on international trade and its positive or negative impact on people and businesses interest in international trade.

# Monitoring the implementation and enforcement of trade agreements by civil society will remain a key focus area. The section will continue to closely monitor the EU trade negotiations currently under way at bilateral and regional level.

# Other mandates for **Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs)** might be received for possible upcoming trade or investment agreements (UK, USA, China, etc.). The REX secretariat will continue to provide the administrative and policy support for these DAGs, while also addressing horizontal issues such as resources and coordination challenges. A balanced approach shall be improved between business, social partners and NGOs.

# Sustainability of international trade will remain a key driver as we embark on a post-COVID-19 recovery. International trade must play its part in delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The section will thus maximise the reach of two recent opinions (*The design of a New Multilateral Matrix* and *Sustainable supply chains and decent work in international trade*).

# The section will also follow the WTO negotiations and reform process, participating as a civil society advisor in the WTO Ministerial Conferences or organising workshops at WTO Public Forums. It will follow closely, in that context, the establishment and the WTO compatibility of the Carbon border measure taxation. China, the US and Asia will top our priorities in WTO.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Up to three meetings per EU DAG (with an expected total of at least 30 meetings) * Participation of a REX delegation in the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference * Organisation by the section of a seminar at the WTO Public Forum, in Geneva * Five meetings of the Follow-up Committee on International Trade, including one meeting in Geneva * A conference on International trade and Sustainability or joint hearing on TSD enforcement |

**ACP-EU relations and EU development policy**

During the 2020-2023 mandate, the EESC will develop a strategy to reinforce the role of organised civil society – including social partners – in the activities already jointly developed within the future European Union-Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Partnership Agreement, and within the future comprehensive EU-African Union Strategy.

From development to partnership

The role of the EESC in the European Union-Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Partnership Agreement: the EESC has based its contribution to the EU-ACP partnership on a set of activities developed under the guidance of a Follow-up Committee made of 12 EESC members and 12 delegates from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The section strategy will be based on the following core objectives:

* keeping up the pressure at all levels to achieve a prominent role for civil society in the future European Union-Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Partnership Agreement;
* maintaining the excellent working relations with the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament; continuing to exchange and extend invitations/carry out visits;
* promoting the involvement of the EESC and local civil society representatives in all EU-ACP European Partnership Agreements;
* in the post-COVID-19 era, advocating for EU assistance and transfer of knowledge and funds, including the development of infrastructure;
* promoting recognition of civil society in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, including capacity-building.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Renewal of the ACP delegates to the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee * EESC own-initiative opinion on the role of organised civil society in ACP-EU relations * Holding of the 28th meeting of ACP-EU economic and social interest groups (Ghana/tbc) * Studying the feasibility of one fact-finding mission of 3 members to a country with an EPA agreed * Participation in the ACP-EU JPAs (Portugal + third countries/tbc) (e.g. speaking slots at the plenary meetings) * Two meetings of the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee |

A stronger and more equitable partnership with Africa

The African continent is a strategic partner to the EU and its Member States and one of the main priorities of the von der Leyen Commission (2019-2024), as unveiled during the first trip by the Commission President to Ethiopia in December 2019. REX will share this priority and support and contribute to any European Commission and European Parliament related initiatives.

The section strategy will be based on the following core objectives:

* ensuring civil society ownership, with a particular emphasis on African organised civil society in relation to the future Comprehensive Joint EU-African Union Strategy;
* promoting core commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including fundamental labour and gender rights, ILO Conventions, etc.;
* being attentive to the respect of human rights and rule of law in African countries affected by conflicts and migration flows (South Sahel, Horn of Africa, Western and Central Africa);
* promoting infrastructure development and monitoring the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which encompasses 54 African nations in Northern Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Western Africa, in such a way as to ensure that civil society – including the Social partners – is heard;
* in line with the EU Consensus on Development, the EESC advocates promoting decent work, good life prospects and sustainable economic development based on a fair investment and trade partnership.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Provide recommendations to the sixth AU-EU summit by holding the *7th Meeting of the EU-Africa Economic and Social Stakeholders' Network* * Develop cooperation with the African ECOSOC * Promote a cultural exhibition by an African artist, to be held at the EESC |

**The Western Balkans**

The section will maintain the links established at regional level with the Western Balkan partners, in particular via the efforts of the Western Balkans Follow-up Committee. The role of the Western Balkans Follow-up Committee is to follow political, economic and social developments in the Western Balkans (especially in those partner countries with which no joint bilateral civil society bodies have been set up) and to encourage the development of civil society and the consolidation of democracy in the region.

The section strategy will be based on the following policy priorities and objectives:

* the role of social partners and other CSOs in promoting regional cooperation and people-to-people relations – building bridges;
* the state of social dialogue and civil dialogue and enabling civic space in the Western Balkans;
* "fundamentals" (rule of law, fundamental rights, fight against corruption, media freedom, economic reform programmes);

The role of CSOs in coping with the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis;

Contribution of civil society to the Green Agenda and sustainable development of the Western Balkans;

* promoting networking between CSOs from the region and the EU;
* continuing extensive cooperation with the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Parliament, as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC);
* promoting the benefits of the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries to the EESC's partner organisations.

The Western Balkans Civil Society Forum is held every two years in one of the countries of the region with the aim of fostering civil society dialogue and regional cooperation. The 8th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum will be held in 2021.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Eighth Western Balkans Civil Society Forum in Skopje, September 2021 (tbc) * REX section: general debate on the Western Balkans in the context of opinion REX/533 on *Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans*, 3 March 2021 * Three-four meetings of the Western Balkans Follow-up Committee, to be held in Brussels * Kosovo⃰, Bosnia and Herzegovina: possible study visits to maintain contact with local organisations |

**Candidate countries**

The Civil Society Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) remain a valuable tool for the Committee in its work relating to the EU accession talks with Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, and soon with Albania and North Macedonia. The JCCs' role is to channel know-how, experience and information between the EU and organised civil society in these countries on the scope of common policies and the actual taking-up and implementation of the Community acquis.

Considering the current political relations between the EU and Turkey's government, and also in light of the prevailing situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, the section considers it important – more than ever – to keep dialogue channels open not exclusively but especially with Turkish civil society. The 40th meeting of the JCC is scheduled to take place in Turkey in the summer of 2021 and to include the presentation and discussion of reports on disaster management and the green economy.

The JCCs will each hold up to two meetings per year, alternately in the candidate country and in the EU.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Two meetings of the EU-Montenegro JCC * Two meetings of the EU-Serbia JCC * Two meetings of the EU-North Macedonia JCC * Two meetings of the EU-Albania JCC * One meeting of the EU-Turkey JCC (+ a preparatory meeting on the EU side) |

**The European Economic Area**

The section will continue its activities regarding relations with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein in the framework of the EEA Consultative Committee's work, and will participate in meetings of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * One meeting of the EEA CC Bureau, in the last quarter of 2021 in Brussels * One meeting of the EEA CC, in the second quarter of 2021 (virtual meeting in June – tbc), combined with a meeting of the EEA CC Bureau   + Report and resolution on the Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights   + Resolution on the EU digital levy proposal and its implications for the EEA * Participation in two meetings of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee |

**Eastern Europe neighbouring countries**

The section will continue its efforts to keep the Eastern Partnership high on the EESC's external agenda, especially in light of recent developments in Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It will strive to improve communication between civil society representatives from the EU and its eastern neighbours, support the consolidation of civil society organisations in those countries and help them strengthen their capacity to influence national decision-making mechanisms.

REX will continue to efficiently monitor the implementation of association agreement, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia through dedicated civil society platforms and domestic advisory groups. The section will take further steps towards the full establishment of the EU-Armenia civil society platform under the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement. In the context of the recent military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (November 2020) and the resulting peace-building in the region, it will explore opportunities to facilitate dialogue between the Armenian and Azeri civil societies.

Concerning Belarus, the section will provide support to the democratisation process in the country following the presidential elections in August 2020. REX will investigate possibilities of organising an exploratory mission to Belarus with the aim of creating sustainable links with business associations, independent unions and other CS organisations.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Two meetings of the EU-Ukraine CSP * Two meetings of the EU-Moldova CSP * Two meetings of the EU-Georgia CSP * Two meetings of the EU-Armenia CSP (after successfully setting up the CSP) * Participation of a REX delegation in the annual Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum * Exploratory mission to Belarus (tbc) * Two meetings of the Eastern Neighbours Follow-up Committee |

**Russia**

The Russia Follow-up Committee will continue its cooperation with Russian NGOs within the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum. To keep channels open, it will maintain its contacts with the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in agreement with the EEAS. It will also deepen its cooperation with the European Parliament and its Russia delegation and closely monitor the situation and developments as regards the 2021 Duma elections. Finally, it will potentially establish relations with organisations working with Russian civil society outside and within Russia and try to provide more visibility for Russian civil society.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * One meeting with the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation * One meeting with the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum * One mission to Moscow, for a meeting between the EESC and Civic Chamber presidents |

**Euro-Mediterranean region and Union for the Mediterranean 25 years after Barcelona**

Work in these areas will be given further impetus based on the upcoming adoption of a "Joint Communication by the EC and High Representative on a renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbours" and the reaffirmation by the European Council that the southern neighbourhood is a strategic priority (economy, security, migration, post-COVID recovery, green economy, natural resources). The Council announced that a new Agenda for the Mediterranean would be developed based on shared priorities and focused responses, with a "strong role for civil society".

Therefore, the section will focus on the implementation of the MoU[[4]](#footnote-4) between the EESC and the Union for the Mediterranean secretariat concluded on 30 September 2020.

In addition, the Section for External Relations will establish a Euro-Mediterranean disability rights network, in close cooperation with the European Disability Forum (EDF) and with the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD).

The Section for External Relations will also monitor and contribute to the negotiations on a DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) between the EU and Morocco (ongoing), Tunisia (ongoing) and Jordan (negotiation directives adopted).

Furthermore, especially in the context of the lessons to be learnt for the post-COVID recovery, the REX section will support the European Commission's initiative to encourage on-shoring and near-shoring – production in and near Europe – in order to shorten supply chains and support manufacturing in the EU's Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood.

The section strategy will be based on the following core aims:

* concrete implementation of the MoU between the EESC and the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat concluded on 30 September 2020;
* coordination with the EU ESCs[[5]](#footnote-5), EU institutions, the Union for the Mediterranean and other bodies;
* monitoring of trade negotiations between the EU and Morocco (ongoing), Tunisia (ongoing) and Jordan (negotiation directives adopted);
* promoting civil society involvement in the EU's Neighbourhood Policy;
* promoting the establishment and support of, as well as reviving relations with, ESCs in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries;
* capacity-building to reinforce the involvement of civil society organisations in decision-making processes in their countries.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * One Euromed Summit co-organised with the Moroccan Economic, Social and Environmental Council in Morocco * One fact-finding mission of three members to a country in the Euromed region * One meeting of the EU-Morocco Joint Advisory Group in Morocco * Participation in the Regional Forum of the UfM * Participation in UfM Ministerial Conferences * Participation in the plenary meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean * Two meetings of the Euromed Follow-Up Committee * One preparatory meeting for the Euromed Summit that could include a third meeting of the Euromed  Follow-Up Committee * Co-organisation of, and participation in, the Brussels Civil Society Forum (MAJALAT) in collaboration with DG NEAR, EEAS, DG DEVCO and the CoR |

The Section for External Relation favours an inclusive approach that recognises the role of North Africa as a bridge between the EU and the African Union as well as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) which creates a market of 1.2 billion people with a combined GDP of EUR 2 trillion.

The African Union and the AfCTA both encompass the whole African continent. Euromed and ACP should therefore not be viewed in isolation. Issues such as peace, stability, migration and trade testify to the strong ties between both regions.

**Transatlantic relations**

The Transatlantic Relations Follow-up Committee will monitor transatlantic relations in a broad sense (the US and Canada except CETA), exploring possibilities of cross-Atlantic dialogue where common ground can be found building upon common values of democracy, freedom and human rights. A close cooperation will be established between the various REX bodies (section, CETA DAG, Trade Follow‑up Committee). The subjects it will tackle will include future trade opportunities on a more granular level, settling trade disputes and exploring options for reforming and strengthening multilateralism principles. It will also follow and support efforts to unite allies sharing common democratic values in facing new global challenges, including working towards a common strategy on China, jointly tackling global challenges, not least the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, as well as building joint strategies to develop key technologies and support innovation.

The section, together with its Canadian counterparts, will monitor the implementation of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the early TSD review and the ratification process.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Three-four meetings of the Transatlantic Relations Follow-up Committee * One mission to the United States * Three meetings of the EU-Canada EU DAG (two in Brussels and one in Canada) |

**Latin America**

The EESC will follow the developments related to the negotiated Association Agreement between the EU and Mercosur, and will set up the civil society monitoring mechanisms provided for by the association agreements. The EESC will enhance its cooperation with our Mercosur counterpart, the Mercosur Consultative Economic and Social Forum.

The EESC will organise the 10th Meeting of the EU, Latin American and Caribbean Organised Civil Society aimed at providing EU and CELAC heads of state with civil society's opinion and maintaining well-established relations.

The members of the Latin America Follow-up Committee will attend sessions of the EuroLat Joint Parliamentary Assembly, and will continue to organise civil society hearings as part of the EuroLat meetings.

The EESC will further extend cooperation with the European Parliament, the EEAS and the Commission, in order to encourage more effective regional and bilateral cooperation.

On the basis of the mandate received by the Association Council within the EU-Chile Association Agreement, the EESC will continue its work on the EU-Chile JCC and will monitor the ongoing negotiations to modernise it, especially following unprecedented serious social unrest (October 2019) and at the beginning of a transformational process marked by the constitutional referendum (October 2020) which will take up to the next two years.

The EESC will continue its role in the DAGs under the EU-Central America Association Agreement and the Free Trade agreement between the EU and Colombia/Peru/Ecuador. Moreover, the EESC will set up the Joint Consultative Committee provided for in the EU-Central America Agreement for Political Dialogue and Cooperation.

With a view to revising the Association Agreement with Mexico, the REX section will actively follow the possible establishment of another committee of this type. Similarly, it will try to establish contact with Cuban civil society in order to complement the dialogue held under the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement with a civil society perspective.

The activities of the EU-Brazil Round Table are unilaterally suspended due to the Bolsonaro administration's decision to shut down the Economic and Social Development Council (CDES).

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * Meeting with the FCES of Mercosur, in Argentina * 10th Meeting of the EU-CELAC Civil Society Organisations, in LAC region * 2 meetings of the EuroLat Joint Parliamentary Assembly (location tbc) * 7th and 8th Meeting of the EU-Chile JCC, in Brussels and Santiago * 2 meetings of the EU DAG under the EU-Central America AA + 1 joint meeting of the DAGs * 2 meetings of the EU DAG under the FTA between the EU and Colombia/Peru/Ecuador + 1 joint meeting of the DAGs * Two meetings of the Latin America Follow-up Committee |

**Relations with Asia**

Following the cancellation of the meeting in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU-China Round Table is expected to relaunch its work under the new EESC presidency. The section will monitor the progress of the negotiations on the conclusion of an ambitious EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). If the current gaps (market access, investment-related sustainable development, and level playing field issues) cannot be bridged by the end of 2020, the closing of the deal could drag on until next year.

On 15 November 2020, the ten countries of ASEAN as well as China, Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand signed a major trade deal that covers 30% of the world's population and GDP, 28% of global trade, and includes five members of the G20. The Indo-Pacific region is of strategic and economic importance to the EU. The REX section intends to follow closely how the region develops in the future and how the RCEP trade deal is implemented.

The REX section looks forward to the Commission's plan to table a legislative proposal for a carbon border adjustment mechanism in the second quarter of 2021. An opinion on the CBAM proposal would be a logical follow-up to REX/531, an own-initiative opinion on carbon markets that was adopted at the EESC plenary session in September 2020. A CBAM should encourage international trading partners – such as China – to match the EU in the ambition of their climate action. The CBAM will be relevant in the context of the announcement that China aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

Climate change, the multilateral rules-based trading system, the global economy after the pandemic, Eurasian connectivity and digital transformation are common challenges and potential areas for future EU-China cooperation – hence important topics to be followed at a general level by the REX section. It will be equally important to monitor the human rights situation in China, including developments in Hong Kong and the treatment of people belonging to minorities.

Through the Domestic Advisory Groups under the respective trade agreements, the EESC has contacts with South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Vietnam.

Through its EU-Japan Follow-up Committee, the EESC will continue to strengthen its cooperation with Japanese counterpart organisations, and it will pay special attention to the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), beyond the chapter on trade and sustainable development, monitored by the EU-Japan Domestic Advisory Group (DAG). It will continue to keep an eye on the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and issues such as education, research and innovation, and climate action. Connectivity and RBC/CSR will also be on its radar.

The EU DAG for Singapore will work on the following four topics during its first mandate:

* the exchange of views on the liberalisation of environmental goods and services;
* respect for fundamental rights by the parties and in particular the ratification and full implementation of ILO Conventions on freedom of association, discrimination and forced labour;
* conservation and sustainable management of natural resources;
* wildlife trafficking.

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| **EXPECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2021:**   * 18th EU-China Round Table, to be held in the EU in 2021, possibly via videoconference (+ a preparatory meeting on the EU side) * Mission to Japan of the EU-Japan Follow-up Committee * Regular meetings of the EU-Japan Follow-up Committee * Two meetings of the EU DAG under the EU-Japan EPA + Joint Dialogue with civil society * Two meetings of the EU DAG under the EU-South Korea FTA + 1 joint meeting of the EU and South Korea DAGs * Two meetings of the EU DAG under the EU-Singapore FTA + 1 joint meeting of the EU and Singapore DAGs * Two meetings of the EU DAG under the EU-Vietnam FTA + 1 joint meeting of the EU and Vietnam DAGs |

**Relations with international organisations**

Cooperation with other international organisations such as the UN, FAO, International Organization for Migration, etc., will be enhanced. A Joint Action Plan between the EESC and the ILO will be agreed at the beginning of this term of office.

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1. **Ongoing negotiations** for a DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) between the EU and **Morocco** (since 1 March 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Ongoing negotiations** for a DCFTA between the EU and **Tunisia** (since 13 October 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Negotiation directives for a DCFTA between the EU and **Jordan** adopted in 2011 (**negotiations** **not launched yet**). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Memorandum of understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Economic and social council. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)