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Answer given by Ms Thyssen
on behalf of the Commission
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The Commission will continue tackling labour rights abuses, including forced labour, in a multidimensional approach and in cooperation with different stakeholders and international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), including by its garment sector engagement¹. The EU promotes the ratification and enforcement of ILO Fundamental Conventions and is devoted to the rapid international ratification of the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention.

The EU legislation on public procurement and non-financial information² also supports a stronger respect for labour rights issues³.

The Commission expects companies to respect labour standards, including the elimination of forced labour in the garment sector, and to exercise due diligence, regardless where they operate⁴.

The Commission plays an active role in facilitating dialogue and exchanges of information and best practices through regular interactions with key stakeholders in the garment value chain, e.g. in the OECD⁵. Through the Development Cooperation Instrument specific projects support civil society, private and public entities to build capacity and prevent labour rights abuses with remedial and accompanying measures. Activities include improved knowledge and awareness, enhanced transparency and traceability schemes particularly in sub-contracted and informal work⁶.

The EU has been addressing labour issues with India in different formats, including the EU-India human rights dialogue, the 2017 Universal Periodic Review, or most recently with the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of India. The EU also funded a project through Fair Wear Foundation which aimed to reduce workplace violence and exploitation of women in selected factories in the export-oriented garment industry in south India.

¹ Cf. Staff Working Document "Sustainable garment value chains through EU development action", SWD(2017)147.

² Enterprises in the scope of the EU Directive on disclosure of non-financial information (2014/95/EU) are obliged to report on the policies they implement in relation to a.o. employee matters and respect for human rights and the principal risks related to those matters linked to the undertaking's operations.

³ Cf. EU public procurement Directive (2014/24/EU); EU Directive on disclosure of non-financial information (2014/95/EU).

⁴ Among others by promoting the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and of Corporate Social Responsibility/Responsible Business Conduct.

⁵ E.g. in OECD Forum on Due diligence in the garment and footwear sector.

⁶ Development Cooperation Instrument 2016 Multi-country Action "Promoting Responsible Supply Chains the Garment Sector with a focus on Decent Work, Transparency and Traceability" and Call for Proposals EuropeAid/157515/DH/ACT/Multi.