



CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

MEETING ON THE EVALUATION OF THE EU-SADC ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA): DRAFT INCEPTION REPORT

Date: 31 May 2023

Time: 14:00-15:30

Location: Webex

Lead speakers

- Head of Unit – African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries Unit, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission
- Study Coordinator/Team Leader of the consortium led by BKP Economic Advisors

Moderator

Civil Society Coordination - Transparency, Civil society and Communication Unit, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission

1. Introduction

DG TRADE initiated the meeting by providing a brief overview of the EPA between the EU and the six SADC States – the members of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa) and Mozambique – noting that the Agreement started to be applied in 2016 (for the EU and SACU) and 2018 (for Mozambique). Negotiations about the accession of Angola, which had been part of the original negotiations but eventually did not sign the Agreement, are expected to begin as soon as Angola signals its readiness.

Bilateral trade since 2016 has increased substantially – EU imports from the partners by 85% to 2022, and EU exports by almost 30% – showing that the Agreement delivers. At the same time, strategic challenges such as the war in Ukraine, China's increasing role in Africa or the EU's need for access to critical raw materials call for continued close trade relations between the EU and Southern Africa.

By assessing the implementation of the EPA and identifying opportunities and challenges, the evaluation is expected also to provide inputs to the ongoing joint review of the EPA which is undertaken in line with Article 116. Special attention will be given to trade and sustainable development (TSD) issues.

The importance of feedback from stakeholders for the evaluation cannot be overstated, and accordingly extensive consultations are foreseen, including an online public consultation planned for July to November.

The draft inception report produced by the evaluation team was published on 17 May and describes the methods used for the evaluation as well as the consultation plan. Comments on the report should be provided by 12 June.

2. Presentation of the Draft Inception Report

The study team presented the draft inception report,¹ which focusses on the evaluation approach and methodology as well as the consultations plan. The evaluation will cover the implementation of the EPA by the Parties as well as the impacts it has had to date (covering economic, social/gender & labour, environmental, and human rights effects). The corresponding slides are available on the evaluation website.²

The evaluation team invited participants to provide inputs into the evaluation especially with respect to four issues:

- Recommendations for additional stakeholders to be consulted, notably in SADC EPA States, and especially NGOs.
- Referrals to (EU or SADC) firms involved in EU-SADC EPA trade and investment who might be willing to share their experience with the evaluation.
- Information about any problems and/or success cases in terms of EU-SADC EPA trade and investment (including issues related to labour, gender, environment, etc.).
- Proposals for case study topics.

3. Discussion / Questions and Replies

A representative of the EESC requested clarification on how the evaluation team would undertake consultations in partner countries with limited civic space, such as Mozambique and Eswatini. DG TRADE responded that this was indeed a pertinent question. One mitigating measure was to resort on the EU Delegations in the field which have a good understanding of the actual situation and stakeholder landscape and would allow a balanced interpretation of inputs. The evaluation team added that consultations of non-state actors would be undertaken independent from governments, aided by local experts, coupled with interview of international organisations, and NGOs; at the same time, a residual risk of receiving biased inputs from different stakeholders remains, and the evaluation report would need to transparently address such limitations. In any case, since the publication of the draft inception report, the evaluation team identified a number of civil society stakeholder in Eswatini, and will continue doing so.

SpiritsEUROPE requested more information about the start of negotiations on Angola's accession to the EU-SADC EPA. DG TRADE responded that this had been expected earlier but had been delayed due to General Elections in Angola, as well as capacity constraints in the country. Nevertheless, the new administration had now indicated that they are ready to start the negotiations, and the formal follow-up to plan for the launch is now in process, so that negotiations are hoped to start soon.

¹ Available at https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-meetings-civil-society/civil-society-dialogue-meeting-evaluation-eu-sadc-economic-partnership-agreement-epa-draft-inception-2023-05-31_en

² <http://eu-sadc.fta-evaluation.eu/en/resources>

Next steps

Stakeholders are requested to **send their comments on the draft inception report by 12 June 2023** so that the final version can be completed by mid-June.

DG TRADE also encouraged participants to continue contributing to the evaluation and share the request for inputs – notably on the four issues mentioned above – with colleagues and partners.