

Brussels, 7 January 2026
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COVER NOTE

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

date of receipt: 19 December 2025

To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

No. Cion doc.: SWD(2025) 434 final

Subject: COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION of the impact of EU's agreements on key environmental aspects, including the climate

Delegations will find attached document SWD(2025) 434 final.

Encl.: SWD(2025) 434 final



Brussels, 19.12.2025
SWD(2025) 434 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

of the impact of EU's agreements on key environmental aspects, including the climate

{SWD(2025) 433 final}

Trade agreements signed by the European Union include dedicated provisions on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), including on environmental and climate issues. In its 2021 Trade Policy Review, the European Commission announced that it would carry out an ex-post evaluation of the impact of the EU's agreements on key environmental aspects, including the climate. The Commission tasked a contractor with a qualitative study, and the results were published in February 2025.

The evaluation assessed trade agreements containing comprehensive TSD chapters. At the time the study was commissioned, eleven such agreements – applying to trade with 19 partner countries – had been concluded and ratified by the EU. The evaluation focused on a sample of eight countries (covered by seven agreements): Canada, Costa Rica and Honduras (same agreement), Georgia, Japan, Peru, Singapore, and Viet Nam. The evaluation also provided 20 case studies.

The evaluation focused on five key cross-cutting parameters related to the environmental objectives of the agreements: (i) ratification and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); (ii) promotion of regulatory cooperation; (iii) non-regression in environmental protection and standards within partner countries; (iv) dissemination of environmental goods and services (EGS); and (v) building of multilateral alliances related to climate and the environment between the EU and partner countries within relevant international fora.

This staff working document summarises the findings of the evaluation and presents the views of the Commission services on the analysis.

The Commission services consider that the environmental and climate provisions in EU free trade agreements (FTAs) contribute positively to the environmental policy and sustainability efforts of its trading partners. They help reinforce existing commitments, can encourage the adoption of additional environmental protocols and play a limited but supportive role in ensuring compliance and enforcement.

EU trade agreements serve as platforms for intergovernmental exchange, regulatory cooperation, and dialogue on climate and environmental policies. The agreements facilitate regulatory cooperation through TSD committees, transparency provisions, and economic incentives.

FTAs also contribute to alliance-building, supporting informal and multilateral cooperation on biodiversity, climate, circular economy, and deforestation. While direct connections between the agreements and these alliances are difficult to establish, the FTAs provide mechanisms for collaboration and sustainable policy alignment.

Trade in EGS supports the diffusion of green technologies and sustainable production methods. EGS trade helps economies transition towards sustainability by promoting renewable energy, circular economy models, and eco-friendly technologies.

Importantly, there is evidence that EU FTAs have led to improvements in environmental standards in partner countries. While external factors often shape environmental policies more

than FTAs themselves, the absence of a "race to the bottom" suggests that these agreements provide a stable framework for sustainable trade practices.

The Commission services agree with the evaluation that environmental clauses in EU FTAs are effective, efficient, coherent, and relevant. Overall, the inclusion of environmental provisions in EU FTAs has been a success.