



2015/2059(INI)

17.6.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on International Trade

on the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea
(2015/2059(INI))

Rapporteur: Siôn Simon

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the EU-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has brought significant benefits to trade between both parties, contributing to economic development, opening up new business opportunities and creating new and sustainable jobs, both in the EU and in the Republic of Korea;
 - B. whereas the EU- Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement opened new trade opportunities in the fast growing east Asian market;
 - C. whereas, under Chapter 13 of the FTA, the Republic of Korea has undertaken to respect, promote and realise, in its law and practices, core international standards as laid down in International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions;
 - D. whereas the EU-Republic of Korea FTA is the first of a new generation of FTAs concluded by the EU, in that its scope is wider than that of any previous agreements and includes commitments on labour rights, a follow-up system and the involvement of the social partners and civil society;
 - E. whereas, under Chapter 13 of the FTA, the EU and the Republic of Korea confirm the parties' right to establish their own levels of environmental and labour protection while aiming at a high level of protection;
 - F. whereas the future trade strategy declares strong labour rights to be one of the goals of a fair trade policy;
1. Welcomes the steps taken by the Commission as regards trade relations with the Republic of Korea to promote sustainable development, particularly in the field of employment and occupation;
 2. Is concerned at the latest reported repression of trade unions in the Republic of Korea; calls on the Commission to initiate consultations with the Korean authorities on the reported violations of fundamental rights such as freedom of association and the failure to ensure effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; asks the Commission to make its assessment of the situation publicly available; believes that it is important to look ahead and investigate where the free trade agreement can be improved in a manner that benefits both parties, with regard not only to business interests, but also the interests of employees and the wider public;
 3. Recalls that a Party shall not weaken or reduce the labour protection afforded in its laws to encourage trade or investment; is concerned at the recent revisions of labour law undertaken by the Republic of Korea, and therefore calls on the Commission to investigate possible non-compliance and prepare adequate measures in case of breaches of the requirements laid down in Chapter 13;

4. Encourages the Republic of Korea to ratify and implement without undue delay the fundamental ILO conventions that it has not yet ratified; welcomes the launch of the EU-funded project to support the Republic of Korea for the implementation of the ILO convention on non-discrimination in employment and occupation as an important initiative in the protection of workers' fundamental rights;
5. Commends the role of the Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs) in the preparation of a joint project regarding the implementation of ILO Convention 111, and suggests that the DAGs prepare a similar project on the implementation of all ILO core conventions in the near future;
6. Deplores the absence of a clause in the EU-Republic of Korea FTA which would exempt repaired goods from custom duties on re-entry; calls on the Commission to find, as a matter of urgency, a solution to this problem, which constitutes a competitive disadvantage for European companies, putting jobs at risk;
7. Ask the Commission to have the development of the labour rights situation in the Republic of Korea observed by the DAGs, and to receive, examine and find solutions in line with the outcome of the DAGs' discussions;
8. Recalls the commitment of both the EU and the Republic of Korea to the promotion of decent work, to freedom of association and to the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the eradication of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation;
9. Stresses that labour standards should not constitute non-tariff trade barriers but should, rather, contribute to ensuring an adequate protection of employers' and employees' interests, raising living standards and promoting economic growth, competitiveness and stability;
10. Expects that the parties to the agreement respect workers' fundamental rights and international core labour standards in line with Article 13 of the FTA; recommends that the Commission provide an assessment of its implementation; believes that European businesses have an important role to play in promoting international standards on good governance and human rights; supports the inclusion of workers' rights clauses in all relevant international agreements between the EU and third countries, including with regard to labour standards;
11. Calls on the Commission to monitor closely the impact of the agreement on the European labour market and specific economic sectors at Union and Member State level;
12. Stresses the importance of dialogue between the Commission, social partners and civil society with a view to pursuing the implementation of the commitments set out in the agreement.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	15.6.2016
Result of final vote	+: 39 -: 3 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	Guillaume Balas, Tiziana Beghin, Brando Benifei, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, David Casa, Martina Dlabajová, Lampros Fountoulis, Elena Gentile, Marian Harkin, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Kostadinka Kuneva, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Javi López, Morten Løkkegaard, Thomas Mann, Dominique Martin, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, João Pimenta Lopes, Georgi Pirinski, Marek Plura, Terry Reintke, Sofia Ribeiro, Maria João Rodrigues, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Siôn Simon, Jutta Steinruck, Romana Tomc, Yana Toom, Marita Ulvskog, Renate Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka
Substitutes present for the final vote	Daniela Aiuto, Georges Bach, Lynn Boylan, Eva Kaili, Eduard Kukan, Edouard Martin, Michaela Šojdrová, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Tom Vandenkendelaere, Flavio Zanonato