



## **Stakeholder Consultation Strategy**

### **Mid-Term Evaluation of the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)**

#### **1. Context**

The stakeholder consultation process will serve to collect information and insights from a wide range of stakeholders to feed into the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), as well as further raise awareness of the EU's GSP among relevant stakeholders.

On 2 May 2016, the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission (DG Trade) published its roadmap for the Interim Evaluation of Regulation (EU) No. 978/2012 on a scheme of generalised tariff preferences ('the GSP Regulation').<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the Commission will present its findings on the application of the scheme to the European Parliament and the Council in November 2017 in the 2017 GSP Evaluation Report.

To support the Commission's 2017 GSP Evaluation Report, DG Trade has contracted DEVELOPMENT Solutions Europe Ltd. to conduct an in-depth quantitative and qualitative assessment of the economic, social, environmental and human rights impact of the scheme in the beneficiary countries. The goal of the study is to assess the scheme's effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and relevance.<sup>2</sup>

A continuous and wide-ranging consultation process will be conducted to support the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EU's GSP. This inclusive consultation process is a key characteristic of all EU impact assessments and evaluations. The effective delivery of stakeholder consultation requires adherence to the common methodological framework outlined in the Better Regulation Toolkit<sup>3</sup> and Better Regulation Guidelines,<sup>4</sup> as well as in the formulation of a robust methodological approach in response to the specific requirements of this evaluation. The Project Team will establish a dynamic and robust methodological approach that will adhere to the minimum standards for stakeholder consultation<sup>5</sup> to ensure that the consultation process is:

- **Comprehensive** - giving all stakeholders the opportunity to express their views;
- **Balanced** - ensuring that the consultation is representative;
- **Timely** - allowing sufficient time for stakeholder inputs and contributions;

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. (2016). *Roadmap: Interim Evaluation of the Regulation (EU) No. 978/2012 on a scheme of generalised tariff preferences (GSP Regulation)*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2016\\_trade\\_021\\_evaluation\\_gps\\_regulation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2016_trade_021_evaluation_gps_regulation_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EU's GSP, please visit [www.GSPevaluation.com](http://www.GSPevaluation.com)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission. (2015). *Better Regulation Toolbox*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/toc\\_tool\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/toc_tool_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> European Commission. (2015). *Better Regulation Guidelines (SWD(2015) 111 final)*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/swd\\_br\\_guidelines\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/swd_br_guidelines_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. (2016). *Handbook for trade sustainability impact assessments 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Available at: [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/april/tradoc\\_154464.PDF](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/april/tradoc_154464.PDF)



- **Tailored** - ensuring that the needs of specific target audiences are met; and
- **Incorporated** - taking into account all feedback and input in the study.

The current Stakeholder Consultation Strategy document will (1) set out the objectives and scope of the consultation, (2) map key stakeholders and (3) establish consultation methods and tools which ensure a comprehensive, balanced, timely, tailored and incorporated stakeholder consultation process. A website is set up to provide a centralized source of information on all stakeholder consultation activities and their outcomes ([www.GSPevaluation.com](http://www.GSPevaluation.com)). A synopsis report will document all consultation activities, summarize the responses and will give feedback to the stakeholders on how their input was used (and if not, why).

## 2. Stakeholder Consultation – Objectives and Scope

The **objective** of the stakeholder consultation process is two-fold: (i) to collect information, ideas, opinions and insights from a wide range of stakeholders to complement the data analysis and secondary research; and (ii) to raise awareness of the EU's GSP among relevant stakeholders.

The **focus** of the stakeholder consultation process will be to assess whether the objectives set by the GSP Regulation are on track to be achieved. The following key aspects will be consulted on:

### *Effectiveness*

- To what extent are the objectives of the current GSP on track to be achieved? What has been the impact of the present scheme on developing countries and LDCs?
- What are the factors (positive and negative) influencing the achievements observed?
- What unintended consequences, if any, can be linked to the design, implementation, or use of the current GSP?

### *Efficiency*

- To what extent is the current GSP efficient?

### *Coherence*

- To what extent is the current GSP coherent with the EU's relevant policies?

### *Relevance*

- To what extent is the current GSP scheme relevant to the development needs which it is intended to address?

A particular focus will be on the countries and sectors covered in the case studies of the evaluation: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Pakistan and the textile and machinery sectors.

Through the different stages of the consultation process, the feedback, results, and data gathered among others will feed into answering these questions in the Final Report of the Mid-Term Evaluation.



### 3. Stakeholder Mapping

The Inception Report for the evaluation contains a preliminary list of key stakeholders in the EU, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan. To establish this list, initial desk research was conducted to identify relevant stakeholders in the following categories:

- **National and regional government administrations** – relevant government bodies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan, such as ministries and other relevant entities of the national and regional administrations involved with trade and the generalised scheme of preferences.
- **Businesses** – relevant chambers of commerce, SME organisations, business associations and trade associations in the EU, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan.
- **Social partners** – relevant social partners, such as trade unions, in the EU, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan.
- **International organisations** – relevant international organisations involved with social rights, human rights and environmental protection, in particular those involved in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan.
- **Civil society** – relevant non-governmental organisations, human rights organisations, women's rights and gender equality organisations and other relevant civil society groups involved with social rights, human rights and environmental protection, in particular those involved in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan.
- **Research institutes** – relevant university and research institutions involved in trade, social, environmental and human rights research in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Pakistan or the region.

This list contains suggested stakeholders and will be expanded and refined throughout the project in consultation with the Inter-Service Steering Group and Delegation of the EU to the respective countries.

The preliminary stakeholder list will serve as a database for the consultation and stakeholder outreach activities:

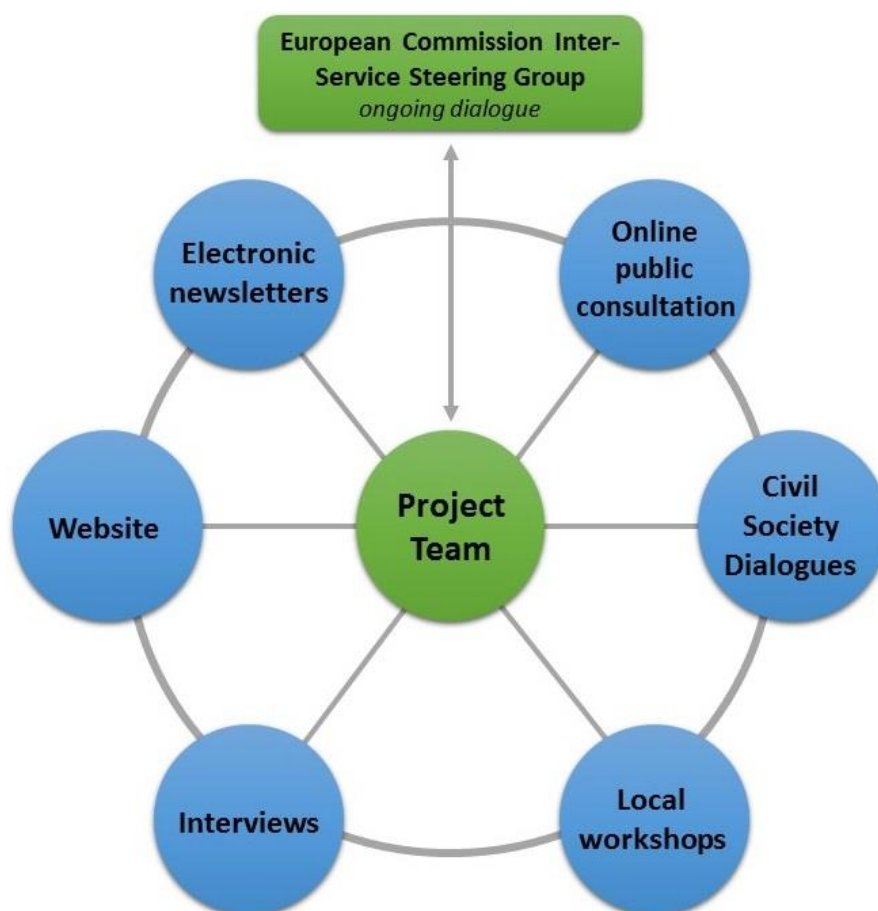
- **Local workshops** – priority stakeholders will be selected from the database, in close consultation with the European Commission and the respective EU Delegations, to attend the local workshops. Correctly assessing the most adequate participants to attend and speak at the workshops is of ultimate importance, as the quality of the data gathered from the workshops relies on this. Priority stakeholders are therefore selected taking into account various aspects, such as the relevance of the administration or organisation and involvement with the GSP.
- **Interviews and meetings** – priority stakeholders will be selected from the database to conduct interviews in the context of the case studies on Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Pakistan and the textile and machinery sectors.
- **Online public consultation** – stakeholders in the database will be invited to complete the stakeholder questionnaire, given their expertise and experience with the GSP, trade policy and social rights, human rights and environmental protection.



#### 4. Consultation Methods and Tools

The Project Team will employ a wide range of consultation activities and tools to ensure a comprehensive and well-balanced consultation process, which aims to contribute to answer the evaluation questions outlined in Section 2 and to increase awareness of the EU's GSP.

The activities and tools include a dedicated project website and electronic outreach tools, a 12-week online public consultation, interviews and meetings with relevant stakeholders, Civil Society Dialogues in Brussels and local workshops in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan. Figure 1 provides an overview of all stakeholder consultation tools and activities.



**Figure 1: Overview of the stakeholder consultation activities and tools**

##### 4.1. Dedicated website for the GSP Evaluation

The Project Team has designed and launched a dedicated GSP Evaluation website at [www.GSPEvaluation.com](http://www.GSPEvaluation.com) to serve as the main platform for conducting online consultation as well as for regularly and pro-actively informing stakeholders on the Mid-Term Evaluation and will include the following features:

- **Publication** of all relevant information concerning the evaluation's progress through uploading of reports (both draft and final versions),



minutes of Civil Society Dialogues and the local workshops, a summary on the stage of the evaluation process, relevant background information and newsletters (as approved by the Commission);

- **Questionnaire functionalities** for the online stakeholder consultation;
- Publication of **stakeholder input** (permission based);
- Detailed information on **local workshops and Civil Society Dialogues**;
- **Dedicated email address** for the GSP Evaluation ([comments@gspevaluation.com](mailto:comments@gspevaluation.com)); and
- **Data collection tools** built on the website's back-end to easily collect and collate information on website usage ('hits').

The website will ensure long-term visibility of the project throughout its continued maintenance for 24 months following the approval of the final report.

An information depository within the GSP Evaluation website will house all project documentation (reports, public meeting reports, list of stakeholders (permission based), publication/documentation sources and other outputs as approved by the Commission).

#### **4.2. Electronic stakeholder outreach tools**

In addition to the project website, the Project Team will maintain contact with relevant stakeholders through various other electronic tools to disseminate information on the progress on the Mid-Term Evaluation, namely electronic newsletters, social media channels such as Twitter and LinkedIn and an electronic documentation e-library.

**Electronic newsletter:** A newsletter will be disseminated electronically to the stakeholder network throughout the study. The newsletter will include a summary of the ongoing evaluation process, consultation activities and preliminary results of the project. The newsletter will be distributed both via email within the network and will also be made publicly available on the project website.

**Twitter:** Twitter will form an integral part of the evaluation's visibility strategy. The Project Team will utilise this tool to post frequent updates on the evaluation process, links to the project reports and other sections of the project website, as well as other sources of useful, relevant information.

**LinkedIn:** The Project Team will maintain an active LinkedIn account in order to promote relevant materials, such as infographics, reports, meetings and information on the local workshops, as well as links to relevant sections of the project website. Through LinkedIn, the Project Team will be able to share content with stakeholders and build stakeholder engagement. Additionally, the Project Team will create an ongoing community dialogue by asking stakeholders to ask and answer project related questions. This will also help to increase project's visibility.

#### **4.3. Public online consultation**

The purpose of the public online consultation will be to collect information, views and opinions on the application of the GSP Regulation and its effectiveness,



efficiency, coherence and relevance. Through a set of questions that will be tailored to receive fruitful answers from stakeholders, these questionnaires will gather useful information from stakeholders who we consider have key knowledge on the subject matter.

The main advantage of using questionnaires is in their ability to gather large volumes of standardised information with a relatively efficient use of budgetary and personnel resources. In addition, stakeholders are given appropriate time to prepare responses, allowing them to gather and utilise information that may not be readily available during an interview. Two major drawbacks of using questionnaires include the generally low response rates as well as the rigidity in this form of feedback. Inevitably, in some cases the questions asked may not be entirely applicable to the stakeholder. In order to minimise these risks and aim for a high rate of responses, the Project Team will follow-up on survey recipients with telephone calls where feasible.

The questionnaire will be produced and made available on the website in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. The questionnaire will be featured on the project's website, as well as on existing consultation mechanisms such as the Your Voice in Europe<sup>6</sup> platform on the DG Trade website which can be linked to the project website.

The public online consultation is expected to be launched in February 2017 and will run for 12 weeks.

#### **4.4. Interviews and meetings**

Interviews conducted over telephone and face-to-face meetings will constitute the most direct form of stakeholder engagement under the GSP Interim Evaluation. Structured interviews will allow for the Project Team to interact directly with the stakeholder groups and obtain detailed information and experience with the revised GSP.

The main objective of these interviews is to **facilitate detailed discussions with stakeholders** on the various impacts of the GSP. Additionally, interviews will allow the Project Team to obtain **in-depth qualitative data** on the subject, and also give insight into a range of different perspectives. However, one major constraint of interviews is that they can be time-consuming to hold and to process. To ensure maximum efficiency, the Project Team will develop a standard list of questions as a basis for conducting interviews while allowing a degree of flexibility to the interviewer to interact with the interviewee.

Interviews will also be the main form of consultation when engaging with the identified stakeholders; given that response rates tend to be higher in interviews than in the alternative method of distributing surveys. A further benefit of conducting interviews is that this will also mitigate against the constraints of internet access and usage that may negatively impact the response rate to web-based feedback in many developing countries, particularly LDCs.

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<sup>6</sup> The Your Voice in Europe platform can be found at [http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm).



#### **4.5. Civil Society Dialogues**

The Project Team will participate in two Civil Society Dialogues (CSDs) organised by DG Trade, involving participants from registered civil society organisations. The CSDs will serve to obtain feedback from EU civil society on the project reports and invaluable insight on the impact of the GSP Regulation on EU industry.

The first CSD will take place after the submission of the Draft Inception Report, and the second meeting will take place following the submission of the Draft Interim Report. The reports will be posted online for external stakeholders prior to the public meetings. During the meetings, the Project Team will present the objectives and planned activities under the GSP Interim Evaluation and will discuss feedback with stakeholders.

#### **4.6. Local workshops in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan**

Four full-day workshops will be held in beneficiary countries identified by the Commission, namely Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Pakistan. The workshops are aimed at gathering the views of key stakeholders about the impact of the EU's GSP in the beneficiary countries, as well as raising overall awareness about the GSP.

The Project Team is proposing to organise these four workshops between February and June 2017. The first workshop is to take place in Bangladesh on 7 February 2017. The second workshop is proposed to take place between in Ethiopia on 7 March 2017. The third workshop is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bolivia in April 2017. Lastly, the fourth workshop is proposed to take place in May 2017 in Pakistan. The Project Team will organise these workshops in close liaison with the Commission and local EU Delegations. Detailed information, such as the date, venue, speakers and briefing documents, will be published on the dedicated project website and other electronic communication tools. Additionally, local media will be used to advertise and cover the workshops and the evaluation as well as raise awareness about the GSP. Both before and after each workshop, a press release targeting the local media will inform all stakeholders and other interested parties.

For each workshop, the Project Team will invite up to 30 participants. A diverse and balanced participation from private businesses, national and regional administrations, social partners including trade unions, international organisations that are present on the ground, and civil society will be ensured. The Project Team will consult the local EU Delegation on the selection of participants and the final list of participants will be approved by the Inter-Service Steering Group.

Stakeholders will be invited to participate and comment on the work delivered during the interim project phase. During the local workshops, key experts will present the preliminary findings of the evaluation and case studies as well as provide a general presentation of the evaluation process. Local experts will be invited to make presentations outlining the impacts of the GSP and participants will be invited to comment and ask questions. Briefing documents including the





agenda, speaker biographies and factsheets be disseminated during the workshop to the participants.

Following the workshop, a workshop evaluation form outlining their views on the workshops will be distributed amongst participants just prior to the closing remarks. The evaluation will be designed to capture quantitative and qualitative feedback of technical relevance for the assessment and the merits of the workshop as well as of the logistics, content and areas of future improvement. The summary of the results will be reported to DG Trade as part of the Interim and Final Reports.

As a follow-up to each workshop, the Project Team will publish a workshop report on the dedicated project website. This report will include summaries of the presentations, an overview of the stakeholder contributions to the discussions and questions raised and a participant list. The PowerPoint presentations provided by the speakers will also be uploaded on to the dedicated website. Finally, a short overview and a link to the workshop report will be featured in the GSP Evaluation Newsletter.

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