

: Programme

sef: Policy Briefing 2015

International Responsibility in the Global Garment Industry: What Role for the EU?

Wednesday, 4 November 2015, 17.00 hrs.

Brussels

Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 8-14, 1040 Brussels

Conference language

English

Cooperating Partners

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Berlin/Bonn
CIDSE - International Alliance of Catholic Development Agencies, Brussels
Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU
Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union



Representation of the State
of North Rhine-Westphalia
to the European Union



BACKGROUND

Most products on sale here in Europe represent the end point in a long global supply chain. Nowadays, the head offices of many transnational corporations only deal with design, management and distribution; manufacturing has been outsourced to low-wage countries. As a result, garment retail chains, for example, can sell their products more cheaply in Europe than ever before. Most of their stock comes from suppliers on the other side of the world – from China, Bangladesh or Vietnam. However, catastrophic accidents along these globalized supply chains are by no means uncommon, resulting from a lack of compliance, in countries of the Global South, with international environmental and social standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO's core labour standards, and from the lack of national legislation in this field. NGOs have been drawing attention to this state of affairs for years, but their voices have often gone unheard. It was only when the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed, leaving more than 1000 people dead and 2000 injured and causing an outcry in Europe, that efforts to introduce responsible supply chain management gained fresh momentum.

In Germany, this has led to the formation of a new Textiles Partnership between the German Government, the textile and clothing industry, retailers, trade unions and civil society. Through a collective and cooperative approach, the Partnership aims to bring about social, environmental and economic improvements all along the textile and garment supply chain. Alliances of this kind are most likely to effect change when they have broader transnational support, so it is very gratifying that this issue is being addressed at EU level as well; the European Commission is planning to launch a new initiative before the end of 2015. With their Policy Briefing, the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:) and its cooperating partners, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), CIDSE, the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU and the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union, will analyse and critique this process, not least in the context of the European Year for Development 2015.

The event will start with presentations on the new German Government and European Commission initiatives. This will be followed by a discussion and evaluation of the measures taken to date and future challenges. Key questions to be addressed are:

- How ambitious are these initiatives in terms of their specific objectives and timetables?
- To what extent should international responsibility be voluntary?
- How can national initiatives such as Germany's Textiles Partnership tie in with European and international initiatives and institutions in order to harmonize standards and thus avoid distortions of competition?
- How can companies wishing to join this type of initiative be assisted in auditing and monitoring their supply chains?
- What lessons should be learned from non-compliance? For example, why did it take more than two years to reach the USD 30 million target for the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund, set up to provide compensation for victims and their families? How can support be mobilized more quickly in future?
- How can and must the responsible persons at the local level (policy-makers, construction companies, factory owners and security staff, etc.) be held to account?

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17.00 HRS

REGISTRATION AND DRINKS

17.15 HRS

WELCOME

Ambassador Reinhard Silberberg

Permanent Representation of the
Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union, Brussels

Dr Gerd Harms

State Secretary (ret.)
Deputy Chair of the Executive Committee of the sef:, Bonn

CHAIR

Dr Dorothee Starck

Permanent Representation of the
Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union, Brussels

17.30 HRS

INPUTS

Dr Bernhard Felmberg

Head of Directorate 11 “Civil society; churches and
the private sector in development cooperation“
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
(BMZ), Bonn

Klaus Rudischhauser

Deputy Director General
DG Development and Cooperation, EuropeAid, Brussels

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18.15 HRS

COMMENTS AND ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Elin Åström

Global Sustainability Business Expert
Hennes & Mauritz, Stockholm

Denise Auclair

Senior Policy Advisor, Private Sector
CIDSE, Brussels

Tapan Kanti Ghosh

Minister(Commerce)
Embassy of Bangladesh to the European Union, Brussels

Arne Lietz MEP

Member of the European Parliament, Brussels

Followed by discussion with the audience

19.30-20.30 HRS

RECEPTION WITH LIGHT REFRESHMENTS