

MANIFESTO ON FREE TRADE

For a unified, resilient and prosperous European Union

European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen ,
Trade Commissioner-Designate, Valdis Dombrovskis,
European Parliament President, David Sassoli,
European Parliament INTA Committee Members,
Chairs of European Parliament political groups,
European Council President,

In the past months we have faced unprecedented challenges with the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic affecting every personal, social, and economic part of our lives. By working together and finding solutions in cooperation, we have once again proven, that the European Union is stronger united than it is divided.

In order to deal with the current crisis situation and return to a stable and prosperous economy, we, the European International Trading Houses, urge you to the following:

- **Allow the free flow of essential goods and services across European borders**
- **Preserve the Single Market and condemn nationalization**
- **Harmonize and preserve common market rules to facilitate cooperation**
- **Support the WTO reform and strengthen it against nationalist and protectionist practices**

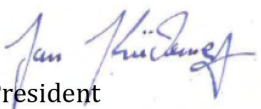
The rise of the crisis came at the cost of one of Europe's greatest achievements: our open borders and the freedom of movement and goods. With national governments locking down their countries, a dangerous precedent has been set. We therefore urge you to the utmost, to ensure that this will not happen again. **It is of vital importance, to allow the free flow of people, obviously paying due attention to health issues, goods and services across European borders. We support free trade, fair trade and resilient trade and encourage you, to further foster those principles.**

The European Single Market is at the heart of the European project – it leads to economic growth and prosperity for every one of us. European citizens benefit from a wide choice of services, products, and job opportunities and European businesses from a large domestic market, stimulating trade, and improved efficiency. However, when Member States breach agreed upon single market rules or create obstacles in their national law with the aim of protecting their national market, the entire system is at stake. The short term gains for the national governments harm the European Single Market system and damage our businesses in the long run. We are concerned by the disproportional negative effect this has on small and medium sized businesses (SMEs), which account for 99% of all businesses in Europe. SMEs are the economic and social

backbone of the European Union and must be treated accordingly. These companies do not have the means to comply with different sets of rules in every European country and are penalized by administrative burdens and complexity. **The European Union must preserve the European Single Market and strongly condemn the nationalization of supply chains and production.** Only together we can achieve the EU's green and digital transformation goals and compete globally. **We therefore urge you, to harmonize and preserve common market rules, facilitate cooperation, and allow free trade within the European Union.** The single market depends on robust, well-functioning systems for standardization and certification. These help to increase the size of markets and provide legal certainty for our citizens and businesses.

Global trade has been highly affected by the current pandemic, with national trade restrictions around the globe. The World Trade Organization (WTO) was founded, to administer multilateral trade rules, serve as a forum for trade negotiations and provide a mechanism to settle trade disputes. However, in recent years the WTO has come under pressure for not fulfilling all three of its core functions. Now, the COVID-19 pandemic and the international response to it have added an additional layer to this complex situation. **We underline the importance of a well-functioning World Trade Organization as well as international guidelines and rules for foreign trade of goods and services, foreign investment, open public procurement and respect to intellectual property rights. To achieve that, we support the current demands for a WTO reform and an end to current nationalist and protectionist trading practices.** The EU together provides one third of the WTO budget and is thus the largest member. We call upon the European Union, to use this influence to modernize the WTO to adapt to current world trade realities, for example by giving the secretariat its own right of proposal. The current vacancy of the Director-General of the WTO has come at a critical time, in the midst of the economic crisis caused by COVID-19. We therefore hope that the European Union will utilize its unified influence to support a candidate that is in favor of free and fair trade and willing to tackle the problems at hand swiftly and effectively.

Yours sincerely,



President

