

Delivering the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Brno (24/11/2023)

Recognising That:

- The Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP) has a long and proud campaigning tradition of supporting the European Commission's trade ambitions with third countries throughout the world, most especially with democratic nations sharing our common values.
- As a free and democratic nation, Australia is a strategic partner of the European Union whom we should endeavour to strengthen our trade and cooperation with.
- The European Commissioner for Trade originally launched negotiations for a comprehensive trade and cooperation agreement with Australia on 22 May 2018, when given clearance from the Council of the European Union.
- According to an impact assessment conducted by both parties at the time, trade in goods and services between the two partners could increase by around a third.
- The trade negotiations initiated in 2018 aimed to remove barriers and help EU firms – especially smaller ones – to export more.
- It also aimed to put European companies exporting to or doing business in Australia on an equal footing with those from countries that have signed up to the Trans-Pacific Partnership or other trade agreements with Australia
- The negotiations had ambitions to secure provisions on trade and sustainable development, showing a shared commitment to labour rights and environmental protection, including climate change, in trade.
- The EU aimed to protect distinctive regional EU food and drink products from imitations in Australia, and to allow EU companies to better participate in government procurement in Australia.

Acknowledging That:

- Negotiations for a free trade agreement between the European Union and Australia collapsed in October 2023, with the Australian government saying at

the time that a deal was unlikely in this term of both the Australian Parliament and European Parliament.

- The Australian government had said it would only do a deal if it was in their national interest, with one of its key demands being to secure much greater access for Australia's agricultural exporters to sell to EU consumers.
- The Australian agriculture minister, Murray Watt, said the EU had not offered enough access for beef, sheep and sugar exporters.
- The European Union is Australia's third largest two-way trading partner and second largest source of foreign investment, according to its Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- The Australian government has urged exporters to spread their risk across a range of markets despite the thaw in relations with China, which remains Australia's largest trading partner.
- The United Kingdom recently brokered a free trade agreement with Australia enabling, among other things, ease of access for students and workers between the two countries, enabling greater trade and cultural cooperation.
- Given the unpopularity of TTIP among both US Presidential candidates, the likelihood of a trade agreement with the United States remains low, and the European Union should see Australia as a top target for further cooperation.

YEPP Calls for:

- The European Commission to offer a marginally larger trading quota for Australian beef, sheep and sugar exporters as a means of enticing the Australian government to return to the negotiation table, without compromising level-playing field rules, ensuring that European farmers are not undercut by Australian competitors.
- The European Commission to expand the Terms of Reference for the negotiations to cover reciprocal visa access for students and workers between Australia and the European Union, aiming to secure an exemption from Regional Work for those availing of Working Holiday Visa schemes offered by the Australian government, as secured by the UK Government.
- The European Commission to ensure that European companies exporting to or doing business in Australia on an equal footing with those from countries that have signed up to the Trans-Pacific Partnership or other trade agreements with Australia

- The European Commission to ensure that any future trade agreement contains provisions on trade and sustainable development, showing a shared commitment to labour rights and environmental protection, including climate change, in trade.
- The European Commission to protect distinctive regional EU food and drink products from imitations in Australia, and to allow EU companies to better participate in government procurement in Australia.
- The European Commission to add a Foreign and Security Policy chapter to the negotiations, intended to strengthen EU-Australian information sharing and resilience in the event of conflict in the South China Sea.