

Complex supply chains and industrial integration

There is a strain of advice going to Ministers from officials, the CBI and others of the Remain persuasion that we now have complex supply chains in business, and that European integration of industrial activity means we have to stick close to the single market.

In the 1980s before I became a Minister I chaired a large quoted industrial group. Between 2003 and 2010 in the opposition years I chaired an industrial group servicing the global market with some European production, as well as plants in the USA, India and China. I now realise I was in charge of complex supply chains. They did not cause problems at the time, despite the fact that components and finished product crossed many borders both within and outside the EU.

I have two main conclusions from my experience. The first is it is true that just in time and high quality production required careful management of suppliers. Sourcing was global, not regional. There is a high degree of mutual dependence in modern industry on a range of suppliers around the world. Large companies do not rely just on the EU or just on the US these days.

The second is we had no more difficulties with non EU sourced components than with EU products, despite all such products if needed in EU based factories having to come in under WTO rules.

The crucial things we had to manage were the quality and quantity suppliers could deliver, and the ability of the transport system to deliver them over long distances in some cases. Government interference in the process was rarely the main problem. Goods moved with electronic manifests, were always traceable and well known to the authorities in the countries they were travelling through.

There is absolutely no need to bend or drive UK policy on some fear about supply chains. Cheaper good quality components and products will still get there from EU and non EU places as they do today, whatever Agreement or lack of Agreement we end up with.

In the case of the pharmaceutical industry some claim to worry about the degree of UK/EU business integration, whilst ignoring the fact that UK/US business integration is much closer for the majors and takes place across WTO rules based frontiers.

[EU Cities for Fair & Ethical Trade Award](#)

For the first time, the European Commission will grant an EU city with a Fair and Ethical Trade Award.

The aim of the Award is to highlight the important role of cities in providing platforms for fair and ethical trade schemes. The contest was officially launched in Brussels on 7 December 2017 and applications will be accepted until 13 April 2018.

Source: <http://www.trade-city-award.eu>

What is the EU Cities for Fair & Ethical Trade Award?

The Award is part of the EU's efforts to raise awareness about how purchasing decisions of EU consumers can affect the environment and livelihoods of people in other countries – and the role that cities and local authorities must play.

Help your city apply!

Civil society organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders are welcome to complete city applications with the approval, in the form of a Mayoral Declaration, of the relevant municipality authority.

Applications are open to all EU cities that contain at least 20.000 inhabitants.

You will find all the relevant information regarding the contest here <http://www.trade-city-award.eu>

[Environment ministers discussed the Circular Economy and the Plastics Strategy](#)

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Urgent action is needed to protect our oceans and seas from an invasion of plastics

At today's Environment Council, ministers exchanged views on the package presented by the Commission on 16 January 2018, which aims at delivering on the circular economy action plan. The package consists of the following elements:

- European strategy for plastics in a circular economy
- a Monitoring framework for the circular economy
- Implementation of the Circular Economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation

They based their debate on a note prepared by the Presidency and took into account the interventions of Commissioners Vella and Arias Cañete, who were present.

Ministers agreed that they welcome the presentation of the new EU plastics strategy. They highlighted the need to move forward with the plastics strategy as it aims to improve how we use and recycle plastics. Plastics have been instrumental in achieving the economic and social standards we have today. However, in recent years marine littering and other undesirable consequences linked to the use of plastic have been a concern to environment ministers. All Ministers welcomed the Commission package and called for an urgent implementation of concrete measures, in particular to increase the recycling of plastics, find solutions to the widespread use of single-use plastic and to find a holistic approach to the value chain of plastic production. Eco-design for plastic products can play a very important role here. In their exchange of views, ministers mentioned several other possible actions to be taken at EU or at national levels:

- campaigns for raising consumer awareness
- increasing the quality of recycled products through setting standards
- green public procurement
- the use of the rules on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), similar to the one which was agreed recently in the waste package, together with financial incentives and voluntary commitments by the industry.

Finally, ministers agreed that they are all looking forward to the Commission legislative proposal on single use plastics.

We need to protect our environment from plastic pollution. We also need to protect our seas from microplastic particles. Today we have made a very important first step towards commitments which will enable us to deliver on our promise to protect the environment and the health of our citizens.

Neno Dimov, the Bulgarian Minister for Environment and Water

On the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation, many ministers highlighted the need for availability of information on substances of concern in products. According to several speakers the same rules should

apply to the content of hazardous substances in primary and in secondary raw materials, which underlines the importance of the substitution of such substances as far as possible. A number of speakers also addressed the need for more harmonised end-of-waste rules throughout the EU.

While many Ministers focused in their interventions on the plastics strategy and the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation, as suggested by the Presidency, several speakers also highlighted the importance of another element of the package, namely the monitoring framework regarding progress towards a circular economy. The proposed indicators were generally welcomed, but some ministers asked to broaden the scope of the indicators to other areas than the waste sector. In this context, they stressed the substantial contribution which the circular economy can make to the fulfilment of the climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Finally, Environment Ministers underlined the need to fully involve other Council formations in the discussions and the work on circular economy throughout different sectors.

The Bulgarian Presidency is planning to have Council conclusions adopted on the above topics in June.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

[News story: 2018 Groceries Code Adjudicator annual sector survey](#)

Take part in the survey on the [YouGov website](#)

The Groceries Code Adjudicator (the GCA) has launched her fifth annual survey of the groceries sector. The annual survey allows the GCA to collect the most comprehensive set of views on current Code-related issues facing suppliers.

The GCA is seeking experiences and views from suppliers and others in the sector on how the 10 regulated retailers are complying with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice.

The survey will be an important source of information for the GCA about current retailer practices and changes over the past twelve months. The information provided will help the Adjudicator focus her attention for the year ahead.

All the information you provide is treated in strict confidence.

All answers are collated and analysed by YouGov and respondents are not identified to the GCA without their prior consent.

The results will be presented at the GCA Conference on 25 June 2018.

The survey will be open from 5 March 2017 to 22 April 2018.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Syrian ceasefire](#)

The Foreign Secretary said:

I am deeply concerned by the continued military campaign against the civilians of Eastern Ghouta and credible reports that Russian aircraft are actively participating alongside the Asad regime, contrary to the Security Council's demand in UNSCR 2401 for a 30-day ceasefire in Syria. The areas suffering from bombardments are civilian populated areas.

There are reports of a death toll of more than 600 civilians in the last two weeks, including 200 airstrikes and over 100 killed since Russia voted in favour of the ceasefire. All this in an area that, lest we forget, Russia itself announced as a de-escalation zone through the Astana Process.

The main Opposition armed groups on the ground are involved in the UN-led Geneva process and Russia's own Astana process and have clearly committed to full implementation of the UNSCR. These groups are not terrorists – they support a negotiated political solution to the crisis in Syria. Having voted for UNSCR 2401 less than a week ago, Russia has a responsibility to ensure implementation of the ceasefire.

The people of Eastern Ghouta have endured enough, among broken promises of ceasefires and humanitarian pauses. We demand that Russia and the regime cease hostilities immediately and ensure the sustained delivery of humanitarian aid to Eastern Ghouta and medical evacuations, as called for by the UN Human Rights Council this morning in a UK-proposed Resolution. The people of Eastern Ghouta can wait no longer.

Further information

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