



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

3 May 2024

EFTA–THAILAND NINTH ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS

Bangkok, 23–26 April 2024

PUBLIC REPORT

I. Context

EFTA and Thailand met for the ninth round of negotiations in Bangkok, Thailand. Delegates discussed Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade Remedies, Investment, Services, Legal and Horizontal Issues and Dispute Settlement, Intellectual Property Rights, Cooperation and Capacity Building, Government Procurement, and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Based on the progress made during the round, EFTA and Thailand reiterated their objective to conclude a modern, comprehensive and ambitious free trade agreement in 2024. The next round is expected to take place in August 2024.

II. Trade in Goods

On trade in goods, experts achieved progress by agreeing on most of the open articles in the chapter. With respect to market access negotiations, experts provided further indications on potential improvements in their offers, where further liberalisation was requested, and where tariff commitments were not possible. EFTA and Thailand agreed on a way forward in order to prepare the next exchange of offers.

III. Rules of Origin

Good progress was made on Rules of Origin (RoO), with experts going over the outstanding text of the RoO Annex and the Product-Specific Rules of Origin (PSR) and Origin Declaration Appendices. Discussions on pending issues in the RoO Annex were useful, and two articles were cleaned. The Origin Declaration Appendix was agreed, and some progress was also achieved in the PSR Appendix, with the cleaning of one chapter as well as useful cleaning of the PSR Appendix. Both sides clarified outstanding proposals and agreed on follow-ups for further work needed ahead of the next round.

IV. Trade Remedies

Pending issues, including anti-dumping measures, global safeguard measures and bilateral safeguard measures, continued to be discussed. Experts proposed options for finding mutually acceptable solutions, preparing the ground for conclusion either before or at the next round of negotiations.

V. Investment

On investment, experts achieved progress by agreeing on the core article on reservations with respect to the commitment to grant investors national treatment. They further sounded out landing zones for the other outstanding issues in the chapter and discussed their specific reservation list entries. The EFTA States and Thailand agreed to hold an intersessional meeting with a view to addressing the open elements on the investment track.

VI. Trade in Services

Services experts discussed pending issues and revised market access offers, finalising two Annexes (Domestic Regulation, and Tourism and Travel Services). Except for a few pending references, the Financial Services and Maritime Transport Annexes were almost finalised. Finally, market access offers were reviewed thoroughly during the week, and some technical amendments and improvements will follow.

VII. Legal and Horizontal Issues

Legal experts from the EFTA States and Thailand continued their negotiations. Substantial textual progress was made in the preamble and within the chapters on general and institutional provisions, as well as dispute settlement, which as in the eighth round continued to be the focus of discussions. Throughout the round, work towards the consolidation of text proposals under negotiation continued, facilitating further clarity on possible routes towards concluding the areas under discussion. Legal experts agreed to continue work through an intersessional meeting ahead of the next round.

VIII. Intellectual Property Rights

The EFTA States and Thailand held four days of discussion on intellectual property rights, where further textual progress was made. Constructive exchanges were held in areas still outstanding, with experts agreeing to continue work through intersessional meetings ahead of the next round.

IX. Cooperation and Capacity Building

Cooperation experts discussed and agreed on several of the pending issues, and identified a landing zone on the remaining key issues to be confirmed after the round.

X. Government Procurement

On government procurement, discussions continued in this round. Experts took note of their divergent approaches in the negotiations and agreed to meet in the next round to address the way forward.

XI. Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

In the ninth round of negotiations, the working group continued its work and was able to successfully resolve the remaining issues, leading to the finalisation of the SPS Chapter.