

EN

E-001549/2024

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis
on behalf of the European Commission
(25.10.2024)

Several EU measures set out requirements to minimise the risk that companies place on the EU market products linked to human rights violations, such as the use of child labour in the manufacturing of cobalt-based products.

The corporate sustainability due diligence Directive¹ requires companies in the scope to identify and address adverse human rights impacts (including child labour and forced labour) with respect to their own operations, the operations of their subsidiaries, and the operations carried out by their business partners in the chains of activities of those companies. In line with the Directive, the future Commission guidelines will help companies to conduct due diligence (in particular with the identification and prioritisation of impacts, adaptation of purchasing practices, responsible disengagement, remediation and stakeholder engagement) and other relevant aspects (such as identifying data and information sources and assessing risk factors)².

The forthcoming Regulation on forced labour products³ prohibits the placing on the EU market of any product made with forced labour, including with forced child labour, irrespective of its origin in the EU or third countries.

The Batteries Regulation⁴ requires operators placing batteries on the EU market to establish a due diligence policy to identify and mitigate sustainability (including human rights) risks associated with the sourcing of certain raw materials such as cobalt.

Furthermore, the EU and the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a strategic partnership on sustainable critical raw materials value chains⁵ to strengthen cooperation in sustainable and responsible production of raw materials such as cobalt.

¹ Directive (EU) 2024/1760 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on corporate sustainability due diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937 and Regulation (EU) 2023/2859 (Text with EEA relevance) PE/9/2024/REV/1 (OJ L, 2024/1760, 5.7.2024) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1760/oj>).

² See Article 19 of Directive (EU) 2024/1760.

³ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-welcomes-political-agreement-ban-products-made-forced-labour-union-market-2024-03-05_en

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2023 concerning batteries and waste batteries, amending Directive 2008/98/EC and Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and repealing Directive 2006/66/EC (Text with EEA relevance) PE/2/2023/REV/1 (OJ L 191, 28.7.2023, p. 1–117) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1542/oj>).

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_5303