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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

**PROMOTE DECENT WORK WORLDWIDE
RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS FOR A FAIR, SUSTAINABLE AND
RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

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Glossary

<i>Term or acronym</i>	<i>Meaning or definition</i>
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
Commission	European Commission
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
EEAS	European External Action Service
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EIB	European Investment Bank
ESG	Environment, Social, Governance
EU	European Union
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FPI	Foreign Policy Instruments
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G7	Group of Seven
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MLC	Maritime Labour Convention
NFRD	Non-Financial Reporting Directive
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFPA	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements

SOM	Senior Officials Meeting
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TSD	Trade and Sustainable Development
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
VZF	Vision Zero Fund
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1. OBJECTIVE

This Staff Working Document provides an overview of EU involvement in the promotion of decent work worldwide. It underlines the crosscutting nature of the decent work agenda with relevance in external action, multilateral fora, and other EU policy areas with outreach beyond EU and in global partnerships. The EU is active in different policy areas to promote decent work in global value chains, striving for a fair, sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

2. THE ROLE OF THE EU AS A RESPONSIBLE LEADER IN PROMOTING DECENT WORK GLOBALLY

The COVID-19 crisis has a strong impact on all workers,¹ including some groups that have been particularly affected. It has already led to a decrease in working hours equivalent to the loss of 400 million full-time jobs worldwide.² It also brought a drop of income, for example of an estimated 60 per cent for informal workers globally, already in the first month since beginning of the crisis³. Moreover, 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy will lose job opportunities.⁴ One out of six young people has stopped working due to the crisis.⁵ The employment of women is currently at a more than 15% higher risk of reduction in working hours, cuts to wages and of layoffs compared to men.⁶ Women are particularly affected by the crisis due to their high representation in the health and social sectors,⁷ and in other female dominated sectors hit by the crisis⁸ and finally due to the unequal distribution of care work⁹. The COVID-19 crisis risks endangering progress on gender equality achieved in the past.¹⁰ The pandemic is a particularly severe crisis for those who are already the most vulnerable. The crisis can push millions of additional children into child labour¹¹ due to lower household income, closure of schools and persisting other risk factors for child labour.¹² Migrant workers and refugees, who already face barriers in accessing work and livelihood opportunities, have experienced a rising level of xenophobia, food insecurity and overall

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745337.pdf; https://www.ilo.org/global/research/policy-briefs/WCMS_749368/lang--en/index.htm.

² https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_749398/lang--en/index.htm.

³ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang--en/index.htm.

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang--en/index.htm.

⁵ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_745879/lang--en/index.htm.

⁶ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf.

⁷ ILO, The COVID-19 Response: Getting Gender Equality Right for a Better Future for Women at Work, May 2020.

⁸ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf.

⁹ ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fifth edition, p. 8-9.

¹⁰ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749399.pdf.

¹¹ <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Campaignandadvocacy/wdacl/2020/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_747421.pdf.

worsening working conditions.¹³ Workers, who already have to bear unsafe working conditions in many regions of the world, now face an additional risk in the form of improper protection measures against COVID-19 at their workplaces.

While the COVID-19 crisis has created a new threat to the livelihoods of many workers, it has also put a spotlight on the already existing poor living and working situation of millions in the world and on the need for change. Still today, more than 150 million children, some as young as five years of age, are victims of child labour and 25 million workers suffer due to forced labour.¹⁴ Families of almost three million workers mourn the work-related deaths of their loved ones every year, which represents a deterioration over the last years.¹⁵ Millions of workers around the world suffer from poverty wages, excessive working hours, discrimination and harassment and violence at work. Good examples of well-functioning industrial relations have proven that social dialogue is an essential part of a successful crisis management. However, in many regions of the world, a successful social dialogue is currently made difficult because workers are – often violently – hindered from associating and from acting collectively. Moreover, 55% of the global population is today without any kind of social protection¹⁶, even though social protection has proved essential to provide an effective support to populations affected by adverse situations such as loss of employment or illness.¹⁷

The driving forces of this poor living and working situation include weak labour and social protection legislation,¹⁸ insufficient law enforcement,¹⁹ public administration without appropriate capacity as well as irresponsible business conduct and unsustainable business practices and short-term business models.

¹³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf.

¹⁴ Between 2000 and 2016 there was a 38 per cent decrease in child labour globally; https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_713925/lang--en/index.htm; on forced labour there is no adequate data allowing an estimation on the development,

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_181953.pdf.

¹⁵ There is an indication that the number of deaths attributed to work has increased between 2014 (2.33 million) to 2017 (2.78 million), https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_686645.pdf.

¹⁶ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_601903/lang--en/index.htm.

¹⁷ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_744708/lang--en/index.htm.

¹⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹⁹ Cf Promote Decent Work, ILO/OECD/WB/IMF report 2016, P 27, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_563297.pdf; ILO benchmarks on the number of labour inspectors: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_077633/lang--en/index.htm.

CHILD LABOUR

The UN General Assembly has urged the international community to step up efforts to eradicate forced labour and child labour, and declared 2021 as the Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.²⁰ The SDG target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda aims to end all forms of child labour by 2025.

Between 2000 and 2016, the number of child labour victims decreased by 94 million. However, this progress is slowing down. While between 2008 and 2012 a 47 million reduction was recorded, there was a reduction of only 16 million between 2012 and 2016.²¹

According to the latest International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates (2017), 152 million children between 5-17 years old are victims of child labour. Almost half of them, 73 million, work in hazardous child labour. The prevalence of child labour is highest in Africa (72.1 million, 19.6% of all children), Asia and the Pacific (62.1 million, 7.4%) and the Americas (10.7 million, 5.3%). Victims of child labour work for domestic and export markets. The regions with the highest share of child labour linked to export goods are Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (26%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (22%).²² Children as young as 5-11 years account for almost half of the 152 million child labour victims, 42 million are 12-14 years old, 37 million 15-17 years of age.²³ Globally 12% of child labour is in industry and mining, 17% in services and 71% in agriculture, fishing and forestry.

Child labour affects the whole life of a child. Children in hazardous working environments suffer from diseases and injuries, including those that are life-long or fatal. Victims of child labour often experience little or no school education or training, limited job opportunities in the adulthood and are at risk of being trapped in poverty.²⁴

New technologies, such as artificial intelligence, environment and climate change, demography and migration, as well as globalisation are drivers for change in labour markets and working patterns. New business models spurred by the digital transformation raise important considerations over poor working conditions and a possible race to the bottom in labour standards. Some types of online platform work²⁵, such as work on micro-tasking platforms, have become increasingly important in global supply chains (i.e. in labelling data to train AI systems). Such work is often associated with unfair practices, for example unjust

²⁰ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_713925/lang--en/index.htm.

²¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf.

²² Cf “Ending child labour, forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chains”, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipecc/documents/publication/wcms_716930.pdf.

²³ Cf Child labour, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁴ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575541.pdf;
<https://www.who.int/ceh/risks/labour/en/>;

https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_11354/lang--en/index.htm.

²⁵ Online platform work is characterised by a clear Global North-South pattern, in which most employers are located in high-income countries while most workers are located in low- and middle-income countries.

rejection of having a labour contract and non-payment of already performed work. Despite some initiatives, online platform work remains largely unregulated.²⁶

In this changing world of work, fundamental labour rights, decent working conditions, protection of vulnerable groups, social protection and equal access to education have to be ensured to prevent a future of work that would consist of even more deprived workers and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which the world has committed.²⁷

The EU has impact on and its economy is connected to many workers, even when these workers live and work on the other side of the world. The EU is a big economic player and heavily involved in global value chains.²⁸ It is part of the EU's founding values to respect human rights, including labour rights, and promote sustainable development, and thus to stand up for workers' rights all over the world. The President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen has made it very clear in her political guidelines: "*I want Europe to strive for more by strengthening our unique brand of responsible global leadership*".²⁹ EU responsible global leadership is needed now more than ever.

The EU has underlined its clear stance in the Joint Communication on the Global EU response to COVID-19³⁰: a resilient recovery from the crisis is only possible if sustainability, the respect of labour rights and corporate responsibility in global supply chains are ensured and a backtracking is avoided. It is thus important to ensure that post-COVID-19 interventions contribute to decent jobs in the recovery phase. Many stakeholders around the world share this EU approach.³¹

EU action on promoting decent work in global value chains constitutes a safeguard against a race to the bottom and fully supports achieving a global level playing field. As stressed in the ILO Declaration on social justice for a fair globalisation (2008)³², the violation of fundamental principles and rights at work can never be invoked or used as a legitimate comparative advantage. Workers worldwide have to be able to rely on their fundamental rights at work and on decent working conditions. This global level playing field consists of international labour standards contained in the fundamental Conventions of the ILO, which

²⁶ ILO (2018) Digital labour platforms and the future of work: Towards decent work in the online world.

²⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/lang--en/index.htm>; <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/centenary-declaration/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/eu-position-in-world-trade/>.

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf.

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/joint_communication_global_eu_covid-19_response_en.pdf.

³¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_750806/lang--en/index.htm,

<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un-comprehensive-response-to-covid-19.pdf>,

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/the_world_of_work_and_covid-19.pdf,

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_742571.pdf,

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/statement/wcms_742371.pdf,

<https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/COVID-19-Call-to-Action-for-Responsible-Mineral-Supply-Chains.pdf>.

³² https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/WCMS_099766/lang--en/index.htm.

cover freedom of association and collective bargaining, elimination of forced and child labour, equality and non-discrimination³³, as well as other international labour standards in areas such as occupational safety and health, decent wages and working hours. It also covers social dialogue, social protection and access to effective remedy. The ILO supervisory system monitors the application of these international labour standards in the countries.³⁴ The ILO framework interrelates with the International Bill of Human Rights,³⁵ the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with different guidelines and declarations on responsible business conduct of the UN, the ILO and the OECD.³⁶ This document will elaborate further on the global level playing field and the EU actions in that matter.

The Commission will further promote decent work in the world as underlined in the political guidelines of the President of the Commission,³⁷ the 2020 Commission Work Programme,³⁸ the Communication on A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions³⁹ and the Joint Communication on the Global EU response to COVID-19⁴⁰. It will put the SDGs at the heart of EU policy-making, acting towards a socially just transition of the global economy and corporate responsibility.

Leading by example also means to ensure the highest standards of decent work within the EU. The President of the Commission underlined in her State of the Union Address 2020 that “in our Union the dignity of work must be sacred”.⁴¹ The European Pillar of Social Rights⁴² particularly shows and emphasizes this aspiration of the EU.⁴³ It includes 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets structured around equal

³³ ILO Conventions No. 29, 87, 98, 105, 110, 111, 138, 182.

³⁴ <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-supervisory-system-mechanism/lang--en/index.htm>.

³⁵ The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols.

³⁶ The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf; ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, <https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/mne-declaration/lang--en/index.htm>; OECD Guidelines for multinational enterprises and different OECD guidance on due diligence, <http://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/>; <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/duediligence/>.

³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf.

³⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en.

³⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_49.

⁴⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/joint_communication_global_eu_covid-19_response_en.pdf.

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/soteu_2020_en.pdf.

⁴² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

⁴³ The Commission has also launched further initiatives on decent work within the EU, eg specific initiatives to improve the inclusion of non-EU migrant workers in the EU (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1274&langId=en>) and a process to ensure that the EU competition rules do not stand in the way of collective bargaining for those who need it: the initiative seeks to ensure that working conditions can be improved through collective bargaining not only for employees, but also for those self-employed who need protection (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1237).

opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion.⁴⁴ In its Communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions, the Commission launched a process of dialogue and consultation to prepare the ground for an Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.⁴⁵

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, several guidelines were provided to protect workers, such as the guidance on a safe return to the workplace,⁴⁶ on the free movement of critical workers⁴⁷ and the rights of – both EU and third-country – seasonal workers,⁴⁸ as well as overarching policy initiatives such as the youth employment support package.⁴⁹

IMPORTANCE OF DECENT WORK IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The UN 2030 Agenda envisages a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 of the 2030 Agenda sets as specific targets to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.⁵⁰ It includes the substantial reduction of the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training, to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, to end modern slavery and human trafficking, and to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. The SDG 8 also underlines the need to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious jobs.

Decent work is also important for achieving other SDGs, such as for ending poverty including by social protection systems (SDG 1), for erasing hunger (SDG 2), enforcing gender equality (SDG 5), reducing inequality (SDG 10) and for ensuring responsible consumption and production patterns (SDG 12) through decent work in global value chains.

⁴⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf.

⁴⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/cwp-2020-publication_en.pdf.

⁴⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_729.

⁴⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9630>.

⁴⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1342.

⁴⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_1194.

⁵⁰ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination/epic/lang--en/index.htm>.

3. AREAS OF EU ACTION – PROMOTING DECENT WORK IN GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS

This section provides an overview of the EU action in different areas aiming at promoting decent work worldwide. It also underlines the dynamic of the policy area of decent work in global value chains by referring to ongoing review processes in different areas of action. Thus, this EU action contributes to a fair, sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

3.1. EU REGIONAL AND BILATERAL EXTERNAL ACTION IN DIFFERENT POLICY AREAS:

i. Trade arrangements

Since 2011 all new generation EU trade agreements, making up 15 of 37 EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with 76 countries worldwide, include chapters on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), with binding commitments on international labour standards. The EU has improved the FTA-TSD chapters and labour provisions in its formulation and scope following the 2015 Communication on “Trade for All”⁵¹ and the 15-point TSD action plan of 2018⁵². The priorities of the Commission for 2019-2024 underline the need for a stronger Europe in the world including the continuation of upholding and updating the rules-based global order, to ensure the highest standards of climate, environmental and labour protection and a zero-tolerance policy on child labour as well as a stronger implementation and enforcement.

The Commission is currently reviewing its trade and investment policy.⁵³

The EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) supports developing countries with unilateral trade preferences. According to the GSP Regulation, the GSP preferences may be temporarily withdrawn for reason of serious and systematic violation of principles laid down in the core human rights and labour rights conventions. For example, in 2020, the Commission has decided to withdraw part of the tariff preferences granted to Cambodia. The current GSP Regulation⁵⁴ is in force for the period 2014-2023. It is intended that the new regulation will continue to pursue the policy of fostering sustainable economic, social and environmental development, including the respect for good governance and human rights⁵⁵, which include labour rights.

⁵¹ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/october/tradoc_153846.pdf.

⁵² <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1803>.

⁵³ <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2158>.

⁵⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02012R0978-20170101&from=EN>.

⁵⁵ https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2018/january/tradoc_156536.pdf.

The EU supports its FTA and GSP+ beneficiary countries through Trade for Decent Work projects⁵⁶ in cooperation with the ILO in different Asian and African countries, aiming to improve the application of the ILO fundamental Conventions in EU trading partner countries through improved labour relations and working conditions.

ii. Development policies

According to the European Consensus on Development (2017),⁵⁷ European development policy aims to reduce poverty, ensure sustainable development, and promote democracy, the respect for human rights, and the rule of law across the world.⁵⁸ EU Development policy consists of programmes at global, regional and country level counting for some EUR 70 billion in the programming phase 2014-2020.

Development policy on work-related issues has evolved at EU and international level with a view to promoting decent work – instead of creating any kind of jobs – and fostering the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This shift was underlined in the Development Cooperation Instrument for 2014–2020⁵⁹ and the European Consensus on Development (2017)⁶⁰. The proposal for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument for the period 2021 – 2027⁶¹ confirmed this shift. This evolution underlines that decent jobs are a key driver of development, with a significant impact on individual and societal well-being such as providing means for income and consumption and boosting sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, while contributing to social cohesion and the promotion of gender equality and women’s economic empowerment⁶². This development at EU level is also backed by the international discussion on development policies that has shifted from “growth only” to decent work creation as reflected in particular in the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs of 2015. In addition, in the context of a global COVID-19 related recovery, with the aim of ‘building back better’, the focus has geared towards the quality of jobs. In the new programming phase 2021-2027, there is an urgent need to take up these developments and to ensure that the decent work principles become a crosscutting issue.

As an illustration, SOCIEUX+ is a programme that brings together EU Member State experts and their peers in third countries to support the countries in labour, employment and social protection matters. With the COVID-19 crisis, this technical assistance and expertise from the EU Member States is even needed more to support partners’ authorities and institutions

⁵⁶ http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_697996/lang--en/index.htm.

⁵⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/european-consensus-development_en.

⁵⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/about-us_en.

⁵⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0233&from=EN>.

⁶⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf.

⁶¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1540392552799&uri=CELEX%3A52018PC0460>.

⁶² <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/eu-gender-action-plan-ii-how-eu-delegations-contribute-gender-equality-worldwide>.

design and implement reforms, as well as promote sustainable and inclusive labour protection and social systems.

iii. Enlargement and neighbourhood policies

In line with their path towards the EU, candidate countries and potential candidates are expected to fully align with the EU labour acquis and standards before acceding to the EU. Furthermore, they continue to work together with the EU, the ILO and other UN organisations to develop policies ensuring decent work for all. In the Communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions of 14 January 2020⁶³, the Commission underlined that it will strengthen the dialogue specifically with the Western Balkans to foster the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in this region. The cycle of EU –Western Balkans Ministerial meetings on Employment and Social affairs that started in 2019 is a good example of policy dialogue on labour and social protection issues including decent work and social dialogue. The EU’s Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs) in the Western Balkans and Turkey are a key element of high level policy dialogue on challenges and structural reforms needed for inclusive and sustainable growth. The Western Balkans’ Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the ILO manage the Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) that assists the Western Balkans with reforms in the labour market and social policy area. The Commission also adopted on 6 October 2020 an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, which sets a proposal for the mobilisation of funding under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III for the period 2021-2027 to support inter alia inclusive growth and the development of human capital by increasing IPA funding, including for employment and social protection and inclusion.

Since 2004, through the European Neighbourhood Policy the EU supports political and economic reforms in Europe’s neighbouring countries. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission has focused its financial assistance to partner countries on addressing challenges and needs related to the impact of the pandemic on the employment and social protection sectors including by supporting businesses and workers’ rights in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions. Employment and social areas will also be highlighted in the future programming period in order to promote a fair and inclusive recovery in the enlargement and neighbourhood partner countries.

In the Commission’s Communication on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 – Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all,⁶⁴ the aim of helping partner countries to “create decent jobs and economic opportunities, ensuring prosperity for people” is clearly stated. With partner countries in the southern neighbourhood, the Commission cooperates on decent work through bilateral dialogues, that focus amongst other

⁶³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_49.

⁶⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/76166/joint-communication-eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-reinforcing-resilience---eastern_en.

things on fundamental labour rights, working conditions, social dialogue and social protection, and also through the UfM. Promoting decent work and respect for international labour standards remains a priority of the EU new Strategy for Central Asia adopted in May 2019 – “The EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership”⁶⁵.

The Commission’s Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, as well as its specialized EU agency, the European Training Foundation provide support in the area of human development, skills, employment and social policy to the EU enlargement and neighbourhood partners.

iv. Human Rights Policies

The EU promotes the respect for human rights within the EU⁶⁶ and in its relations with third countries and international and regional organisations⁶⁷ in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the EU Treaties, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that labour rights are human rights, including human dignity, anti-discrimination at the workplace and equal pay, decent wages and social protection, the right to form and join trade unions and reasonable limitation of working hours.⁶⁸ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly include safe and healthy working conditions, protection against forced labour and against economic exploitation of children.

The EU promotes and protects human rights worldwide making a full use of different instruments such as political dialogue, policy and sectoral dialogue, public diplomacy and strategic communication, human rights dialogue, rights-based approach to development cooperation and regular dialogue with a variety of stakeholders. Further areas are thematic and geographical programmes under the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, actions in multilateral and regional human rights fora, dialogue and monitoring missions to implement the EU’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

The EU conducts and initiates human rights dialogues and subcommittees with more than 40 non-EU countries, a number of which cover also labour rights. The objective of such dialogues is to discuss human rights issues and developments on both sides, raise respective concerns and recognise the progress made, and work together with the countries to address these concerns in order to improve the protection of human rights.

⁶⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/62411/Joint%20Communication%20on%20the%20EU%20and%20Central%20Asia:%20New%20Opportunities%20for%20a%20stronger%20partnership.

⁶⁶ See Art 2 TEU.

⁶⁷ See Art 21 TEU.

⁶⁸ Art 23f Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In March 2020, the Commission and the High Representative adopted the Joint Communication and EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.⁶⁹ This strategic document defines the EU priorities for human rights and democracy in external action for the years to come. It highlights that while the EU has contributed to the significant progress made in countries and regions where human rights were under strain, widespread challenges persist, including labour abuses and child labour. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy calls for action in several areas of decent work, including engaging with the business sector on upholding and promoting human rights, due diligence and enhancing decent job creation along the value chain. Other actions proposed in the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy include the support of multi-stakeholder processes to develop, implement and strengthen standards on business and human rights and due diligence and to engage with development banks and international financial institutions. The support of advocacy work and enabling spaces for business engagement with civil society and human rights defenders in decent job creation and the support of partner countries in their implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights is also part of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

To ensure the effective implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, already 18 EU Member States have developed or are developing a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.⁷⁰

EU Delegations are actively engaged in raising awareness of governments and business sector/companies in partner countries, and in empowering local stakeholders, including civil society, to advance the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights is mandated to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of EU human rights policy, including in its external dimension. Taking into account that labour rights are human rights, the EUSR for Human Rights has actively engaged in the promotion of the EU policies and principles of decent work in global supply chains. Since his appointment, the EUSR has strongly engaged on the issue of labour rights, including combatting child and forced labour, promoting freedom of association, collective bargaining, occupational safety and health and decent wages in third countries (e.g. during his bilateral visits to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, and in early 2020 during a visit to Qatar).

⁶⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12122-EU-Action-Plan-on-Human-Rights-and-Democracy-2020-2024>.

⁷⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/NationalActionPlans.aspx>.

v. Partnership and Cooperation Agreements

The EU has concluded strategic PCAs with countries on all continents.⁷¹ These agreements are based on shared values and principles such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, including labour rights, good governance, multilateralism and sustainability. Under these agreements, the EU is strengthening its relations across a wide range of areas, including on decent work issues. A joint commission and several subgroups, regularly covering trade, human rights and sustainable development, ensure the implementation of a PCA. Decent work topics are currently discussed in the framework of a number of PCAs, mostly in the subgroups on trade and on human rights.

vi. Labour Rights dialogues

The Commission carries out bilateral labour dialogues in particular with the USA, Canada, China, Japan, Brazil, Thailand and Chile, as well as through regional cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in the Western Balkans, with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), with Asia (ASEM), with Latin America and in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The promotion of decent work for all is one of the core topics of labour dialogues, during which key areas for cooperation are identified and can then be followed up by closer cooperation and mutual learning. The established labour dialogues have proven to be a useful platform for promoting cooperation with our partners and strengthening the decent work agenda globally.

For example, the Thailand-EU Labour Dialogue is an important platform for the parties to enhance cooperation in areas such as forced labour and work in fishing, contributing to better cross-sectoral relations between the parties. With China, the Commission engaged in several policy dialogues on employment and social affairs, including a stand-alone dialogue on occupational health and safety. Regular meetings of the High-Level Working Group on Employment and Labour of the UfM and the Social Dialogue Forum, as well as Ministerial-level meetings are organised to discuss employment, employability and decent work.

vii. Senior Official Meetings

The EU is engaged in different Senior Official Meetings (SOMs) such as the ASEM SOM, Rabat Process SOMs (Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and development), the UfM SOM and SOMs in different EU bilateral dialogues. Depending on the scope of its mandate, it can have to a certain extent access to issues in which decent work should be included. At present, decent work is included in a number of SOMs. Experience so far shows that whenever the EU acts as co-president of the SOM, notably in the UfM SOM, the EU can more effectively include decent work matters on the agenda.

⁷¹ Full list available at <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/negotiations-and-agreements/>.

viii. Foreign policy instruments (FPI) projects

The Partnership Instrument,⁷² created in 2014, is specifically designed to pursue EU strategic interests globally, promote cooperation and alliance-building on issues of EU or mutual interest and challenges of global concern. With a budget of EUR 140 million a year, it operates in support of EU foreign policy objectives, the Commission's six political priorities and the SDGs. Actions cover challenges of global concern such as the international dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive jobs and growth. Altogether, the Partnership Instrument supported eleven stand-alone projects relevant for decent work with a total EU budget of EUR 59.76 million in the period since 2017. Most of the supported projects are in Asia and Latin America with thematic focus on responsible value chains, economic empowerment of women at work, business and human rights, anti-discrimination in employment or promoting social and solidarity economy ecosystems. Examples of these projects are two EUR 9 million programmes with the ILO, the OECD and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), that enable outreach and capacity building activities in Asia and Latin America.

ix. Investment and financial support instruments

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is annually financing investments in third countries with a volume of EUR 7.9 billion in 2019.⁷³ As a public institution driven by the policy objectives of the EU and the related principles of sustainable development, the projects financed by the EIB also have to comply with the EIB Statement of Environmental and Social Principles and Standards Requirements for EIB financing include the assessment and management of environmental and social risks, rights and interests of vulnerable groups, labour standards, occupational and public health, safety and security and stakeholder engagement. In the case of intermediated finance, the principles and standards enable promoters to identify and manage the risks and potential impact of projects and to weigh those factors when making decisions.

In EU blending and guarantee operations, maintaining safeguards against environmental and social risks is the responsibility of the financing institution, to which the Commission entrusts the implementation of a financing operation.

x. Transport policies

In the area of maritime transport, the ILO's Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006) is a key standard-setting instrument. The EU promotes the MLC 2006 globally in its bilateral and

⁷² https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/what-we-do/partnership-instrument-advancing-eus-core-interests_en.

⁷³

<https://www.eib.org/en/projects/loans/regions/index.htm?sortColumn=breakdownResult&sortDir=desc&pageNumber=0&itemPerPage=25&pageable=true&language=EN&defaultLanguage=EN&loanPartYearFrom=2019&loanPartYearTo=2020>.

multilateral activities,⁷⁴ including the coherent and effective implementation of the MLC 2006 with a particular focus on shipping labour supplying countries. The MLC 2006 is a global legal instrument being considered the “fourth pillar” of the most important maritime regulations, complementing the International Maritime Organization regulatory regime for sustainable shipping.⁷⁵

On road transport, the Interbus Agreement⁷⁶ requires contracting parties to accede to the European Agreement concerning the work of crews of vehicles engaged in international road transport which establishes minimum standards for road transport working conditions, or to apply the relevant EU social standards for road transport workers.

In the area of air transport, the only existing international standards for civil aviation cover safety and security, adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization. The EU-Qatar Air Transport Agreement initialled in March 2019⁷⁷ is the first agreement with comprehensive labour provisions. The on-going EU-ASEAN and EU-Oman Air Transport Agreement negotiations are following this example.

xi. Fisheries

The EU promotes the ratification and implementation of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention⁷⁸ and other instruments contributing to combatting forced labour and other labour abuses in fisheries. It cooperates with the ILO and partner countries to that aim, for example through the Thailand-EU Labour Dialogue and the Ship to Shore Rights project with the ILO in South-East Asia. The EU also encourages the implementation of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) to the extent permitted by the mandate of those organisations. EU dialogues on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing have resulted in improvements in domestic interagency cooperation in third countries allowing for better detection of possible labour abuses in this sector. In bilateral dialogues, including IUU dialogues, and in regional and international fora, the Commission and the High Representative will address IUU fishing-related challenges such as forced labour and other forms of work that violate human rights.⁷⁹ The EU Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) with partner countries contain articles relating to seafarers’ employment and working conditions. However, SFPAs are usually not leveraged to promote the social dimension of sustainability. Similarly, there is an untapped

⁷⁴ This convention has been implemented at Union level by Council Directive 2009/13/EC, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009L0013>.

⁷⁵ <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/32-MLC.aspx#.X2hUykxuJzk>.

⁷⁶ Agreement on the international occasional carriage of passengers by coach and bus (Interbus Agreement) (OJ L 321, 26.11.2002, pp. 13-43) and related acts <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A124264>.

⁷⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/air/news/2019-03-04-eu-and-qatar-reach-aviation-agreement_en.

⁷⁸ Implemented at Union level by Directive 2017/159, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2017.025.01.0012.01.ENG.

⁷⁹ Cf https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/join-2016-49_en.pdf.

potential of EU contribution to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to be used in the promotion of decent work in the fishing and seafood sector.

3.2. EU ACTION IN INTERNATIONAL AND MULTILATERAL FORA

i. International Labour Organisation

The EU and its Member States contribute actively to the ILO standard-setting processes, including its supervisory mechanism. ILO standards – Conventions, Recommendations – and the work of the supervisory mechanism are the authoritative references in upholding labour rights in countries that are part of global value chains. The EU and its Member States also support the adoption of ILO Declarations and Resolutions. Key examples are the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a fair Globalisation and the 2019 Centenary Declaration for the future of Work, as well as the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, revised in 2017, and the 2016 Resolution concerning decent work in global supply chains. The EU works together with ILO through a variety of projects, initiatives and cooperation activities. Examples are the Vision Zero Fund (VZF)⁸⁰ on occupational safety and health in global supply chains and the Better Work programme on working conditions in the garment value chains⁸¹.

The EU and its Member States uphold and contribute to updating the rules-based global order of international labour standards. They, in close contact with their social partners and partner countries, also continue cooperating with the ILO in the implementation of the conclusions of its 2016 International Labour Conference⁸² and to leverage at best its potential to promote decent work in global value chains.

ii. United Nations

At the UN, the EU actively advocates for the topic of decent work in different UN bodies, including the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Commission for Social Development. The EU also promotes the universal ratification of all Fundamental Labour Conventions and the EU and its Member States participate in the negotiation of the General Assembly and resolutions of the UN Economic and Social Council.

⁸⁰ <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/departments-and-offices/governance/labadmin-osh/programmes/vzf/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁸¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/3/2018/EN/C-2018-8440-F1-EN-ANNEX-4-PART-1.PDF>.

⁸² <https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/previous-sessions/105/committees/supply-chains/lang--en/index.htm>; Resolution concerning decent work in global supply chains, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_497555.pdf.

The EU also supports the implementation of important decent work-related UN instruments. This is in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁸³, the 2030 Agenda⁸⁴, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁸⁵ and on Civil and Political Rights,⁸⁶ Conventions to protect the rights of children⁸⁷, women⁸⁸ and people with disabilities⁸⁹ as well as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights⁹⁰. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is the first international, legally binding instrument setting minimum standards for rights of people with disabilities, and the first human rights convention to which the EU has become a party.⁹¹ Furthermore, the EU encourages the mainstreaming of decent work at country level through the close engagement with the Resident Coordinators of employers and workers as well as the inclusion of the promotion of labour standards in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

The EU participates in discussions within the UN on the possible development of an international binding instrument on business and human rights and it supports the work of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights and the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, including on implementation of the UNGPs.

iii. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The EU actively engages in the work of the OECD Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct with the aim to foster due diligence in value chains. This includes the promotion of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The Commission's objective is to help create a level playing field for responsible companies and investors, in order to facilitate business' contribution to inclusive and sustainable growth. It also aims to foster synergies and coherence between the various developments at the international level. With support of the EU, the OECD has developed a general due diligence guidance. Labour rights and working conditions are a key element of due diligence in OECD guidelines and guidance.

For example, since 2016, the Commission has developed and is continuing to fund a project to support OECD work on responsible supply chains in the garment and footwear sector supply chains in particular with a view to provide support to the development of a due-diligence guidance and its implementation.

⁸³ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

⁸⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/>.

⁸⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cescr.pdf>.

⁸⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

⁸⁷ Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version>.

⁸⁸ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>.

⁸⁹ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

⁹⁰ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf.

⁹¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1138&langId=en>.

iv. Group of Seven (G7) and Group of Twenty (G20)

The promotion of decent work in global value chains has been a key element of G7 and G20 declarations in recent years with active support of the EU.

The 2015 declarations by G7 leaders, along with their employment and development ministers, were the starting points of the EU co-financed VZF on occupational safety and health in global value chains. The G7 employment ministers underlined in 2019 that the G7 is at the “forefront to address the downsides of globalisation and to enhance the positive contribution of businesses to sustainable development” by promoting responsible business conduct and human rights due diligence in global value chains. Also, in 2017, finance ministers endorsed the Bari Policy Agenda on Growth and Inequalities where they recognise the contributions of technological change and global integration to raising living standards across the world over recent decades, while they engage in further work to make the global economy work for everyone. Some of the initiatives of the Bari Policy Agenda have been followed up in 2019 under the G7 French Presidency, which has pointed out the importance of private companies’ engagement in reduction of inequalities and ensuring of inclusive growth.

As for the G20, in their 2017 declarations, G20 leaders and employment ministers underlined the responsibility of businesses to exercise due diligence, they committed to eliminate child labour by 2025 and forced labour and they emphasised the importance of social dialogue and decent wages for sustainable value chains. In 2018, the G20 leaders adopted a declaration focusing on the future of work. They committed to building an inclusive, fair and sustainable Future of Work by promoting decent work, vocational training and skills development, including reskilling workers and improving labour conditions in all forms of employment. The G20 leaders recognized the importance of social dialogue in this area, including work delivered through digital platforms, with a focus on promoting labour formalization and making social protection systems strong and portable, subject to national law and circumstances. In 2019, the G20 leaders and employment ministers emphasized the importance of sustainable global value chains for eradicating child labour, forced labour and human trafficking. The regular reporting of the G20 employment ministries on decent work in global value chains contributes to keeping the topic on the agenda of the G20.

The G7 and G20 meetings often provide opportunities for international organisations to present important reports and research findings. One example is the discussion on the report on ending child labour, forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chains at the 2019 G20 Labour Ministers’ meeting. The G7 and G20 meetings are now the main occasions for discussing about the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. In April 2020, G20 countries have committed to support workers through active labour market, training and reskilling policies to minimize the loss of human and organizational capital. They also engaged to examine the ILO’s and OECD’s analyses on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on employment.

v. World Bank, World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund

The EU and the World Bank Group share the objective of promoting sustainable development. Structured cooperation between the Commission and the World Bank on decent work related issues was guided by High Level Meetings to ensure complementarity between their core activities with EU Member States and candidate countries and potential candidates. Such focused High Level Meetings were discontinued after 2013, while High Level Meetings still take place annually. Some cooperation continued occasionally (e.g. analytical projects, policy dialogue on specific EU Member States). One example is the Better Work programme jointly implemented by the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (WB group) on improving working conditions in the garment value chain to which the EU provides funding. However, there is a potential to develop joint approaches on fostering decent work.

While not subject to the WTO rules, labour standards have become increasingly present in the trade policies of many WTO Member States, particularly of the EU, its Member States and of EU trading partners. As mentioned above, the EU systematically includes internationally recognised labour standards as enshrined in the Fundamental Labour Conventions in its FTAs, PCAs and GSP. When relevant, the EU together with other WTO members raises questions regarding labour standards and the application of Fundamental Labour Conventions to their trade partner countries in the context of the WTO Trade Policy Reviews. Labour standards considerations were also taken into account and analysed in the Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Trade in Services Agreement. In its Proposal for WTO disciplines and commitments relating to investment facilitation for development, the EU suggested to include an item on corporate social responsibility to identify and address adverse impacts including on labour conditions.

Together with the ILO, the OECD and the World Bank, the IMF regularly advises the G20 in relation to decent work and global value chain matters, such as in the 2016 report for the G20 Employment Working Group.⁹² In the report the four organisations recommend to promote greater compliance with labour standards including on occupational safety and health, labour inspection and the promotion of due diligence throughout value chains.

3.3. OTHER EU POLICIES WITH OUTREACH BEYOND EU

i. Zero-tolerance-on-child labour policy

The elimination of child labour⁹³, including in global value chains, requires an integrated and comprehensive response by using all policy instruments at hand and involving all relevant stakeholders. The instruments include trade, development policies, bilateral dialogues, cooperation with international organisations in particular the ILO, sustainable financing and

⁹² http://www.oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_563297.pdf.

⁹³ See box in Section 2.

investment, public procurement and responsible management of value chains. Such instruments have to aim at structural reforms that include improving legislation and its implementation in producing countries. The goal of the reform would entail prohibiting child labour, ensuring effective law enforcement mechanisms including by labour inspection, addressing informality, building and extending social protection systems, providing access to effective remedy for victims, free quality public education and improving youth employability. They also need to ensure that business enterprises exercise human rights due diligence to identify and address labour rights risks in their value chains. The promotion of social dialogue plays a central role in combatting child labour as it holds the potential to reach better working and living conditions of workers and thus it lowers drivers for child labour.

The EU is committed to promote respective international conventions on elimination of child labour, in particular the ILO Conventions on minimum age and worst forms of child labour and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has taken different measures in this regard. Through its international cooperation and development the EU undertakes political and policy dialogue with partner countries, and supports their governments in reviewing their legislation, improving enforcing measures including integrated projects in selected areas and value chains. Due diligence legislation such as the Conflict Minerals Regulation⁹⁴, trade instruments such as the FTAs and unilateral trade preferences contribute to reducing and preventing child labour. The President of the Commission has underlined to strengthen EU role as responsible global leader, including a zero-tolerance policy on child labour. The Commission has emphasized the need to put the SDGs – SDG Target 8.7 explicitly calls for elimination of child labour by 2025 – at the heart of EU policy-making.

ii. Corporate governance

In the search for more sustainable economic and business models, companies and regulators are rethinking their approach to business. 75% of CEOs recognise the need for a sustainability strategy to be competitive already today⁹⁵ and 87% of CEOs notice shareholder pressure to generate short-term profit, claiming that longer-time horizons would improve performance and innovation.⁹⁶

Duties of companies to identify and address labour rights risks in their value chains (“due diligence”) have been introduced in France and the Netherlands and similar initiatives are being discussed in other European countries. Calls for an EU horizontal and cross-sectoral due diligence regulation arise to provide for legal clarity on business’ responsibilities and for a level playing field in Europe.⁹⁷ The Commission published in February 2020 the results of a study on human rights and environmental due diligence requirements through the supply

⁹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017R0821>.

⁹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/sustainable_corporate_governance_conference_program_0.pdf.

⁹⁶ <https://responsiblebusinessconduct.eu/wp/2020/04/30/speech-by-commissioner-reynders-in-rbc-webinar-on-due-diligence/>.

⁹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/sustainable_corporate_governance_conference_program_0.pdf.

chain.⁹⁸ The study respondents favoured mandatory due diligence in all sectors as a legal standard of care. Another study on directors' duties and sustainable corporate governance was published on 29 July 2020.⁹⁹ This study recommends further action on the clarification of corporate directors' duties, including as regards the integration of sustainability into the strategy, adoption of targets, remuneration and other aspects.¹⁰⁰ Against this background, the Commission's 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan¹⁰¹ and Biodiversity Strategy¹⁰² announce a forthcoming initiative on sustainable corporate governance for 2021 as well as other European Green Deal implementing strategies such as the Farm to Fork Strategy,¹⁰³ and also the recent Recovery plan "Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation"¹⁰⁴ announce a forthcoming initiative on sustainable corporate governance for 2021. This initiative may take the form of a legislative proposal addressing human rights and environmental duty of care and mandatory due diligence across value chains, aiming to ensure that sustainability is further embedded into the corporate governance framework with a view to align better the long-term interests of management, shareholders, stakeholders and society. A public consultation on sustainable corporate governance will be launched in autumn 2020 and the Inception Impact Assessment is open for feedback.¹⁰⁵

iii. Corporate transparency

Corporate Transparency on social and environmental aspects is an important element to achieve a more sustainable economy. It helps investors, NGOs, consumers, policy makers and other stakeholders to evaluate performance of companies in these fields and it encourages these companies to develop a responsible approach to business.

At EU level, Directive 2014/95/EU – also called the non-financial reporting directive (NFRD)¹⁰⁶ – lays down the rules on disclosure of non-financial information. It applies to large public-interest companies with more than 500 employees. The NFRD provides for disclosure of policies, their outcomes as well as the companies' risks and management of risks as regards different matters. These matters cover – among others – human rights, social and employee matters including in global value chains. In June 2017, the Commission published guidelines to help companies disclose environmental and social information.¹⁰⁷ Users of non-financial information are demanding more and better information from companies about their social

⁹⁸ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8ba0a8fd-4c83-11ea-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

⁹⁹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e47928a2-d20b-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

¹⁰⁰ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e47928a2-d20b-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

¹⁰¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/index_en.htm.

¹⁰² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>.

¹⁰³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>.

¹⁰⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-europe-moment-repair-prepare-next-generation.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12548-Sustainable-corporate-governance>.

¹⁰⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014L0095>.

¹⁰⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/non-financial-reporting-guidelines_en.

and environmental performance and impacts. To this end, the Commission will make a proposal to revise the NFRD in early 2021 as part of the strategy to strengthen the foundations for sustainable investment.¹⁰⁸

iv. Sustainable finance

Sustainable finance refers to the process of taking due account of environmental and social considerations when making investment decisions, leading to the increased investment in longer-term and sustainable activities.¹⁰⁹ Social considerations may refer to labour standards¹¹⁰ and the responsible management of related risks in value chains¹¹¹. The market of sustainable investing assets is increasing significantly. It reached about EUR 24 trillion globally in 2018, an increase of 34 percent within two years. Europe is the region with the worldwide largest volume of sustainable investing assets of about EUR 11 trillion in 2018.¹¹²

In 2018, the Commission has adopted an Action Plan on sustainable finance,¹¹³ including references to social consideration of sustainable investments, and a package to implement key actions comprising of three Regulations. These Regulations are the Taxonomy Regulation,¹¹⁴ the Regulation on sustainability-related disclosures in the financial services sector¹¹⁵ and the Regulations amending the benchmark Regulation.¹¹⁶ All three Regulations include decent work elements to a certain extent. In addition, the Commission has been seeking feedback on amendments to delegated acts under the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID II)¹¹⁷ and the Insurance Distribution Directive¹¹⁸ to include ESG considerations into the advice that investment firms and insurance distributors offer to individual clients. Further steps are envisaged to strengthen the decent work dimension in sustainable finance. The Taxonomy Regulation includes a provision that the Commission shall evaluate by 31 December 2021 the extension of the Regulation to cover social objectives¹¹⁹ and that the

¹⁰⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en.

¹⁰⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance_en.

¹¹⁰ Investment governance and the integration of environmental, social and governance factors, p 40; <https://www.oecd.org/finance/Investment-Governance-Integration-ESG-Factors.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Cf OECD, Responsible business conduct for institutional investor, p 17, <https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/RBC-for-Institutional-Investors.pdf>; Why ESG factors in the supply chain matter, <https://www.unpri.org/infrastructure/managing-esg-risk-in-the-supply-chains-of-private-companies-and-assets/615.article>; PRI-project “From farm to table: Ensuring fair labour practices in agricultural supply chains”, <https://www.unpri.org/farmland/from-farm-to-table-ensuring-fair-labour-practices-in-agricultural-supply-chains/5800.article>; original figures in USD.

¹¹² http://www.gsi-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/GSIR_Review2018F.pdf.

¹¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/news/sustainable-finance-commissions-action-plan-greener-and-cleaner-economy_en.

¹¹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/852/oj>.

¹¹⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/2088/oj>.

¹¹⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32019R2089>.

¹¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/markets-financial-instruments-mifid-ii-directive-2014-65-eu/amending-and-supplementary-acts/implementing-and-delegated-acts_en.

¹¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/insurance-distribution-directive-2016-97-eu/amending-and-supplementary-acts/implementing-and-delegated-acts_en.

¹¹⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R0852&from=EN>.

Platform on Sustainable Finance shall advise the Commission on addressing other sustainability objectives, including social objectives. The European Green Deal has announced a Renewed Sustainable Finance Strategy,¹²⁰ which aims to provide the policy tools to ensure that the financial systems genuinely support the transition of businesses towards sustainability in a context of recovery.

v. Social dimension of environment and climate policies – Green Deal – Circular Economy Action Plan, Farm to Fork Strategy

The European Green Deal Communication was adopted in December 2019.¹²¹ It is the new growth strategy of the EU, aiming at overcoming the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. The Green Deal is of essential importance for promoting decent work including in global value chains. Examples are the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Farm to Fork Strategy.¹²²

The Circular Economy Action Plan¹²³ includes measures such as considering mandatory requirements linked to environmental and social aspects along the value chain of products and services. The Farm to Fork Strategy underlines that the production of agri- and seafood has to aim at a sustainable food value chain. It emphasizes that the production of commodities can have negative environmental and social impacts in the countries where they are produced. Thus, it calls for raising standards globally, in order to avoid the externalisation and export of unsustainable practices. The Farm to Fork Strategy aims at improving the corporate governance framework, including a requirement for the food industry to integrate sustainability into corporate strategies. It also includes developing an EU code and monitoring framework for responsible business and marketing conduct in the food supply chain.¹²⁴

The environmental transition has to go hand in hand with a socially just transition of the global economy¹²⁵, which includes the respect of labour rights and the promotion of decent working conditions and social protection. The EU will ensure that its action for a green recovery also fosters the social dimension of sustainability. For instance, ensuring the supply of sustainable raw materials, in particular of critical raw materials, is key for clean technologies and sustainable digital applications. Respect of environmental and labour rights standards throughout value chains of these raw materials is key for sustainable sourcing. Another example is the Commission's guideline "Integrating the environment and climate

¹²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/business_economy_euro/banking_and_finance/documents/2020-sustainable-finance-strategy-consultation-document_en.pdf.

¹²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1583933814386&uri=COM:2020:98:FIN>.

¹²² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>.

¹²³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/index_en.htm.

¹²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12183-Farm-to-Fork-Strategy->.

¹²⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0014>.

change into EU international cooperation and development” that identifies decent work elements as relevant for climate mainstreaming.¹²⁶

vi. Public Procurement

Over 250.000 public authorities in the EU spend every year around 14% of GDP (around EUR 2 trillion per year) on the purchase of services, works and supplies.¹²⁷ This is a huge potential for public authorities to promote sustainability, including decent work in global value chains.

The 2014 revised Public Procurement Directives¹²⁸ allow contracting authorities to include in public procurement ethical and social considerations related to human rights due diligence in global value chains.¹²⁹ The Directives also require Member States to take appropriate measures to ensure that national, EU and international social and labour law obligations, among which are the core Conventions of the ILO, are complied with in the performance of procurement contracts. However, 55% of procurement procedures use the lowest price as the only award criterion for public contracts.¹³⁰ This indicates that public buyers are probably not paying enough attention to quality, sustainability and innovation.¹³¹ The Commission is reviewing and updating its “Buying social” guidance on introducing social considerations in procurement procedures. The guidance will also include recommendations to public buyers on how to incorporate considerations related to decent work in global value chains in tenders. Several examples of good practices by EU public buyers in the field of human rights due diligence and decent work are included in a recent Commission report.¹³² Finally, the Commission continues to promote the application of high social and labour standards in public procurement procedures in international fora and when negotiating public procurement chapters of bilateral trade agreements.

vii. Social entrepreneurship policies

Social economy actors in general and social enterprises in particular mainly aim at having a social impact rather than generating profit for their owners or shareholders. They are managed in an open and responsible manner, for example by involving employees, consumers and

¹²⁶ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-environment-climate/documents/new-guidelines-integrating-environment-and-climate-change-eu-international-cooperation-0>.

¹²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement_en.

¹²⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014L0024>.

¹²⁹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-000886-ASW_EN.html.

¹³⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0572&qid=1600591595725&from=EN>.

¹³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement_en.

¹³² https://ec.europa.eu/info/making-socially-responsible-procurement-work-71-good-practice-cases_en.

stakeholders affected by their commercial activities.¹³³ Their high level of commitment to social objectives make social enterprises an excellent tool for promoting decent work.

Building on the Social Business Initiative Communication of 2011, the Commission adopted the “Start-up and Scale-up initiative” Communication of 2016 which included a dedicated chapter on “Social economy and social enterprises”. The actions implemented by the Commission on the basis of these initiatives focus on improving conditions for social enterprises including a strengthened international dimension.

Given the strong social economy tradition in many European countries, this is an area where Europe can lead by example and share its experience globally. Therefore, the Commission participates in international development fora to enhance the visibility of social economy and make social economy part of the global political agenda. For example it engages with the international networks representing the social economy such as the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy and the International Leading Group on Social and Solidarity Economy.

To promote further the business and organisational models of social economy organisations, an Action Plan for the Social Economy is planned for adoption in 2021.¹³⁴

viii. Other commercial and agricultural policies

The Conflict Minerals Regulation¹³⁵, which will apply to European importers from 2021, requires EU companies in the supply chain to ensure they import from responsible sources only. The Regulation obliges EU importers of tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold to exercise due diligence including in supply chains in line with standards of the OECD.¹³⁶ The EU has published comprehensive guidance to support importers of these minerals and metals in fulfilling their obligations.

In October 2017, the Commission launched a European Battery Alliance, which aims at creating a competitive manufacturing value chain in Europe with sustainable battery cells at its core.¹³⁷ Its work is linked to the Strategic Action Plan for Batteries of May 2018, which underlines as strategic action area to ensure fair and sustainable access to raw materials in third countries and to promote socially responsible mining.¹³⁸ The Commission Work Programme 2020¹³⁹ contains the revision of the Battery Directive.¹⁴⁰ The initiative will

¹³³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy_en.

¹³⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0014>.

¹³⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017R0821>.

¹³⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/conflict-minerals-regulation/>.

¹³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/european-battery-alliance_en.

¹³⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:0e8b694e-59b5-11e8-ab41-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_3&format=PDF.

¹³⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en.

¹⁴⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006L0066>.

modify the Directive or put forward a proposal for a new Regulation repealing the Directive will be prepared, to notably encompass end-of-life and sustainability requirements.¹⁴¹

The report “An Africa-Europe agenda for rural transformation”¹⁴² of the Task force Rural Africa¹⁴³ covers the question of responsible business conduct and recommends initiating a multi-stakeholder dialogue with European agri-food export associations to discuss best practices and how the existing guidelines (e.g. Responsible Agricultural Investments Principles) are applied by agri-food companies.¹⁴⁴

ix. Consumer policies

Sustainable consumption is on the rise in the EU. According to a 2019 survey of the International Trade Centre on the market for sustainable products in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, 85% of retailers report increased sales of sustainable products over the past five years and 92% of them expect to increase sales in sustainable products in the next five years. 68% of consumers in these countries are willing to pay more for sustainable goods. These numbers correspond with the global increase of retail sales of Fairtrade certified products by over 80% from 2010 (EUR 4.36 billion) to 2016 (EUR 7.88 billion).¹⁴⁵

The EU supports this trend. Established in 1992 and recognised across Europe and worldwide, the EU Ecolabel¹⁴⁶ is a label that is awarded to products and services meeting high environmental standards throughout their life-cycle. Core labour standards and occupational safety and health have been integrated in the EU Ecolabel criteria for some products such as textiles, but not for all products and services. However, the – voluntary – EU Ecolabel has a reduced impact in comparison to mandatory approaches.¹⁴⁷ Thus, in the new Circular Economy Action Plan of 11 March 2020¹⁴⁸, the Commission has announced to propose a sustainable product policy legislative initiative. In addition, a new Consumer Agenda is included in the Commission Work programme 2020.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar%3Af1ebd6bf-a0d3-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0006.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.

¹⁴² https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/publication/africa-europe-agenda-rural-transformation_en.

¹⁴³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/european-commission-launches-expert-group-strengthen-eu-africa-partnership-agriculture-2018-may-24_en#:~:text=The%20Task%20Force%20Rural%20Africa%E2%80%99s%20work%20will%20be,to%20boost%20intra-African%20trade%20...%20Plus%20d%27articles...%20.

¹⁴⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/report-tfra_mar2019_en.pdf.

¹⁴⁵

http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/EU%20Market%20for%20Sustainable%20Products_Report_final_low_res.pdf.

¹⁴⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/>.

¹⁴⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A98%3AFIN>.

¹⁴⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/index_en.htm.

¹⁴⁹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar%3Af1ebd6bf-a0d3-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0006.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.

x. Corporate Social Responsibility

The Staff Working Document “Corporate Social Responsibility, Responsible Business Conduct, and Business & Human Rights: Overview of the Progress”¹⁵⁰ of March 2019 underlined that the actions of companies have significant impacts on workers and other citizens in the EU and around the world including working conditions and human rights. It pointed out that EU citizens expect companies to identify their positive and negative impacts on society and prevent, manage and mitigate any negative impacts including in global supply chains.

xi. Migration policy

According to ILO global estimates, migrant workers accounted for 164 million in 2017 out of the world’s approximately 258 million international migrants. Migrant workers contribute to growth and development in their countries of destination, while countries of origin greatly benefit from their remittances and the skills acquired during their migration experience. However, the migrants are among the most vulnerable groups. They often face structural, legal and other barriers in access to regular work and livelihoods. In transit and destination countries, they experience legislation restricting access to work, the lack of basic labour rights standards and xenophobia. Migrants and especially displaced populations are exposed to exploitation in the informal sector and forced labour. At the same time, migrant workers often leave their home due to a lack of opportunities in their country of origin. The political guidelines of the President of the Commission have underlined that the responsibility of the EU starts in the home countries of those who come to Europe. The EU must support improving the economic and social outlook of those who consider leaving their countries of origin because they feel they have no alternatives. One essential element in this respect is promoting opportunities for decent jobs in people’s home countries.¹⁵¹

The EU takes different action and envisages further steps to promote decent work worldwide, including for migrant workers, as shown in this SWD.

On 23 September 2020, the European Commission has presented a new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum,¹⁵² which promotes a new approach by the EU in addressing migration challenges. As part of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Commission will launch Talent Partnerships to support legal migration and mobility with key partner countries, to better match labour and skills needs. The EU would facilitate partnerships between skilled workers, employers, social partners, labour market institutions, and education and training through dedicated outreach and by building a network of involved enterprises, as well as to support mobility schemes for work or training. The Talent Partnerships will build on the

¹⁵⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/34482>.

¹⁵¹ On EU initiatives on inclusion of non-EU migrant workers within the EU, see under section 3.3 of this SWD.

¹⁵² https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020_en.

experience with the legal migration pilot projects, launched in 2017 (six launched so far) with the aim of encouraging and promoting the development of concrete projects by Member States in the area of legal migration, with a particular focus on labour migration (including opportunities for traineeships and reintegration in the country of origin).

3.4. EU ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND PROMOTION OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN THE AREA OF DECENT WORK

i. Engagement with social partners

There is no decent work without social dialogue. The EU promotes tripartite and bipartite European social dialogue at cross-industry and sectoral level, including through its support to 43 Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees. In 2015, the Commission launched the initiative « A new start for social dialogue » to enhance EU support to such social dialogue. Over the last years, European social dialogue has contributed to the promotion of decent work in various ways. In particular, through their agreements to implement the ILO MLC 2006 and the ILO Work in Fishing Convention in the EU, European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees in the maritime and fishing sectors have dramatically contributed to promote decent work in these globalised sectors. Similarly, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in the textile and clothing sector supported SMEs in this sector to identify and address the risks of violation of social, environmental or human rights in their value chain.

Social partners are also an essential part of the implementation of TSD chapters of EU trade agreements as part of Domestic Advisory Groups. They also take part in bilateral labour dialogues of the Commission with selected partners. European companies, trade unions and employee representation bodies have been very active in cross-border social dialogue addressing the issues of decent work in their global activities and value chains, including through transnational company agreements.

However, the potential of European social dialogue and European social partners to the promotion of decent work in global value chains appears to remain largely untapped, both at sectoral level and at cross-industry level.

ii. Support for global partnerships

The EU and its Member States contribute to and actively support global partnerships and multi-stakeholder initiatives relevant to decent work in global value chains. The Global Occupational Safety and Health Coalition is a multi-stakeholder platform aiming at generating strategies and practical solutions for common occupational safety and health challenges that can benefit from a global perspective.¹⁵³ Under the co-leadership of the World Bank and the ILO, global partners work together in the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection

¹⁵³ https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/programmes-projects/WCMS_740967/lang--en/index.htm; <http://visionzero.global/vision-zero-summit-sees-launch-global-osh-coalition>.

to increase the number of countries that provide universal social protection. The global partnership supports countries to design and implement universal and sustainable social protection systems, in line with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.¹⁵⁴ Alliance 8.7 is a partnership of government institutions, social partners, CSOs and academic institutions for eradicating child labour, forced labour and human trafficking.¹⁵⁵ The 2016 Global Deal, a multi-stakeholder initiative for social dialogue and inclusive growth, aims at benefitting from and contributing to a platform that highlights the value of social dialogue and strengthens existing co-operation structures.¹⁵⁶

iii. Engagement with civil society at large

One of the major innovations of the Lisbon Treaty was the obligation¹⁵⁷ for the European Institutions to give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action and to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is the voice of organised civil society. It advises the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The EESC consists of 326 members from three different groups, employers, workers and other social society groups. It has dealt in several opinions, information reports and events with decent work in global value chains and related issues.¹⁵⁸

The promotion of civil society dialogue, including on decent work issues, pervades also the EU external relations. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020 – 2024 encompasses the promotion of a safe and an enabling environment for civil society. The European Consensus on Development, the Development Cooperation Instrument, the NDICI, the European Development Fund and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights underlines the importance of civil society engagement and provides respective support. The Commissions' bi-yearly dialogue with the European Confederation of NGOs for relief and development (CONCORD) allows for a regular exchange on major issues of development policies including decent work.¹⁵⁹ The Policy Forum on Development (PFD) is the result of a Structured Dialogue, which brings together Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Local Authorities (LAs) from the European Union and partner countries with European Institutions and bodies.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.usp2030.org/gimi/USP2030.action>; https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_666166/lang--en/index.htm.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.alliance87.org/the-alliance/>.

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.theglobaldeal.com/>.

¹⁵⁷ Article 11 TEU.

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/search/node/supply%20chain>; <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/search/node/decent%20work>.

¹⁵⁹ <https://concordeurope.org/>.

¹⁶⁰ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/policy-forum-development>.

The Commission systematically consults CSOs in the framework of FTA negotiations and implementation. Another structured engagement with the CSOs is in the process of preparations for the Joint Committees in the framework of PCAs, under the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Governance. The EU also consults and maintains relations with CSOs in its bilateral relations, such as in preparation of human rights dialogues.

iv. Engagement with the research community

To ensure that high standards of decent work can be maintained on the long run against the background of fast-changing realities, the Commission engages actively with the relevant research community, supporting R&I projects through its current Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Under Horizon 2020, the Commission supports objectives for societal wellbeing, inclusiveness and equal opportunities, covering social protection and investment, economic resilience and growth, fiscal policies, employment and productivity, gender equality in research careers, socio-economic inequalities, globalisation, education, training and migration. These objectives are expected to continue and be reinforced under the next European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe.

Research actions supported under Horizon2020 dealt with decent work related matters. These matters included the role of sustainable market actors for responsible trade,¹⁶¹ the ways in which Europe can exercise its soft power in external cooperation and trade,¹⁶² the platform economy's impact on work, welfare and social protection¹⁶³ and the impact of the new technologies on the future of jobs, business models and welfare¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶¹ <https://www.smart.uio.no/>.

¹⁶² <http://respect.eu.eu/>.

¹⁶³ <https://project-plus.eu/>.

¹⁶⁴ <https://beyond4-0.eu/>.