

Making trade work against inequality and for human rights

- Include enforceable labour and human rights rules in EU trade deals
- Label goods to show social impact of production
- Protect whistle-blowers who reveal forced labour and trafficking

Trade must be made fairer, so as to help prevent workers from being exploited in the world's poorest countries, MEPs said on Tuesday.

As global trade patterns have changed markedly in recent decades and the unequal distribution of its benefits has come in for growing public criticism, MEPs are proposing measures to protect workers and the environment worldwide, by reforming [global value chains \(GVCs\)](#). Their suggestions include:

- boosting corporate social responsibility, by including CSR rules in the trade and investment agreements negotiated by the EU,
- requiring the EU Commission to consider stipulating extensive "due diligence" measures in supply chains, similar to those used for 'conflict minerals' and timber supply,
- including enforceable rules on labour and human rights in trade deals,
- developing an EU strategy to protect whistle-blowers in forced labour and trafficking cases, and
- making the "social impact of production" visible on goods, to raise consumer awareness and help bring about lasting change.

The resolution was approved by 497 votes to 124, with 56 abstentions.

Quote:

Rapporteur [Maria Arena \(S&D, BE\)](#) said after the vote: "The EU, the largest trading bloc, has a key role to play in ensuring the respect for human and environmental rights. We call for binding regulations, which would oblige multinationals to respect these rights, as seen with conflict minerals and timber supply. Wherever they operate and regardless of business, all international companies must meet these standards and respect due diligence obligations".

Quick facts:

In today's interconnected economy, production is increasingly organised within GVCs where production processes span several countries. This can reduce poverty by enabling new firms and employees to contribute, but may also complicate and obscure liability for products and accidents. The EU is to update its trade policies to help prevent tragedies such as [the collapse of the Rana Plaza clothing factory](#) in Bangladesh in 2013. Some 21 million people worldwide are victims of forced labour, generating USD 150 billion a year in illegal profits.

Procedure: non-legislative resolution

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Maria Arena (S&D, BE)

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Further information:

[The adopted text will be available here \(12.09.2017.\)](#)

[Rapporteur Maria Arena \(S&D, BE\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(click on 12.09.2017.](#)

[Press Release - Textile imports: development MEPs call for rules to curb worker exploitation \(March 2017\)](#)

[EP Research Briefing: Improving global value chains key for EU trade \(June 2016\)](#)

[EP Research Briefing: Workers' conditions in the textile and clothing sector: just an Asian affair? \(August 2014\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Audiovisual materials for professionals](#)

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