



Joining the European Services Forum (ESF)

Objectives

A new round of multilateral negotiations on services (GATS 2000) officially started on 1st January 2000 in Geneva at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Prior to that launch, both the European Commission and the Member States of the European Union had made clear they would welcome more contributions from business, as was successfully done during the WTO negotiations for specific services in 1997, in particular for the Basic Telecommunications Agreement and for the Financial Services Agreement.

In the light of this, the **European Services Forum (ESF)** was officially launched in Brussels, in 1999. ESF was created with the support of leading European firms, European services industry federations and **BUSINESSEUROPE**, to provide business input for the GATS negotiations. ESF works closely with the European negotiators as well as with their counterparts, who share the same objectives, in other countries.

Given the difficulty in making progress on the multilateral front and the stalled WTO Doha Development Agenda negotiations, the ESF members have extended the scope of competence of the organisation so as to represent their interests in the framework of the regional and bilateral trade agenda of the European Union, that has been adopted in the "Global Europe Strategy" in 2006. ESF is therefore also presenting views on the various FTAs that the EU has or is still negotiating like with Korea, Latin America, ASEAN countries, India, etc.

The ESF is a network of high-level representatives from the European services sector who are committed to **promoting the interests of European services and the liberalisation of services markets throughout the world.**

ESF now comprises more than 30 major European services companies, including Standard Chartered Bank Plc., Deutsche Telekom AG, France Telecom, DHL Worldwide Express, Siemens AG, Veolia Environment. These companies are represented at the highest level. More than 30 European service sector Federations also joined ESF, thus ensuring representation of all sectoral interests. This takes the ESF membership to more than 60 members (companies and federations) covering more than 20 service sectors, from banking to tourism, via telecommunications, air and maritime transport, audiovisual services, distribution, postal and express delivery, construction services, IT services, energy services, environmental services, and many business and professional services.

Benefits of joining a well-recognised interlocutor

What are the benefits of membership of ESF?

Given its broad membership covering a very large range of services sectors, and the fact that it is a single-issue organisation, ESF is recognised by the European Commission and the European Union Governments as the **Voice of European service industries for the liberalisation services.** It is for this reason that ESF was selected as one of the ten Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) to be part of the Official Delegation of the European Commission for the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle in 1999, in Doha in November 2001, where a new round of multilateral trade negotiations were finally launched, as well as in Cancun in September 2003, in Hong Kong in December 2005 and in Geneva in December 2009. As a business NGO, the ESF team has observer status and is directly briefed and consulted by Trade Commissioner Lamy.

It is also for this reason that the EU Government's services trade negotiators, who come together in the Trade Policy Committee - Services now hold regular meetings with ESF members, so that they can receive direct input from the entire services industry in one meeting. These meetings are organised every six months with the respective EU Presidency.

A company joining ESF will benefit from the excellent relationship between the organisation and the trade negotiators from the EU Institutions and the EU Member States.

Being part of a high level services leaders group

One of the reasons why ESF is considered as a valuable partner by the European Administrations is that it is by personal commitment from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – or at least of a member of the Board – that a company becomes a member of ESF. It is the personal involvement at the highest level of the members' companies that gives the added value to the interventions of the network. The CEOs become members of the "European Service Leaders Group" (ESLG). The ESLG does not meet in plenary sessions but the ESF arranges periodic meetings to discuss EU trade policy with EU Trade Commissioner, or EU Trade Ministers, as well as other countries Trade Ministers.

ESLG members are also the ambassadors of ESF, spreading the messages of the European service industries around the world through their various business contacts. By representing not only their

own company's interest but also an interest shared by many other European service industries, senior executives of ESF companies carry greater weight in the representations they make to political leaders overseas.

Participating directly in the formulation of policy of European service industries for the GATS negotiations

The core business of ESF is conducted through the Policy Committee to which each member of the ESF nominates a delegate. The preparatory work for drafting ESF positions is undertaken within the Policy Committee. By contrast with most European associations, where companies can intervene only via a national association, ESF member companies can participate directly in the policy-making of ESF and the drafting of ESF positions.

Benefiting directly from the most up-to-date information from the trade negotiators

The ESF Policy Committee meets on average every three months. At each meeting, officials from the Services Unit of the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission are invited to brief ESF members on the latest developments on the services negotiations in Europe and in Geneva. ESF members are also invited once or twice a year to be part of an ESF delegation to the WTO Secretariat in Geneva and to present ESF priorities to WTO member delegations. The broad membership of ESF enables meetings with ambassadors and senior officials from of WTO member countries to be arranged efficiently and effectively.

Achievements to date

To date, ESF has adopted **more than thirty** position papers on issues affecting service industries in general such as improvements in Scheduling Commitments in GATS, promotion of the use of Electronic Commerce, multilateral disciplines in the domestic regulation of services; multilateral rules for the public procurement in services, the risks of Emergency Safeguard Measures, preliminary views on WTO negotiations about subsidies in services, support for further progress in trade facilitation, for the benefit of companies which both use and provide Customs services, papers on the Temporary Movement of Key Business Personnel, calling for clear progress in better and faster movement of natural persons, also known as "Mode 4 of the GATS" to allow European service providers to move quickly to their clients, where ever they are in the world, etc.

ESF also adopts on a regular basis press releases, letters to the EU and Member States institutions on the EU Trade Policy and the on-going trade negotiations at regional and bilateral level, supporting the "Global Europe Strategy" adopted by the European Union in 2006.

These papers have been forwarded to the respective European Trade Commissioners, Pascal Lamy, Peter Mandelson, Baroness Catherine

Ashton and Karel De Gucht, to the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission as well as other relevant Directorates, to the EU Member States trade ministers, to the WTO Director General and the relevant divisions in the WTO Secretariat, to many WTO members delegations in Geneva, etc. They are also posted on the ESF web site, sent to the participants of the Global Services Coalition (GSC) and posted on the WTO web site in the NGO section. When appropriate, press releases are also issued and sent to trade journalists.

The ESF ensure follow-up of all these issues and monitor any potential new horizontal international issues of interest to the European services industry. In addition, ESF has adopted many policy statements, in particular for each of the WTO Ministerial conferences. Presentations and speeches are delivered in various conferences to present the views of the industry.

How to join: Conditions of membership

Endorse the basic principles of ESF

Companies that want to join ESF are invited to endorse the basic principles of the forum, including support for liberalisation of trade in services on the basis of the rules of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and for further negotiations within the WTO.

Accept the ESF Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding, adopted by the founding members, sets up an informal structure for the organisation. It lists the objectives of the members, describes the main activities of the network, and establishes the structure of the forum, including a small Secretariat. Joining Companies are invited to accept the Memorandum, to nominate a CEO - or a member of the board - to be member of the European Service Leaders Group and a Personal Representative (Sherpa) who will follow the work of the ESF Policy Committee.

The ESF Memorandum of Understanding and Set of Principles, which were revised in October 2008, are posted on the ESF web site in the section "Who we are".

Sign the ESF Undertaking

A new member commits itself to join ESF for at least three consecutive years. Should a member wish resigning from its ESF membership, a one year notice is required, so as to provide financial stability and visibility to the organisation. The designated leader of the company is invited to sign the Undertaking required of ESF members that the entity will commit, in accordance with the terms of the ESF MoU and to pay the modest annual subscription fee.

For any further information on the Forum and on how to join ESF, please contact: **Pascal Kerneis, ESF Managing Director. Tel: +322 2307514 - Fax: +322 2306168 – esf@esf.be**