

**Question for written answer E-003088/2026/rev.1
to the Commission**
Rule 144
Saskia Bricmont (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Wording of labour provisions in trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters and implications regarding their enforceability

In 2019, the Commission initiated dispute settlement proceedings against South Korea, alleging that it had failed to fulfil its obligations concerning International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions under the bilateral free trade agreement (FTA). The dispute focused on the provision requiring the parties to ‘make continuous and sustained efforts towards the ratification’ of the fundamental ILO conventions.

In its report of 20 January 2021¹, the Panel of Experts issued several recommendations. It stressed that this obligation was not enforceable ‘in the absence of explicit targets or at least any informal understanding on expected milestones towards ratification’ (paragraphs 276 and 278). Since then, the European Parliament² and the Council³ have recommended adopting ‘detailed, time-bound implementation roadmaps’ as a useful tool to achieve the desired results.

Nevertheless, subsequent FTAs have retained the same contentious wording in their TSD chapters.

1. Why has the Commission not incorporated the Panel of Experts’ findings into subsequent FTAs?
2. Why has it not used the TSD Committee to agree on implementation roadmaps with partner countries? (If it has, what was the outcome?).

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¹ <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/09242a36-a438-40fd-a7af-fe32e36cbd0e/library/d4276b0f-4ba5-4aac-b86a-d8f65157c38e/details>.

² Paragraph 2 of European Parliament resolution of 6 October 2022 on the outcome of the Commission’s review of the 15-point action plan on trade and sustainable development, OJ C 132, 14.4.2023, p. 99.

³ Paragraph 7 of the Council Conclusions on the Trade and Sustainability Review, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/17/council-conclusions-on-the-trade-and-sustainability-review/>.