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## PRESS RELEASE

### European Service Industry welcome EU mandate for ambitious WTO E-Commerce negotiations

The European service industry welcomes the adoption by the Foreign Affairs Council on Trade Issues this Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2019 of the negotiating directives to the European Commission for the negotiations of the WTO E-Commerce agreement that have started in Geneva.

ESF calls for an ambitious WTO E-Commerce Agreement that will enable inclusive international e-commerce and achieve a high standard rules-based environment that will enable digital transactions to take place freely, establish transparency and trust, facilitate cross-border data flows, improve rules in telecommunications, prohibit duties on electronic transmissions and provide for efficient customs clearance by building on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

*“The European Services industry continues to have some concerns with the EU's provisions on data flows, but the mandate given by the Council today is showing strong support from the EU Member States for the crucial role that the European Union must play in these talks”* said Mr. Nicholas Hodac, Chair of ESF Digital Trade Task Force.

Especially data-transfer is today's all-purpose means of business communication, spurring economic growth and innovation in all industries. The European Union is the world's most data-dependent actor in the global trading system, underlining the importance of enabling digital trade for the growth of the European economy. The transfer of data from the EU to third country markets and from third countries into the EU is crucial to running the complex daily business operations necessary for value chains which cross many jurisdictions both at a regional and global level.

ESF's members are therefore highly interested in the ongoing negotiations in Geneva on the E-commerce initiative. ESF welcomed the Joint Statement on E-Commerce at the WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) in December 2017 in Buenos Aires, and the political ministerial statement in Davos in January 2019 by 76 WTO members to launch plurilateral negotiations in Geneva.

A detailed ESF [Position Paper can be found here](#).



**About the ESF:** *The European Services Forum (ESF) is a European private sector grouping that represents the interests of the European services industry in international trade and investment negotiations related to services. It comprises major European service businesses and European service sector federations covering service sectors including (but not limited to) financial services, telecommunications and IT services, maritime transport, business and professional services, distribution, postal and express delivery, audio-visual and education services. Our membership comprises businesses and associations from all EU member states, including the United Kingdom. ESF was created in 1999.*

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