# EU/Singapore Free Trade Agreement

2018/0093(NLE) - 02/10/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to approve the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Singapore.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the Council can adopt the act only if the European Parliament has approved it.

BACKGROUND: in accordance with a Council decision, a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the European Union and the Republic of Singapore has been signed.

The fast-growing Southeast Asian economies, with their 600 million consumers and a rapidly rising middle class, are key markets for European Union exporters and investors. With a total EUR 208 billion of trade in goods and EUR 77 billion of trade in services (2016), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) taken as a whole is the EU's third largest trading partner outside Europe, after the US and China.

Within the ASEAN, **Singapore is by far the EU's largest trade partner**, accounting for just under a third of EU-ASEAN trade in goods and services and about two-thirds of investment between the two regions.

CONTENT: the Council's draft decision aims to approve, on behalf of the Union, **the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Singapore.**

The agreement aims to liberalise and facilitate trade and investment between the parties. It defines the conditions under which EU economic operators can take full advantage of the opportunities offered in Singapore, the hub of economic activity and transport in South East Asia.

In accordance with the objectives set by the negotiating directives, the FTA provides for:

- **the comprehensive liberalisation of services and investment markets**, including cross-cutting rules on licensing and for the mutual recognition of diplomas, and sector specific rules designed to ensure a level playing field for EU businesses;

- new **tendering opportunities** for EU bidders;
- the removal of **technical and regulatory trade barriers** to trade in goods, in particular by promoting the use of technical and regulatory standards familiar in the EU in the sectors of motor vehicles, electronics, pharmaceuticals and medical devices as well as green technologies;
- based on international standards, a more trade-facilitative regime for the approval of **European meat exports** to Singapore;
- Singapore's commitment not to raise its tariffs (which are currently mostly not applied on a voluntary basis) on imports from the EU, as well as cheaper access of European businesses and consumers to products made in Singapore;
- a high level protection of **intellectual property rights;**
- a TRIPs-plus level of protection to EU **geographical indications (GI)** following their registration in Singapore once Singapore has established a GI register (which it has committed to do following the European Parliament's consent to the FTA);
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- a comprehensive chapter on **trade and sustainable development**, which aims at ensuring that trade supports environmental protection and social development and promotes the sustainable management of forests and fisheries;
- a swift **dispute resolution mechanism** through either panel arbitration or with the help of a mediator; and
- a comprehensive and novel chapter to promote new opportunities in the "**green growth sector".**

The institutional chapter of the FTA establishes a **trade committee** that has as its main task to supervise and facilitate the implementation and application of the agreement. It shall be comprised of representatives of the EU and of Singapore who will meet every two years or at the request of either side. will be in charge of supervising the work of all specialised committees established under the agreement (Committee on Trade in Goods; Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures; Committee on Customs; and Committee on Trade in Services, Investment and Government Procurement).

The Council will authorise the Commission to **approve, on behalf of the Union, the position to be taken within the trade committee** on certain amendments to the Agreement to be adopted by a simplified procedure (amendments and rectification regarding system of protection of geographical indications, and modification of the list of geographical indications).