European Parliament

2019-2024



Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America

DCAM_PV(2022)1117

MINUTES

of the meeting of 17 November 2022, 14.00-16.00

Brussels

The meeting opened at 14.08 on Thursday, 17 November 2022, with Tilly Metz (Chair) presiding.

1. Adoption of draft agenda

OJ - PE629.264v01-00

The agenda was adopted.

2. Approval of minutes of meetings

DCAM of 16 June 2022 PV – PE629.260v01-00

• DCAM IPM of 26 September 2022 PV – PE629.263v01-00

These minutes were adopted.

3. Chair's announcements

The Chair informed Members that the visit of Honduras and Guatemala from 31 October to 4 November made it possible to learn about the political reality of the two countries. In Honduras, Members were able to assess the situation of the country after the first nine months of government of Xiomara Castro, while in Guatemala it was possible to assess the situation before the elections on 25 June 2023. The Chair announced that DCAM has requested a visit to Costa Rica and Belize during week 20 of 2023 (14 to 20 May).

4. Exchange of views on the final report "Ex-post evaluation of the implementation of part IV of the Association Agreement (Trade Pillar) between the EU and its

PV\1268680EN.docx PE629.266v01-00

Member States and Central America"

with the participation of:

- Magdalena Ruda, Team Leader in the ex-post evaluation study led by BKP Economic Advisors GmbH
- H.E. Mr José Lambour Peñalonzo, Ambassador, Head of Mission of Guatemala to the European Union
- Olivier Coupleux, Trade Affairs Officer, Trade Relations with Latin America, DG TRADE, European Commission
- Karolien Kras, Desk El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Magdalena Ruda, team leader in the ex post evaluation study carried out by BKP Economic Advisors GmbH, presented the results of the study. She pointed out that the European Commission usually commissioned an ex post evaluation of the impact of a trade agreement five years after its entry into force, dealing with economic, social, environmental and human rights. Ms Ruda explained that the period analysed extended from 2013/2014 until the end of 2019 to focus on the impact of this agreement and avoid an analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic. She summarised that generally the impact of the agreement was positive but limited.

Regarding the economic analysis, the impacts of these agreements are positive although limited for the four countries that otherwise would be within the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), consisting of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras. The impacts are more accentuated for Costa Rica, Panama and the EU, since without this agreement the EU would have a trade agreement under WTO rules. In other words, this means that preference could not be given to these markets. Ms Ruda said that trade in goods and services had increased in both directions after entry into force of the agreement. There has also been an increase in Gross National Product in absolute and relative terms, as well as a positive welfare effect, defined as a comparison between the loss of revenue due to forgone tariffs and the additional benefits that come from other fees (such as import tax, VAT, salary increase and other tax revenue). Ms Ruda stressed that the agreement had helped Central American economies to develop, become more resilient and diversify in terms of sectors and products. She also highlighted a greater participation of microenterprises and SMEs in bilateral trade on both sides. She called for more support for SMEs and micro-enterprises. The trade preferences offered by the agreement are well used, with Guatemala and Costa Rica utilising 95% of their quota.

The social impact of the trade agreement is overall positive, although limited. Thanks to exports to the EU, employment has been created or maintained in some sectors in Central America. In addition, there has been a certain reduction in poverty, especially in rural areas, since most of the increase in jobs has occurred in the agricultural and rural sectors of Central America. However, the trade agreement has been only one of the factors that has contributed to this reduction in poverty. More formal jobs have been created or maintained, such as in the banana, pineapple, sugar, medical equipment and tuna sectors, although informal work is still high in sectors such as palm oil, coffee, and

sugar.

Ms Ruda said that it was difficult to have quantified data on women since most of them work in services. She highlighted the participation of businesswomen and merchants in projects financed by the European Union, as well as their intervention in sectors that have benefited from tariff advantages. She points out that the entry into force of the agreement has meant the improvement of working conditions, social dialogue and training for workers in El Salvador. She remarked that in other countries there has been also some progress, but insufficient. She recommended for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to align the legislation with the ILO conventions, as well as to improve the political atmosphere so that trade union organisations can carry out their work.

Ms. Ruda reported on progress in reducing child labour, especially in Costa Rica and El Salvador, a process that had already begun before the agreement entered into force. She encouraged continuing efforts to eliminate child labour beyond sectors related to trade with the EU, as well as continuing to support and promote Corporate Social Responsibility practices in Central America in respect of labour and environmental standards. She also urged to reduce informal work and improve the working conditions and living standards of workers in all sectors and jobs. She strongly recommended supporting the production of organic products in Central America that are exported to the EU, as they provide economic, social and environmental benefits.

Commenting on the agreement's impact on the environment, Ms Ruda stated that the reduction of tariffs had slightly increased greenhouse gas emissions in the EU and in some states, while in others they have been reduced. She pointed out that changes in land use due to tariff reductions had increased in some cases, with the main effects being seen in Costa Rica and Panama. Deforestation has been limited, and was more noticeable in Panama and Costa Rica. An analysis of the palm oil sector in Guatemala showed that its effect on deforestation has been very limited and unlikely. Regarding the effects on water, she said that the tariff reduction had increased water consumption in El Salvador (sugar sector) and Costa Rica (fruit and vegetable sector). She stressed that there had been pressures on the quality of water, land and air prior to the agreement. She underlined positive environmental impacts such as the increase in imports of products that respect the environment, as well as the export of products certified as sustainable, and the increase in trade in organic products. Ms Ruda called for a mitigation of the environmental effects that are due to the increase in agricultural production, such as the reduction in the use of water or chemical products, as well as for dialogue and cooperation between both regions to reduce the environmental footprint. Regarding the efforts to decarbonise the Central American economies, she pointed to potential cooperation in the wind energy sector between Costa Rica and the EU.

Ms Ruda explained that the analysis of human rights in the study was based on the analysis of the right to work, which is combined with the right to favourable and fair working conditions, and the right to property, such as the rights to land of indigenous peoples. Regarding the first, she underlined that there was already a pre-existing vulnerability in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, such as precarious working conditions in part of the sugar sector and informal jobs in other sectors. She stated that the agreement has not produced tangible results. The vulnerabilities were not eliminated by the agreement, but they were not aggravated either. She highlighted legislative gaps

in relation to the rights of indigenous peoples to land, particularly in Guatemala. She alerted that the main provisions on human rights in the agreement are included in the first and fifth part, which have not yet been ratified and have not entered into force. Consequently, M Ruda's first recommendation was to urge the full ratification of the association agreement so that the Political Dialogue and Cooperation part could take effect as well. She also referred to the application of the Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter to ensure that the cooperation dialogue continues, also in matters of labour regulations, and that progress is monitored.

H.E. Mr José Lambour Peñalonzo, Ambassador, Head of Mission of Guatemala to the European Union, stated that this type of exchange contributes and adds to the strengthening of the relationship. He regretted that, unfortunately, it was not possible for the SIECA Members (Secretariat for the Economic Integration of Central America) to gather all the necessary inputs in time to be able to convey a regional position on the results of the study. He pointed out that the positions and arguments that had been presented by each of the countries of the region during the eighth meeting of the Association Committee held in Brussels on 23 June 2022 maintain their validity and relevance. He considered it necessary to recognise the achievements and advances made by the authorities and the productive sectors of the countries of the region in relation to trade and sustainable and comprehensive development. He explained that Central America recognised the great strength of its relationship with the European Union and in this sense was aware of the opportunities that would arise from the full implementation of the Association Agreement.

Olivier Coupleux, Trade Affairs Officer, Trade Relations with Latin America, DG TRADE, praised the study and emphasised the consultative process that had been carried out to prepare this document, involving representatives of the governments, civil society and the private sector. He rated this as a difficult exercise, since it had been necessary to find a fair balance between different opinions. He also thanked the representatives of the different missions and embassies for their help to the evaluators and writers of the document. He stressed that the views expressed in this report relate to the consultations and are not an official opinion of the European Commission. However, he announced that, based on this ex post evaluation, DG TRADE was preparing a document outlining the Commission's position and containing the recommendations put forward by the advisors. He said that DG Trade expected to present this document during the first semester of 2023.

Karolien Kras, Desk officer, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, European External Action Service (EEAS) recalled that the 10th anniversary of the signing of the agreement has been celebrated, highlighting the special importance of evaluation. She recognised the difficulties when it comes to the full ratification of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation part of the Association Agreement, which was part of the recommendation that arose in light of this study. She stressed that the entry into force of the Agreement will give greater impetus to relations with Central America. Therefore, full ratification by the Member States should be encouraged, respecting the juridical and legal procedures of each country. She stressed that the entry into force of the agreement had played an important role in promoting investment and trade between the EU and Central America, especially after the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. She stressed that the EU continued the political dialogue with the countries of the region, such as through the regular dialogue of the Joint Commission, whose last meeting was

held in June last year. She underlined the support for sustainable and inclusive economic development (Sustainable Development Chapter) in the Association Agreement, with special attention to the green and digital transition and social cohesion. She concluded by endorsing the recommendations of the study, which ask for key efforts to be made in cooperation policy, decent work, aid to SMEs and indigenous groups.

Speakers: Magdalena Ruda, José Lambour Peñalonzo, Olivier Coupleux, Karolien Kras, Javier Nart, Tilly Metz

5. Exchange of views on working conditions of Cuba's international healthcare personnel working on missions abroad

with the participation of:

- Duccio Bandini, Deputy Head Americas.2, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- Javier Larrondo, President of Prisoners Defenders
- Miguel Angel Ruano, Legal representative and international spokesperson of the NGO GREMIO MÉDICO CUBANO LIBRE

The Chair opened the session by saying that Cuba had a program to send its medical personnel abroad. She declared that, according to Cuban sources, more than 400,000 health workers have participated in these programs since the beginning of the Cuban revolution. During the COVID-19 emergency, the country has sent doctors and health vaccines to more than 40 foreign countries. The Chair admitted that there are controversies around these missions, since the low compensation and the withholding of much of the salary by the Cuban state do not respect the workers' rights.

Duccio Bandini, Deputy Head Americas.2, European External Action Service (EEAS), declared that the EU does not have any control over the sending of health workers and that the EU did not intend to support it in the future. He recalled that the EU requested all countries, including Cuba, to align themselves with the standards of the World Labour Organisation and to respect the salary regulations and established contractual conditions.

Javier Larrondo, President of Prisoners Defenders, denounced that, according to certain sources (including the UN and Human Rights Watch) more than 50,000 Cubans abroad are working in slave-like conditions. Cuban legislation provides for serious punishments for employees who leave their jobs abroad. The penalty could be up to 8 years in prison. He pointed out that 70% of health workers working outside Cuba do not have an employment contract. He highlighted that Article 24.1 of Cuban legislation on migration issues established that whoever leaves their job abroad cannot re-enter Cuba, becoming a state deserter. He stated that this is a violation of human rights and denounced that the Cuban Ministry of the Interior maintained a list with the names of the workers considered deserters. The status of deserter implies the deprivation of property, nationality and academic titles of the subject. The children of these doctors formally become orphans and today there are more than five thousand children who have been orphaned.

Miguel Ángel Ruano Sánchez, representative of the NGO Gremio Médico Cubano Libre, declared that, to date, there are more than 10,000 doctors who have abandoned their jobs abroad and are unable to enter Cuba, unable to practice their profession as they have been stripped of their academic titles. He explained that Cuban doctors who work in third countries receive only 5% of their salary. He denounced the abuses suffered by Cuban workers abroad and asked the EU to give more attention to this situation.

Speakers: Duccio Bandini, Javier Larrondo, Miguel Angel Ruano, Javier Nart, Laura Ferrara

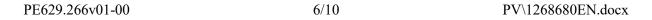
6. Any other business

None.

7. Date and time of the next meeting

The date and venue of the next DCAM meeting will be communicated later on.

The meeting closed at 15.49.



ΠΡΊΓ CЪCTBEH JIÚCT/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/ ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΏΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/ LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRS/DALYVIŲ SĄRAŠAS/ JELENLĖTI ÍV/REĠISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŚCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/ LISTĂ DE PREZENŢĂ/PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/NÄRVAROLISTA

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Tilly Metz (P), Javier Nart (VP)		
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Laura Ferrara, Ivan Vilibor Sinčić		
56 (8) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/Σημείο της ημερήσιας διάταζης/Agenda item/Point OJ/Točka dnevnog reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkės punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Aģenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Punkt på föredragningslistan)		
• Magdalena Ruda, Team Leader in the ex-post evaluation study led by BKP Economic Advisors GmbH	Point 4	
• H.E. Mr José Lambour Peñalonzo, Ambassador, Head of Mission of Guatemala to the European Union		
 Olivier Coupleux, Trade Affairs Officer, Trade Relations with Latin America, DG TRADE, European Commission 		
Karolien Kras, Desk El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, European External Action Service (EEAS)		
Duccio Bandini, Deputy Head Americas.2, EEAS	Point 5	
Javier Larrondo, President of Prisoners Defenders		
 Miguel Angel Ruano, Legal representative and international spokesperson of the NGO GREMIO MÉDICO CUBANO LIBRE 		

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservaturi/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer		
По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimehe kutsel/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair/Sur l'invitation du président/ Na poziv predsjednika/Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/ Fuq stedina taċ-'Chairman'/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitaţia preşedintelui/ Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan		
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Olivier Coupleux		
Европейска служба за външна дейност/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vnější činnost/ EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välisteenistus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Europska služba za vanjsko djelovanje/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europos išorės veiksmų tarnyba/Európai Külügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew għall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/ Serviciul european pentru acţiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnost/Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)		
Karolien Kras		
Други институции и opraни/Otras instituciones y organismos/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner og organer/Andere Organe und Einrichtungen/Muud institutionoid ja organid/Λοιπά θεσμικά όργανα και οργανισμοί/Other institutions and bodies/Autres institutions et organes/Druge institucije i tijela/Altre istituzioni e altri organi/Citas iestādes un struktūras/Kitos institucijos ir įstaigos/ Más intézmények és szervek/Istituzzjonijiet u korpi oħra/Andere instellingen en organen/Inne instytucje i organy/Outras instituições e outros órgãos/Alte instituții și organe/Iné inštitúcie a orgány/Muut toimielimet ja elimet/Andra institutioner och organ		

Други участници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Drugi sudionici/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti ohra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alţi participanţi/Iní účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

Embassy of Guatemala: José Lambour

Embassy of the Dominican Republic: Iván Ogando Lora, Sarah Herasme

Embassy of Costa Rica: Guillermo Rojas Vargas, Sylvia van der Laat Villalobos

Embassy of Honduras: Viviane de Pierrefeu

Prisoner Defenders: Javier Larrondo EU-Cuba Network: Leo Juvier-Hendrick

Секретариат на политическите групи/Secretaría de los Grupos políticos/Sekretariát politických skupin/Gruppernes sekretariat/ Sekretariat der Fraktionen/Fraktsioonide sekretariaat/Гραμματεία των Πολιτικών Ομάδων/Secretariats of political groups/Secretariat des groupes politiques/Tajništva klubova zastupnika/Segreteria gruppi politici/Politisko grupu sekretariāts/Frakcijų sekretoriai/ Képviselőcsoportok titkársága/Segretarjat gruppi politici/Fractiesecretariaten/Sekretariat Grup Politycznych/Secretariado dos grupos políticos/Secretariate grupuri politice/Sekretariát politických skupín/Sekretariat političnih skupin/Poliittisten ryhmien sihteeristöt/ De politiska gruppernas sekretariat

PPE	Hugo Van der Werff, Juan Salafranca
S&D	
Renew	Itziar Munoa Salaverria
ID	
Verts/ALE	Garance Tardieu
ECR	
The Left	
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Кабинет на председателя/Gabinete del Presidente/Kancelář předsedy/Formandens Kabinet/Kabinett des Präsidenten/Presidendi kantselei/Γραφείο του Προέδρου/President's Office/Cabinet du Président/Ured predsjednika/Gabinetto del Presidente/Priekšsēdētāja kabinets/Pirmininko kabinetas/Elnöki hivatal/Kabinett tal-President/Kabinet van de Voorzitter/Gabinet Przewodniczącego/Gabinete do Presidente/Cabinet Preşedinte/Kancelária predsedu/Urad predsednika/Puhemiehen kabinetti/Talmannens kansli

Кабинет на генералния секретар/Gabinete del Secretario General/Kancelář generálního tajemníka/Generalsekretærens Kabinet/ Kabinett des Generalsekretærs/Peasekretæri büroo/Γραφείο του Γενικού Γραμματέα/Secretary-General's Office/Cabinet du secrétaire général/Ured glavnog tajnika/Gabinetto del Segretario generale/Ģenerālsekretāra kabinets/Generalinio sekretoriaus kabinetas/ Főtitkári hivatal/Kabinett tas-Segretarju Ġenerali/Kabinet van de secretaris-generaal/Gabinet Sekretarza Generalnego/Gabinete do Secretário-Geral/Cabinet Secretar General/Kancelária generálneho tajomníka/Urad generalnega sekretarja/Pääsihteerin kabinetti/ Generalsekretærens kansli

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DG EXPO	
DG EPRS	
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DG PERS	
DG INLO	
DG TRAD	
DG LINC	
DG FINS	
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Секретариат на комисията/Secretaría de la comisión/Sekretariát výboru/Udvalgssekretariatet/Ausschusssekretariat/Komisjoni sekretariaat/Γραμματεία της επιτροπής/Committee secretariat/Secrétariat de la commission/Tajništvo odbora/Segreteria della commissione/ Komitejas sekretariāts/Komiteto sekretoriatas/A bizottság titkársága/Segretarjat tal-kumitat/Commissiesecretariaat/ Sekretariat komisji/Secretariado da comissão/Secretariat comisie/Sekretariat odbora/Valiokunnan sihteeristö/Utskottssekretariatet	
Helmut Weixler	
Сътрудник/Asistente/A Avustaja/Assistenter	sistent/Assistent/Assistenz/Βοηθός/Assistant/Assistente/Palīgs/Padėjėjas/Asszisztens/Asystent/Pomočnik/
Rebecca Alrutz	

- * (P) = Πρεдседател/Presidente/Předseda/Formand/Vorsitzender/Esimees/Πρόεδρος/Chairman/Président/Predsjednik/Priekšsēdētājs/
 - Pirmininkas/Elnök/'Chairman'/Voorzitter/Przewodniczący/Presedinte/Predseda/Predsednik/Puheenjohtaja/Ordförande (VP) = Заместник-председател/Vicepresidente/Místopředseda/Næstformand/Stellvertretender Vorsitzender/Aseesimees/Αντιπρόεδρος/ Vice-Chair/Potpredsjednik/Vice-Président/Potpredsjednik/Priekšsēdētāja vietnieks/Pirmininko pavaduotojas/Alelnök/Vici 'Chairman'/Ondervoorzitter/Wiceprzewodniczący/Vice-Presidente/Vicepreşedinte/Podpredseda/Podpredsednik/ Varapuheenjohtaja/Vice ordförande
 - (M) = Член/Miembro/Člen/Medlem/Mitglied/Parlamendiliige/Βουλευτής/Membre/Membre/Član/Membro/Deputāts/Narys/Képviselő/ Membru/Lid/Członek/Membro/Membru/Člen/Poslanec/Jäsen/Ledamot
 - (F) = Длъжностно лице/Funcionario/Úředník/Tjenestemand/Beamter/Ametnik/Υπάλληλος/Official/Fonctionnaire/Dužnosnik/ Funzionario/Ierēdnis/Pareigūnas/Tisztviselő/Ufficjal/Ambtenaar/Urzędnik/Funcionário/Funcţionar/Úradník/Uradnik/Virkamies/ Tjänsteman