



**Memorandum**

19 November 2017

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**Prime Minister's Office**

**Notes from the EU thematic consultation forum on  
8 November 2017 on the European Commission reflection paper  
on harnessing globalisation**

The thematic consultation forum was led by Minister for EU Affairs and Trade Ann Linde. It was attended by Government Offices officials. The aim of the consultation forum was to conduct a dialogue on the European Commission reflection paper on harnessing globalisation and to hear the participants' views on a number of issues.

The Minister welcomed the participants and recalled the information meeting on the reflection paper on 1 June this year that looked at the contents of the paper. She noted that the Government, with this consultation forum, would have held consultation forums on all five of the reflection papers within the framework of the Commission's white paper process on the future of the EU. The Minister then asked for the participants' perspectives and views, in accordance with the invitation to the consultation forum.

All the organisations welcomed the opportunity for discussion and in general also welcomed the Commission's paper on globalisation. Several noted that globalisation has contributed to growth and jobs in Sweden and that Sweden has been relatively good at distributing the benefits of globalisation by investing in welfare, education and innovation, which partly explained the support for globalisation, free trade and the EU in Sweden. At the same time, several organisations pointed out that many citizens perceive globalisation as a threat in terms of, for example, jobs, widening income gaps, migration flows and environmental impact, which must be taken seriously.

Many organisations highlighted the impact that globalisation has on the social dimension and the importance of managing this. The issues addressed included the possibility of finding an effective balance between political measures at national, European and global level. The role of the social partners and initiatives such as the Global Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals were also highlighted. One organisation felt that the Government should take more initiatives along the lines of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg on 17 November.

Several organisations highlighted Sweden as a knowledge-based society and emphasised the importance of investments in education, research and innovation to meet challenges including those posed digital transformation and technological developments. Some stressed the importance of further education and training, while others thought that more developed apprenticeship systems were needed.

Quite a few organisations expressed their concern over the rise in protectionism around the world and pointed to the risks that this entailed for the ability to take advantage of the opportunities globalisation offers. One participant said that the trend is towards less transparent trade barriers, which leads to arbitrariness and increased uncertainty and goes against the principle of good governance. The Commission's reflection paper on harnessing globalisation showed a tendency to seek rules-based solutions such as screening investments, which was problematic. At the same time, one organisation considered that we should not be naive and must be able to say no to opening up to competition from the rest of the world, especially when it comes to raw materials and the possibility of investing in agricultural and forestry land.

One participant emphasised the importance of global labour market flexibility and pointed to the role of self-employed workers in a global perspective. A few organisations spoke about small and medium-sized enterprises and their role in growth and employment.

One organisation would have liked the reflection paper to take greater account of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and saw the need for a clearer action plan and accountability. Sweden also needed to take action for global tax justice and against tax evasion.

One participant felt the individual's perspective was missing in the reflection paper and pointed out that civil society could complement efforts to achieve social sustainability, stability and security.

One organisation stressed the importance of introducing social conditions and sustainability issues in trade agreements, and another organisation saw significant challenges for European businesses in that respect.

The Minister thanked everyone for an interesting discussion and said that the organisations' views would serve as input to the Government's continued work on future issues. She urged the participants to offer their own comments on the reflection paper and the White Paper and informed them that it was also possible to send written contributions to the Government Offices.