

Results of the initial public consultation on the EU-US High-Level Working Group on growth and jobs

Executive Summary:

Stakeholders' view on the future of transatlantic economic relations/work of the High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth

At the 28 November 2011 EU-US Summit meeting, Leaders directed the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) to establish a High-Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth (HLWG), led by US Trade Representative Ron Kirk and EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht. This Working Group has been tasked to identify policies and measures to increase EU-US trade and investment to support mutually beneficial job creation, economic growth, and international competitiveness. Upon completing its analysis, the HLWG will also consider and recommend the practical means necessary to implement any policy measures identified. Within this context, the European Commission launched a first general public consultation in order to gather the views of stakeholders on the objectives and priorities on the work of the HLWG as well as the future of transatlantic economic relations, more broadly. The present consultation will be complemented by a detailed additional exercise based on a questionnaire, which will be part of the Impact Assessment. This second exercise will aim at detailing and structuring the feedback of all relevant stakeholders. The results of both consultations will feed into the Impact Assessment that DG TRADE is currently preparing. The Impact Assessment will help shaping the position of the Commission with regards to a potential bilateral initiative with the United States in the field of trade policy.

In this first exercise, the European Commission has received 48 (publicly-releasable) contributions from organisations/ businesses, citizens and public authorities in Europe. These contributions represent a range of sectors, among which are telecommunications, financial services, engineering, dairy, animal welfare, generic medicines, futures and options, fruits and vegetables, agriculture, legal services, automotives, chemicals, sugar, toys, communications services, automotive suppliers and the services industry. A broader representation of various businesses/ industries has also been assured by their respective umbrella associations.

The list of full contributions can be found on the European Commission's web-site at the following address: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/149761.htm>.

The results of the public consultations showed that stakeholders are generally highly supportive of a transatlantic initiative that would boost trade and generate growth and jobs across the Atlantic. Regarding the form of a future transatlantic initiative, most stakeholders have supported a comprehensive, ambitious and realistic agreement that would be negotiated under a single package. This is the widely preferred option on the way forward in relations with the US.

According to some of the views expressed, such an agreement should also build on the best terms negotiated by both the EU and the US in their previous trade agreements. A small number of alternative views have proposed the parallel negotiation of separate sectoral agreements, which would be negotiated under the scope of an overarching umbrella agreement, on one hand, or implemented separately, on the other hand. Regarding the scope of a transatlantic initiative, stakeholders have generally agreed with the priorities identified by the HLWG. Overall, stakeholders believed that a future agreement should include the following areas: trade in goods, trade in services, investment, public procurement, intellectual property, rules of origin, the digital economy, access to raw materials, visa procedures and in particular "21st century" trade issues such as regulatory cooperation and non-tariff barriers. Additionally, enhanced cooperation in relation to third countries and the importance of preserving the role of the WTO multilateral system has been highlighted.

Whereas stakeholders recognised the importance of cooperation on a wider set of priorities, there has been general agreement that the real potential lies first of all in regulatory cooperation, both in goods and services. Stakeholders believe that substantial benefits could be achieved by trying to remove the differences in regulatory frameworks, including for instance the harmonisation/mutual recognition of certification, rules and standards, the simplification of customs procedures, the sharing of information between regulatory authorities, the improvement of visa/administrative requirements associated with the movement of qualified persons, etc. In addition, some stakeholders have asked for high standards of investment protection, for the inclusion of US states and EU member states under the scope of public procurement discussions and for a strong protection of intellectual property rights. Regarding the relation between the work of the HLWG and the TEC, a number of stakeholders have called for strengthening the role of the TEC, particularly with respect to regulatory cooperation which could also potentially include the prospect of transforming TEC regulatory principles into binding commitments in a potential trade agreement. The TEC should continue to work on emerging regulatory issues. Regarding enhanced cooperation in relation with third countries, stakeholders have found that this could help the EU and US to better engage with third countries, on issues where they share common views. Additionally, some stakeholders also believed that a future EU-US agreement should offer the possibility to third countries sharing the high standards of trade liberalisation to join in at a later stage. Regarding the relation to the WTO, stakeholders have underlined the role of the WTO. Future negotiations between EU and US should be compatible with and impact positively on the WTO system and seek to deepen the multilateral commitment to open markets.

This document does not present the official position of DG Trade or of the European Commission. It is designed to summarise the views of interested parties who gave comments on the future of EU-US trade and economic relations. The suggestions in this document in no way prejudge either the nature or the form or content of any future action by the European Commission.