



Position on the EU-US framework agreement

Adopted at the Executive Committee meeting of 1-2 October 2025

The [EU-US framework agreement on reciprocal, fair and balanced trade](#) has been presented as a necessary step to ensure stability and predictability in transatlantic relations in an increasingly unstable world. The ETUC recognises the geopolitical challenges and the importance of a stable transatlantic partnership for European economic security – workers' never benefit from trade wars. However, as it stands the outcome lacks balance, fairness and reciprocity. It carries significant risks for Europe's workers, our social model and our environmental standards and our long-term investment priorities. The ETUC demands that the ensuing talks that will give substance to the different parts of the framework also contains stronger guarantees with respect to our concerns.

The framework is not legally binding and lacks a democratic mandate. The text represents a series of commitments at the highest political level but there is nothing in it that would prevent the US from threatening or reintroducing further tariffs – the predictability might thus be short lived. To remedy this risk, the EU should stand ready to withdraw its tariff concessions (wholly or in part) as set out in article 3 of the [proposed regulation](#), insist on a stand-still clause and to deploy the anti-coercion instrument, which was devised to deter and, if necessary, respond to economic blackmail from trade partners, including where the coercion threatens the enforcement of labour and fiscal rules.

Further talks must also be based on a democratically determined negotiating mandate as for other trade agreements, with proper oversight of both Council and Parliament. Trade unions must be meaning fully consulted and a Trade and Labour Dialogue should be reconvened. Additionally, the ETUC calls for a granular impact assessment on sectors and jobs and for flanking measures¹ to support workers and foster internal European demand.

The outcome is asymmetric and not compatible with WTO rules, nor with EU's own trade policy. While the EU has made far-reaching commitments, the US has conceded little in return. This undermines the credibility of the EU as a defender of Europe's economic and social interests and an advocate of a rules-based order and the multilateral system, undermining our collective capacity to act in the future rather than pursuing narrow national interests.

Going forward, on goods and market access, the EU should seek to broaden the list of exempted goods and aim for 'zero for zero' tariffs.

¹ <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/eu-urgently-needs-plan-protect-jobs-and-production-eu-after-us-trade-deal> and [US tariffs: EU must take emergency measures to protect jobs | ETUC](#)



In its continued engagement with the US, the EU should also seek to enhance our strategic autonomy and include an enforceable Trade & Sustainable Development chapter or countermeasures focused on economic activities that violate ILO core labour standards. The EU has to use its negotiation power as the second largest economy in the world and put into the balance the US service and digital exports to the EU.

The EU must foster a global agenda to (re)build a multilateral fair-trade regime and related institutions, working towards a progressive, international rules-based system, with a fully functioning WTO that does not undermine the full respect of ILO conventions and supports national enforcement efforts, including in the digital economy. While the commitments to work jointly on the issue of forced labour and of overcapacity are welcome, the EU should insist that in both regards Europe is not the source of these problems and US punishing tariffs have no justification.

Regulatory cooperation, as framed in the joint statement, focuses on “flexibility”. The ETUC is concerned that this will mean a dilution of hard-won European standards and the approximation to US standards will increase compliance costs for our industries and risks undermining collective bargaining standards. Even though the Commission has stated that the EU right to regulate is safe, the aim being administrative facilitation, support to US companies to comply with EU regulations, and that mutual recognition will only happen where the standards are equivalent, the ETUC will continue to oppose any deregulatory attempt: the Commission must defend the EU precautionary principle, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), its due diligence directive as well as European standardisation inclusive practices that involve trade unions (unlike in the US).

The ETUC is committed to the consistent implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA): under no circumstances should pressure from the US administration and corporations lead to a watering down, nor to preventing the EU and its member states from imposing digital taxes, which the ETUC calls for.

The ETUC welcomes the efforts to address third parties’ policies such as economic security, unfair competition, resilience of supply chains, overcapacity and combating forced labour, but stresses the need to tackle those problems in a way that contributes to (re)building a multilateral rules based fair-trade regime.

Procurement and investment commitments: the target of 600bn € of EU investments into the US economy and to procure energy, AI chips and military equipment is a direct threat to European jobs. Mario Draghi has called for investment in Europe to secure the green transition, strengthen competitiveness, and ensure decent jobs. For the ETUC, urging investment abroad is an unacceptable contradiction: it risks locking Europe into fossil fuel dependence while undermining its industrial strength and strategic autonomy. Investment and technology transfer must be channelled first and foremost into Europe’s future and its needs. Trade must serve to bolster reindustrialisation and create quality manufacturing jobs in Europe. The EU cannot afford another wave of deindustrialisation driven by asymmetric trade concessions. The ETUC calls on companies’ CEOs to come clean on their investment plans – workers must be informed and consulted over these plans, as well as on EU instruments supporting investments abroad (loans, guarantees etc).

Security concerns: The ETUC recognises the broader geopolitical climate and the need to secure energy supplies have played a decisive role in shaping this deal. But security should not be used as a pretext to weaken Europe’s social model or to prioritise external commitments over our own economic and social needs, including meeting our carbon neutrality targets. The EU must ensure that trade and investment policy support European industrial policy, green transition and social cohesion.



The EU must defend its economic interests and implement a de-risking policy to reduce our strategic dependencies with the US and other partners that build their competitiveness on aggressive deregulation and social and fiscal dumping. The EU should reduce reliance on vulnerable trade relationships through supply diversification and new export markets with trade partners who are willing to engage in fair and socially responsible Trade Agreements based on universal rules, respect of workers' rights and sustainability rules, with the involvement of trade unions. Boosting domestic demand and domestic supply chains, including for energy and raw materials, must also be part of this de-risking strategy.

The ETUC recognises the need for stability and predictability in uncertain times, but reject any approach that puts corporate flexibility and US investment priorities ahead of European workers and quality jobs. Instead the ETUC calls for agreements that ensure sustainable prosperity on both sides, promote each other's industries and decent work, and respect democratic principles and international standards. Europe must export its social model, not import deregulation.