

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0825/07
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to the Commission

Subject: Impact assessments of trade agreements with the Andes region and Central America

Some years ago, the Commission gained experience of Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIAs) to assess the economic, social and environmental sustainability of trade agreements. This is - potentially - an important instrument for avoiding undesirable effects of agreements and ensuring greater consistency with development policy. Practical experience of SIAs shows that this potential is not always put to optimal use. The proposed negotiations with Central America and the Andes region afford a good opportunity to improve SIA practice. Precisely because sustainable development is a prime objective of the proposed agreement, it is important to implement SIAs promptly and to give them more influence.

1. What plans are there for SIAs under agreements with the Andes region and Central America? What is done to ensure that findings are available in sufficient time? Why has no start yet been made on the SIA?
2. How is account taken in the SIA of the objective of sustainable development of the future agreements? What guarantees are there of a sufficiently multidisciplinary approach? How is coordination between DG Trade and DG RELEX organised in this field?
3. SIAs seem in practice to focus on a few highly specific economic sectors or products. In Central America and the Andes, further liberalisation of the services sector could have an impact on wider social groups (particularly the poor). How is account taken of this in the SIA? What links are made with the Millennium Development Goals and protection of economic, social and cultural rights?
4. Is the SIA so organised that the findings are also genuinely integrated into the negotiations and affect political decision-making?