

U.S.-EU TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL INTERIM FEEDBACK FROM CONSUMERS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Ahead of the 5 December meeting of the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in Washington, D.C., the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue shares its assessment of the process thus far and issues a renewed set of recommendations related to the main outcomes that will be announced during the meeting. Our goal is to prioritize the consumer and citizen interest in these discussions.

“EU-U.S. cooperation and sharing of best practices can be beneficial for consumers. But at the same time as the EU is regulating AI, it now wants to define key AI concepts with the U.S. such as what is a bias. This means these transatlantic discussions could influence how the EU legislates. We are worried about such developments as we do not need yet another closed-door working group to oversee this but an open and multi-stakeholder discussion.”

Monique Goyens, Director General of [BEUC](#) – The European Consumer Organisation, and European co-chair of the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue

“We’re now in the second year of the EU-U.S. collaboration. Few concrete outcomes have emerged so far. Also, we’re still waiting for a clear and intentional stakeholder engagement process. Outreach towards U.S. civil society has been ad hoc and short notice at best. U.S. groups often only learn basic information such as the time and place of meetings through outreach from Brussels.”

Edmund Mierzwinski, Senior Director, Federal Consumer Programs at [U.S. PIRG](#), and U.S. co-chair of the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue

Below is an update on [TACD’s 2021 recommendations](#) for the TTC, beginning with improved transparency and more robust stakeholder engagement moving forward so that the TTC best supports consumer and citizen goals.

- **Transparency and engagement:** There is a growing frustration around the lack of transparency in the TTC discussions.
 - The EU has created an [online platform](#) to collect stakeholder proposals for the TTC, where people should be able to find agendas and reports of the meetings, as well as who is taking part in them. Currently, this platform is just a tool to compile lobby demands. This is not useful for civil society, especially as it is not clear if these demands are read or used by officials.
 - On the U.S. side, the few opportunities for stakeholder engagement have been announced at the last minute, and with inconsistent inclusion of consumer advocates.
 - The process has been confusing and disorganized with multiple agencies leading or participating in various working groups. A real dialogue must be established with civil society. Such dialogue would include regular updates on what is being discussed in the TTC and the possibility for stakeholders to interact with those involved. Most importantly, there should be a common, comprehensive platform for both EU and U.S. civil society organisations to access information and engage with officials.

- **Artificial intelligence:** The EU and the U.S. will announce a roadmap on tools for trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI) and risk management. This roadmap could influence the implementation of the AI Act in the EU, for instance the definition of key concepts for fundamental rights such as bias and risk. Risk prevention, consumer protection and racial equity, should be the primary aim of public policy in the framework of this cooperation. We understand the value of cooperation between the EU and the U.S., but their regulatory approaches differ. The work carried out in the TTC should not lead to weaker legal protections for consumers.
- **Transatlantic Sustainable Trade Initiative:** The interoperability of electric vehicles through hardware and software standards as planned in the goals of the TTC can bring many benefits to consumers. Some of the key aspects of charging that need to be standardized include, but are not limited to, the following: physical charging connectors, communications between the vehicle and the grid, equipment management, inter-network billing management, and utility demand and price signals. The TTC should build on the work of the European Parliament in the context of the proposed EU [Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation](#) and [California's Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment Standards Regulation](#). Additionally, if the U.S. and EU are serious about making trade more sustainable, they must first ensure that trade challenges do not undermine domestic climate policies needed to support the green transition of our economies. Consumer groups call on the EU and the U.S. to find a solution to avoid a trade dispute around the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act that would weaken the new climate policy.
- **Vaccines:** Progress on good manufacturing practices could be positive for consumers if it contributes to improved access to safe, effective, and affordable medicines. The EU and the U.S. should also seek to increase transparency along the drug supply chain, as this will help better assess the risk of shortages and allow for adoption of preventative measures. Additionally, both governments should refrain from blocking attempts by developing countries at the World Trade Organization to waive intellectual property barriers to increasing production of Covid tests and treatments.

Beyond the deliverables of this TTC ministerial, TACD proposes [concrete ideas to make the TTC and other cooperation dialogues between the EU and the US. work for consumers.](#)

Background

Following years of tensions and divergences, the June 2021 announcement of the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in Brussels marked a welcome reboot of transatlantic cooperation. TACD promptly issued a [checklist for the new collaboration](#) that same month, and later that year provided detailed [recommendations for the EU-U.S. cooperation agenda](#) in the interest of EU and U.S. consumers.

The TTC met for the first time in Pittsburgh in late September 2021, co-chaired by European Commission Executive VP Vestager, European Commission Executive VP Dombrovskis, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Raimondo, and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, collectively referred to as the principals of the TTC. Their goal is to coordinate approaches on key emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, economic and trade issues, and deepening transatlantic relationships as partners of first resort.

The [Pittsburgh Ministerial established ten working groups](#) that touch upon critical issues such as artificial intelligence, data governance, misuse of technology threatening human rights, climate and clean technologies.

The second and only other Ministerial to date took place in [Saclay, France](#), which concluded with a [declaration](#) outlining outcomes for each of the 10 Working Groups.

On top of the TTC, the EU and the U.S. have created a series of dialogues and task forces covering areas such as energy security, agriculture, health, and competition. There is also an informal dialogue on [consumer protection](#) between European Commission's Directorate for Justice and Consumers and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Product Safety Commission and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau officials which touches upon concrete problems for consumers on the transatlantic market, for instance the safety of products sold online, dark patterns and green claims.

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