European Services Forum

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Pascal Kerneis to Depart European Services Forum

Brussels. (30 October 2026) – Pascal Kerneis, ESF Managing Director, is leaving the European Services Forum for a well-deserved retirement after nearly 27 years leading the organisation. As of 1 November 2026, and until a new person is recruited Luisa Santos, Deputy Director General of BusinessEurope will be the main contact point for the ESF.

"Having led ESF since 1999, when it was founded, the time is right to step down," said Kerneis. "It has been a privilege to serve as Managing Director. I am proud to see that the ESF is a well-recognised voice of European services sectors in international trade policy."

"Pascal has been an exceptional leader for ESF and the European services sectors," said Annette Meijer, outgoing Chair of the European Services Forum. "He has unfailingly highlighted the priorities of EU services sectors to the EU negotiators in Brussels, in Geneva and in all capitals worldwide where the EU negotiates trade agreements."

Under his leadership, the ESF has:

- Ensured that the interests of EU services exporters, importers, and investors interests have been duly understood and reflected in clear market access commitments and rules allowing services businesses to benefit from new opportunities brought by multilateral, plurilateral, and bilateral trade agreements.
- Advanced trade rules protecting cross-border data flows and prohibiting forced data localization, while securing significant services and digital trade commitments in EU free trade agreements;
- Championed the services industry's advocacy for a permanent WTO Moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions and implementation of the WTO E-Commerce Agreement;
- Expanded ESF's global reach as a co-convener of the Global Services Coalition, which organised a plenary debate at the last WTO Public Forum, a "first" in the WTO Public Forum's history.

"I thank ESF's members for making these successes possible," said Kerneis. "There is no doubt that the future of trade is in services, as all the data show us. I am delighted that ESF will pursue its mission in good hands closely integrated with BusinessEurope and with the support of ESF members."

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