



Ombudsman asks Commission how it ensures respect for human rights in international trade agreements

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The Ombudsman has asked the Commission to provide details on how it ensures respect for human rights in the international trade agreements it signs.

Concretely, the Ombudsman wants to examine how the Commission prepares the 'human rights clauses' in the agreements and how it monitors their implementation.

The Ombudsman is asking for responses to a series of questions, including on whether there is a mechanism allowing civil society organisations to report human rights concerns, and how the Commission decides what action to take when it discovers a country has breached human rights standards.

The request for information follows several Ombudsman inquiries in this area, including most recently the inquiry into the Commission's failure to finalise an updated sustainability impact assessment before concluding the EU-Mercosur trade deal.

In 2015, the Ombudsman criticised the Commission for not carrying out a human rights impact assessment of the EU-Vietnam trade agreement, which came into force in 2020. As part of the current request for information, the Ombudsman asked the Commission for information on the measures it put in place to identify and address the impact of the deal on human rights in Vietnam.

The Commission has been asked to reply by 29 October 2021.