

# New forward-looking and innovative future strategy on trade and investment

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The European Parliament adopted by 534 votes to 146, with 30 abstentions, a resolution on a new forward-looking and innovative future strategy for trade and investment.

**Changing trends in global trade:** Members recalled that the EU is the **wealthiest economy worldwide** controlling a third of world trade, and by 2020 this is projected to decrease to about 26 %. By 2050, the EU-28 will represent only 15% of the world's GDP, down from 23.7% in 2013.

The centre of wealth generation is shifting eastwards, towards the Asia Pacific-Region with China, which has already surpassed Japan and will probably overtake the US to become the world's largest economy in 2025. Emerging economies and developing countries are catching up with the group of industrialised countries and reaching the stage of mature economies. Moreover, the demographic development will also have a negative impact on the EU's position in the world trade scene.

The **EU's trade and investment policy must be bolstered** by:

- ensuring beneficial outcomes in terms of employment and wealth creation for citizens and businesses, but also by strengthening environmental and social rights and guaranteeing the highest level of transparency, engagement and accountability;
- maintaining constant dialogue with businesses, consumers, social partners, all other relevant stakeholders and local and regional authorities, by setting clear guidelines in the negotiations.

**Adapting faster to changes:** Parliament welcomed [Commission's new strategy](#) which focuses on elements such as responsible management of supply chains, the global digital market, trade in digital goods and services, fair and ethical trade, and the social costs of trade liberalisation.

Parliament stated that any future trade policy must fight forms of protectionism, including the reduction of unnecessary non-tariff barriers to trade, and ensure new market access, especially for SMEs. It expressed support for the Commission's aim to enhance synergies between trade and **internal market policies**, and recommended that these policies award priority to measures aimed at creating jobs.

The Commission is called upon to:

- regularly update its trade and investment strategy and to publicly present every two years a **detailed implementation report to Parliament**;
- expedite its procedures so that negotiated trade agreements can be **referred to Parliament within a shorter period of time**, thereby allowing them to be applied provisionally or entered into force more swiftly.

**Increased transparency:** Parliament welcomed the Commission's increased **transparency and openness** at all stages of trade negotiations, and supported the Commission's Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership transparency initiative stating that enlarged access to classified information by Members of Parliament in the TTIP negotiations has strengthened parliamentary scrutiny. In this regard, Members called for a widening of the Commission's transparency initiative to extend full transparency, and the possibility for **public scrutiny**, to all ongoing and future trade negotiations.

Moreover, the Commission is called upon to ensure a strong and balanced involvement of civil society and social partners, including through appropriate, public, online consultations and communication campaigns, in order to improve the content of the EU's trade policy and orient it to the defence of citizen's rights, thereby strengthening its legitimacy.

**Greater coherence between the EU's commercial objectives and other aspects of its external policy on trade for development:** Parliament recalled that consistency between external policies and internal ones having an external dimension must be ensured. Parliament shared the Commission's view that the EU has a special responsibility as regards the impact of its trade policies on developing countries and in particular on least developed countries (LDC).

Given that migration is one of the main challenges the EU is facing in the 21st century, the resolution emphasised that ensuring policy coherence of the EU's trade and investment is fundamental in order to tackle the causes of migration. Parliament regretted that this has not been sufficiently reflected in the 'Trade for All' strategy.

Parliament also stressed that provisions on human rights, social and environmental standards, commitments on labour rights based on the ILO's core conventions and principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR), including the OECD principles for multinational companies and the UN Principles on Business and Human rights, should be binding and must form a substantial part of EU trade agreements through enforceable commitments. Sustainable development chapters should be included in all EU trade and investment agreements and gender perspective should be included, horizontally, in all future trade agreements.

Members called, at the same time, for the inclusion of an **effective enforcement mechanism for labour and environmental rights** to which the human rights clause does not apply. Parliament also called on the Commission to establish a structured and depoliticised process whereby consultations with a partner on suspected violations of obligations under trade and sustainable development chapters must be launched according to clear criteria.

**Transparent global value chains (GVCs) respecting fundamental values and standards worldwide:** although the expansion of global value chains (GVCs) has created job opportunities, **the weak enforcement of existing labour laws and occupational safety standards** – introduced to protect workers from exhaustive working hours and unacceptable conditions – in sourcing countries remains a pressing issue (around 780 million active women and men are not earning enough to be lifted out of poverty). The resolution noted that GVCs have also propelled some supplier firms to ignore labour laws, reallocate their economic activities outside the EU, engage workers in unsafe and unacceptable conditions, demand exhaustive working hours and deny workers their fundamental rights.

The Commission is called upon to present concrete proposals to **improve conditions** in them in close cooperation with the ILO and the OECD with the aim of creating sustainable and equitable growth, and **decent jobs**, in the EU and for its partners. Moreover, better protection of entire spectrum of **intellectual property rights** (IPR) and more effective enforcement is of fundamental importance for further integration into GVCs.

**Effective trade defence instruments (TDIs):** Parliament stressed that further trade liberalisation measures are require the EU to be able to respond even more effectively to unfair trading practices and to ensure a level playing field. It also stressed that the Union's trade defence system needs to be modernised urgently without being weakened and pointed out that EU trade defence law must be more effective. It regretted that the [TDI modernisation proposal](#) is blocked in the Council, which has been unable to deliver on this essential piece of legislation.

**Opposition to the granting of Market Economic Status (MES) to China:** Members reiterated the importance of the EU's partnership with China, in which free and fair trade and investment play an important role. They are convinced that, until China meets all five criteria required to qualify as a market economy, the EU should use a **non-standard methodology in its anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations of Chinese imports** when determining price comparability. The Commission is called upon to make a proposal in line with this principle, and recalled the need to coordinate closely with other WTO partners on the issue.

**Support for the Commission in its fight against corruption:** aware that the inclusion of provisions relating to financial services in trade agreements has raised concerns regarding their potential negative effects in terms of money laundering, tax evasion and tax avoidance, the Commission is urged to fight against corruption as a major non-tariff barrier in developed and developing countries.

Lastly, the Commission is also called upon to:

- address SMEs' needs horizontally in all chapters of trade agreements;
- go even further in seeking an ambitious and more reciprocal opening up of international public procurement markets
- set up a unified EU customs service for a more effective application of customs rules and procedures throughout the customs territory of the EU;
- push strongly in all negotiations for a limitation to geoblocking practices, for a reduction in international roaming fees, and for a reinforcement of passenger rights.