



Brussels Info Flash

25 September 2026

H/Advisors' Analysis

EU and the Philippines move closer to trade deal as Brussels deepens its Indo-Pacific strategy

The agreement would support trade diversification, open new opportunities for EU exporters and strengthen supply-chain resilience with a fast-growing Southeast Asian partner.

The **European Commission** has announced that the EU and the **Philippines** have reached a substantial agreement on a future **Free Trade Agreement**, putting the deal on a clear path towards final conclusion in the coming months. The agreement is designed to deepen economic ties with one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing markets, while reinforcing the EU's strategic engagement in the **Indo-Pacific**.

The deal would liberalise more than **94% of tariff lines**, covering over **97% of bilateral trade**, and improve access for EU industrial, services and agri-food exports. It would also open the Philippine government procurement market to foreign bidders for the first time, strengthen protection for **EU Geographical Indications**, and introduce clearer rules on digital trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, energy and raw materials.

Politically, the agreement reflects the EU's broader effort to use trade policy as a tool for **resilience**, economic security and global influence. The inclusion of sustainability commitments, human rights and the **Paris Agreement** as essential elements also underlines Brussels' attempt to combine market access with values-based trade. Once the remaining technical details are finalised, the deal would strengthen the EU's economic foothold in Southeast Asia.

Highlights of the week

- **Health and pharma resilience.** The Commission announced new Global Gateway investments under the EU Global Health Resilience Initiative, while UNGA engagement also focused on health resilience and pandemic preparedness.
- **Banking and investment.** The Commission and EIB launched the European Institutional Investors Pact to mobilise long-term capital for European tech scale-ups, alongside new EU funding decisions under the RRF and Cohesion policy.
- **Defence and security.** The Council approved nearly €3 billion in support for Ukraine, extended Ukraine-related restrictive measures until 2029, and increased European Peace Facility support for Djibouti.
- **Energy, environment and climate.** The Council advanced the ETS market stability reserve file, while the Commission moved on data-centre efficiency, ocean observation and biodiversity-linked investments.

Main Issues in the EU

The Council

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- **UN General Assembly.** The EU participated in the 81st UN General Assembly High-Level Week in New York, with European Council President António Costa representing the EU and engaging in side events and bilateral meetings. The EU's priorities focused on rules-based multilateralism, UN reform, peace and security, sustainable development and prosperity.

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- **UN General Assembly**
- **Ukraine support.** The Council approved nearly €3 billion under the Ukraine Facility, including almost €800 million from the Ukraine Support Loan, to support Ukraine's macro-financial stability, recovery and reforms, and welcomed Norway's €92 million contribution.
- **Armenia trade measures.** The Council adopted temporary trade-liberalisation measures for Armenian products, suspending import duties on around 80% of Armenia's exports to the EU for two years, with safeguard measures to protect EU producers.

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- **UN General Assembly**
- **Carbon market.** The Council agreed its negotiating position on a targeted amendment to the ETS market stability reserve, aiming to increase carbon market liquidity and predictability by suspending allowance invalidation until the end of 2030 and introducing a higher threshold from 2031.

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- **UN General Assembly**
- **Ukraine sanctions.** The Council extended until 22 September 2029 the individual restrictive measures targeting those responsible for undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.
- **European Peace Facility.** The Council increased EU support for the Djibouti Armed Forces from €10 million to €20 million under the European Peace Facility, aiming to strengthen maritime security and freedom of navigation in and around the Red Sea.

- **General Affairs Council.** Ministers debated the 2028-2034 MFF and preparations for the October European Council, discussed the Commission's 2027 work programme, and reviewed rule-of-law developments in the EU and selected candidate countries.

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- **UN General Assembly**
- **EU-Australia relations.** European Council President António Costa, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met in the margins of UNGA, welcoming the conclusion of EU-Australia FTA negotiations and progress on Horizon Europe, security and defence cooperation, critical raw materials, economic security and AI governance.
- **Partners for Multilateralism summit.** The EU and international partners launched the Partners for Multilateralism initiative in the margins of UNGA, adopting a declaration to uphold international law and strengthen multilateral cooperation, UN reform, fair trade, resilient supply chains, climate action, AI governance and global health.

The Commission

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- **EU infringement procedures.** The Commission sent letters of formal notice to several Member States for failing to fully transpose EU directives into national law, giving them two months to reply and complete transposition before potential further action.
- **NextGenerationEU.** The Commission positively assessed Luxembourg's third €92.2 million payment request under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, covering reforms and investments in healthcare, biodiversity, digitalisation, clean transport and renewable energy.
- **Agricultural support.** The Commission allocated over €73 million from the agricultural reserve to support Italian poultry, egg and pigmeat farmers affected by avian flu and African swine fever outbreaks.
- **UN General Assembly.** The Commission concluded its UNGA High-Level Week engagement with a focus on peace, health and resilience, including EU-led meetings on the Two-State Solution and Gaza, new global health initiatives, and support for education, the UN Resident Coordinator system and OHCHR.

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- **Women's employment in the Mediterranean.** The Commission launched the Surging Women's Employment Initiative under the Pact for the Mediterranean, mobilising €25 million, including €10 million from the EU, to help create 500,000 additional jobs for women across the Middle East and North Africa.

- **Romanian State aid.** The Commission approved an €11 million Romanian State aid scheme to support pig farmers facing higher fuel and fertiliser costs linked to the Middle East crisis.
- **Global health resilience.** The Commission announced three new Global Gateway investments in Africa and Latin America under the EU Global Health Resilience Initiative, aiming to strengthen health systems and pandemic preparedness in partner countries.

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- **Affordable housing.** The Commission launched the first national housing hub in France under the European Affordable Housing Plan, aiming to improve cooperation between public and private actors, mobilise investment and better align national, local and EU housing policies.
- **Hungary EU funds.** The Commission proposed to unlock €4.2 billion in Cohesion funding for Hungary and restore full access to Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, stating that Hungary had addressed the rule-of-law breaches affecting the EU budget.
- **Lebanon support.** The Commission adopted a €505 million support package for Lebanon for 2026 and 2027, aimed at supporting the country's stability, recovery and reforms.
- **Gaza recovery.** The Commission launched the first €43 million Team Gaza projects to help restore essential water and solid waste management services in Gaza.
- **Ocean observation.** The EU and Canada launched the OceanEye International Alliance and secured almost €220 million in pledges for global ocean observation.

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- **EU-Philippines trade.** The EU and the Philippines reached substantial agreement in negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement, aiming to deepen economic ties with a strategic and fast-growing partner in Southeast Asia.
- **European tech investment.** The Commission and the EIB Group launched the European Institutional Investors Pact to channel more long-term institutional capital into Europe's technology and scale-up ecosystem, including through the €15 billion European Tech Champions Initiative 2.0 and the €5 billion Scaleup Europe Fund.

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- **Data centres.** The Commission proposed a common EU rating scheme for data centres to increase transparency on their energy and water use and support their sustainable integration into Europe's energy system.

- **EU Customs Reform.** The EU Customs Reform entered into force, launching a more digital, data-driven and simplified customs system, with a modernised Union Customs Code and the creation of the EU Customs Authority.
- **Fisheries and aquaculture funding.** The Commission proposed targeted changes to the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund to simplify access to funding, support fleet modernisation and generational renewal, and align EU support with WTO fisheries subsidy rules.

The European Parliament

24 September 2026

- **Parliamentary delegations.** MEPs concluded their delegation visits to South Korea and Greenland, focused respectively on digital regulation and Arctic cooperation.

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- **Parliamentary delegations.** Delegations to Iceland, the United States, Finland and Greece concluded, while the missions to South Korea and Greenland continued.

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- **Parliamentary delegations.** Committee delegations continued their missions to South Korea, the United States, Greenland, Greece, Iceland and Finland.

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- **South Korea and artificial intelligence.** MEPs from the IMCO Committee travelled to South Korea for a delegation visit on digital technologies, artificial intelligence, deepfakes and online trade rules, following the recent EU-South Korea digital partnership. The mission runs until Thursday.
- **EU-US taxation.** MEPs from the FISC Subcommittee travelled to Washington DC and Delaware to discuss EU-US tax relations, tax evasion and global tax issues with US authorities, stakeholders and experts. The mission runs until Wednesday.
- **Greenland and Arctic cooperation.** MEPs from the TRAN and FEMM committees travelled to Greenland to discuss transport infrastructure, maritime and air connectivity, sustainable tourism, and the situation of indigenous women and girls. The mission runs until Thursday.
- **Greece railway safety.** MEPs from the PETI Committee travelled to Greece to assess follow-up measures after the 2023 Tempi rail crash and discuss railway safety with national and regional authorities. The mission runs until Wednesday.

- **Iceland and foreign affairs.** MEPs from the AFET Committee travelled to Iceland for talks on foreign policy, security and the future of EU-Iceland relations following the 29 August referendum. The mission runs until Wednesday.

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