

Interim Report

Foreword

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to the 2020 National Policy Forum Consultation.

Your insight has enabled the NPF to provide a set of grounding principles to shape our policy for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The principles outlined in the report are based on the values that bring us together as a Party and lay the foundations for the work we will do together over the next four years. Labour wins when we offer a vision of the future that is optimistic and gives people hope that things can and will change for the better, and these principles reflect this.

From empowering citizens to fighting the climate emergency, rebalancing Britain to supporting the nation's mental health, the principles demonstrate that our Party is rooted in the values that the public share, and outline the kind of change that we know is so needed in our country.

This report could not have been developed without listening to views from across the Labour movement, from our members to affiliates, all of whom play a vital role in developing our policies. But this engagement doesn't stop here – we now want to hear what all parts of our Party think about these principles.

While the world around us is changing fast, the common bonds between us have been strengthened as a result of the challenges we have undergone. By working together, we can rebuild our country and ensure a fairer Britain for all.

Yours,



Keir Starmer
Leader of the Labour Party

The next steps for the National Policy Forum (NPF)

Thank you to all members, affiliates and stakeholders who took part in the NPF (National Policy Forum) consultation this year, whether you submitted your ideas through Labour Policy Forum or attended one of the online roundtable events.

Social distancing measures meant that consultation activity looked a little different this year. The Consultation was held solely online, with all eight documents hosted on Labour Policy Forum, and eight member policy roundtable events on Zoom in lieu of our usual roadshow of events. This was an opportunity to trial new methods of engagement, and we hope to be able to continue to do this as the work of the NPF evolves over the next few years.

This work will be laid out in more detail in the following report. While it was not possible for this report to be taken to Annual Conference and debated on Conference floor, we hope that it will be of interest to inform and explain the work of the NPF this year.

The report lays out a set of principles that the policy commissions will build upon over the course of the election cycle looking to 2024.

**We want to hear your views on these principles,
and welcome you to submit them via Labour Policy Forum:**

www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/make-a-submission.

Your comments will be considered by the policy commission and will inform a fuller report covering two years of NPF activity, which will be taken to Conference in September 2021. If passed by delegates it will form part of our policy platform.

Thank you again for your involvement with the National Policy Forum this year. Your insights will help us to shape our policy platform so we can win again and ensure a fairer Britain for all.

Membership 2020

HM Opposition

Lisa Nandy MP*
Preet Kaur Gill MP
John Healey MP

NEC

Kathy Abu-Bakir*
Yasmin Dar
Rachel Garnham †
George Howarth MP
Jon Lansman †

CLPs and Regions

Charlotte Austin – *Northern Region*
Mohammed Azam – *North West Region*
Paul O'Kane – *Scottish Policy Forum*
Bryony Rudkin – *Eastern Region*
Carol Turner – *London Region*
Tom Unterrainer – *East Midlands Region*
Adrian Weir – *London Region*
Sophie Williams – *Welsh Labour Party*

Affiliates

Tony Dale – *Usdaw*
Sonny Leong – *Chinese for Labour*
Gordon McKay – *UNISON*
Len McCluskey – *Unite*
David Quayle – *Unite*

Elected Representatives

Georgia Gould – *Association of Labour Councillors*

*Co-convenor

† Joined commission in June 2020

Overview of the work of the International Policy Commission

This year's international policy consultation asked how Labour could begin a process of working towards the next General Election, in which we reaffirm our principles and approach to international policy. The process began in the context of Covid-19, and the accelerating decline of an international order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War. It also takes place during a period of fundamental shift in the policy direction in the UK, with the decision to merge the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) and active debates about the future of once protected budget priorities such as 0.7% spending on aid, which the Government have now confirmed will be cut.

Taking this into account, the Policy Commission asked for submissions on several thematic issues that are key to resolving protracted and emerging international challenges.

These themes are:

- Global governance and the lack of strong working partnerships between nations on policy challenges, along with the growing mistrust between nations.
- Growing isolationism and nationalism seen in many countries, leading to more incidents of xenophobia and the persecution of minorities, the proliferation of disinformation, and deteriorating influence of once respected international institutions.
- The diminishing focus on the climate emergency as Covid-19 sucks in most of the political energy at a time when action on climate change has never been more pressing.
- The crisis in the global economy, particularly after Covid-19 lockdowns, and unintended negative impacts for workers worldwide as governments attempt to balance the economy and public health crisis.
- Increasing incidents of human rights abuses by states and non-state actors alike; the deteriorating security outlook across the Middle East and North Africa; and increasing tensions between major global players.

The consultation set out five questions to source views from our members and stakeholders:

1. What are the most important values of internationalism that Labour should champion and how could we embed these in the global leadership needed after coronavirus?
2. What are the lessons to learn from the ingenuity and skill demonstrated throughout coronavirus for a more holistic defence resilience in the future?
3. What should the values and priorities be, which will underpin our international development strategy and define our relationships with partner countries?
4. How should Labour prioritise the international issues on which we will need to offer global leadership for creating more equality and opportunity for all?
5. What do you consider to be the major weaknesses in our national security and collective global stability?

The Policy Commission received hundreds of submissions in response, and met several times to discuss, whilst also taking stock of ongoing events around the world. The issues discussed by the Commission included: cases of human rights abuses in Kashmir, Hong Kong and Xinjiang; the proposed illegal annexation of Palestinian territory and increasing violence in Gaza; the Government's approach to global vaccine development; the refugee crises in Bangladesh and Syria; and the reopening of arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

The Commission held a special evidence session with Ben Ward, UK Director of Human Rights Watch and Sophia Gaston, the Director of the British Foreign Policy Group. The discussions highlighted the lack of consistency in the UK's current approach to foreign policy, particularly on calling out human rights abuses. The discussion also covered how international policy can be better communicated and connected to voters.

The Commission also held a digital forum with members that was attended by Shadow Cabinet members John Healey MP, Lisa Nandy MP, and Preet Kaur Gill MP, along with Shadow Africa Minister Stephen Doughty MP and Shadow Veterans Minister Sharon Hodgson MP. The forum highlighted the need for a foreign policy that is more long term, strategic and consistent than the approach of the current Government. Discussions also displayed a desire to see the UK engaged in global affairs, offering up our expertise, but equally listening to the experience and knowledge of all countries, regardless of their relative economic or political influence.

Principles:

While the submissions and related discussions centred on a wide range of countries and case studies, they also reflected several underlying values and principles. The principles will underpin our international policies on defence, development and foreign affairs.

1. Putting people first, Labour's international policies will be human rights led, standing up to abuse, oppression, and those who seek to undermine our peace and freedom; utilising conflict resolution as a key tool of international relations.
2. The first duty of government is to protect its people; our international policies will bring an end to knee jerk decisions, and ensure a properly planned and funded national defence, based on a strategic, long-term view of shifting power bases, a wider understanding of security threats and the national interest.
3. Fighting the climate emergency will inform everything we do, from working to eradicate poverty and economic inequality, to dismantling systemic injustices around the world.
4. Policies will be focused on the future, harnessing the possibilities of new technologies, new ideas and new alliances, while becoming more vigilant to emerging threats that we have not seen before.
5. Through our assessment of global challenges, Labour will be unafraid to put forward radical ideas. This approach will be founded on the belief that societies are better defended with common values and collective solutions.
6. Recognising that all levels of government need to work together for an international policy that is coherent and supportive of our core objectives as a Party. Labour will champion international labour rights and equitable trade agreements to closely tie our international and domestic priorities, supporting British industry, jobs and regional economies.
7. Labour will take a values based approach to our international relationships. We will not shy away from speaking out for the rule of international law and pursuing truth and justice in the face of opposition, even from our allies. We will strive to always bring light not might in our diplomacy around the world.
8. Labour's decision making processes will be transparent and open to proper public and parliamentary scrutiny.
9. Defending the rights of communities of all colours, cultures, and faiths to determine their own futures and livelihoods. Our policies will promote the UN-led rights of equality, end systemic injustices for women, and champion the rights of minorities such as LGBTQ+ people, BAME people, and people living with disabilities.
10. Representing the interests of all those who call the UK home on the global stage means our diplomatic and armed forces personnel must be as diverse as those they seek to champion and defend.

Consultation responses

This consultation's broad scope covering foreign, defence and development policy reflects the make-up of the International Policy Commission but also mirrors a key current debate in response to the Government's Integrated Review, and recent policy announcements. It is clear that this Government is facilitating a fundamental shift of Britain's place in the world, albeit in a manner that lacks an apparent overarching strategy.

Over the course of the coming electoral cycle Labour is going to encounter many more challenging international policy issues and in 2024 would inherit the responsibility to represent British interests in a world that will be radically different to one we have seen pre-coronavirus.

"This is a moment when Labour must decide on its future foreign policy on the basis of a more fundamental reconsideration of the UK's role in the world than has taken place since the Second World War. The essential starting point is a recognition of Britain's place in the world of today and tomorrow not of yesterday."

Ian, Greater London

The starting point of this journey is to cement the principles that will guide policy making, and which are unique to international policy issues. This ensures our policy will be robust enough to outlast rapidly changing environments and events, and allow Labour to present ourselves as a government-in-waiting that will defend the values we hold to be right on the world stage.

Consistent with this, the main theme running through all of the submissions received was that the priority of Labour's approach to foreign, defence and development policies should be protecting the rights and security of people and the planet:

"First and foremost, human rights and conflict prevention, everything else flows from these principles."

Streatham CLP

Submissions demonstrated a desire to see the UK take an active role promoting the rights and security of people and the environment, with greater urgency than has been seen in the past. In most instances, submissions concluded that Britain needs to stand up for these values by taking the lead internationally.

“The UK needs to show urgent leadership on minimising climate change catastrophe. Even though the COP26 has been delayed till Nov 2021 every country still needs to submit their Paris Pledges (Nationally Determined Contributions) to the UN with actions that are sufficient to keep the world to 1.5deg of warming.”

Hornsey and Wood Green CLP

“To position itself as a global leader, the UK must shift its activities abroad from a siloed to an integrated approach, one that actively works to address the climate and biodiversity crisis while promoting prosperity and human well-being.”

World Wildlife Fund

What is clear, however, is that party members and stakeholders view leadership and Britain's future global role with a different purpose to how the term has been understood and practiced in the past. Submissions suggested that coronavirus has impacted on how people see the world with the need for greater cooperation, rather than nations pursuing narrow self-interest.

“Britain needs to improve its failing international reputation by leading by example and by being moral, fair, compassionate and assertive. This means not competing with other countries, but working with them, because we all need each other. This is now obvious to many more people around the world who are aware of the climate crisis and coronavirus.”

Charlotte, South West

In relation to this, submissions were also clear that cooperation with partner countries means progressing beyond old power and trade relationships to a new footing of equal partnership. Finding workable solutions to the great challenges ahead of us will require us to be bold in acknowledging those answers will not necessarily come from the most “developed” group of nations, and we have more that we can learn from the wider global community.

“Opportunities to learn from and respect the contribution of countries that are not global powers, such as approaches to virus and treatments from Africa. We have an element of disregard and disrespect towards these countries, and we should have the humility to learn what worked.”

Strefford and Urmston CLP

Another key principle underpinning the global role that members want to see a Labour government utilise is accepting Britain has much to offer our partners and multilateral cooperation when we do this on our own terms and not in a way that is unduly influenced by the objectives of others.

Submissions were clear that a more independent international policy allows Britain to be consistent in the application of our core values. While this will be very important to presenting a coherent policy platform to voters, consistency in our policy will also be key to rebuilding trust with the global community and rebuild alliances, by showing our Party has the highest degree of respect for international law.

“Independent but proactive in terms of international policy”

David, South west

“Be consistent in standing up for human rights and democracy in all countries.”

Jasmine, South East

This message of consistency was no more keenly articulated than in the many submissions received on the issue of Palestine, where members voiced their concerns that international law and human rights were at risk of significant violation.

"For a Labour Party to continue to credibly advocate an ethical foreign policy, it has to address the issue of how to rebuild respect for international law and human rights. An immediate and long-standing challenge is Palestine."

Labour and Palestine

Likewise, submissions reflected a strong view that international policy had to be consistent and integrated across all departments in Whitehall. Another example of this is was on arms controls:

"Ban arms sales to dictatorships and countries with poor human rights."

David, North

Independent, integrated and consistent foreign policy is the bedrock of our defence and national security, as the primary objective of any government is to protect its citizens. Submissions recognised the threat posed by a rapidly changing and destabilised world, and the need for the UK to prepare strategically for a range of emerging threats at home and overseas:

"It is vital to recognise that the world is politically more unstable than at any time in recent years. There is a high risk this could escalate with the sharp global economic downturn that we are beginning to experience with the growing climate crisis a further de-stabilising force and existential threat. The Labour party must prioritise de-escalating these tensions, and pursuing peace, global co-operation and international law as not only the most ethical path but the one that will also deliver the best security for our citizens, country and our future. This means pursuing an independent foreign policy."

Unite the Union

At home, an integrated approach should recognise that our foreign and defence policy is also vital for economic security, protecting the jobs and livelihoods of working people. A fully integrated internationalism from Labour should see the dual-goals of defending working class people at home and overseas as mutually reinforcing, and beneficial for global security and economic wellbeing.

"We recognise the economic impact that our armed forces have on regions, particularly in Northern England, where many people are employed, and have patriotic communities."

Julie, East of England

"Britain can, on occasion, appear to be the only G7 nation which takes pride in not supporting its domestic defence industry in favour of investing UK taxpayers' money in the industrial base of other nations. This weakens our long term national security and freedom of action at a time when it is clear that we have struggled to secure our own national sovereign PPE capacity."

Airbus

A strategic and properly resourced defence policy is also necessary, however as the submissions indicated, British security and national interests can only be fully achieved through working with multilateral institutions. In this regard, several key themes reemerged in submissions, that our policy should be integrated across domestic and International departments; our approach should be consistent; and Britain should take an active role in these institutions.

While submissions related to a wide range of case studies, policy challenges and country-specific proposals, most noted the importance of institutions like the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) in achieving a desired outcome. Acknowledging that these institutions are not perfect, they remain vital forums for achieving our primary foreign policy objectives.

"We should more consistently uphold the basic principles of the United Nations system: belief in human rights amid acceptance of respect for national sovereignties as the foundation of international law and civility. (This does not imply that the organisations of the UN don't need reform. They do.) Within this framework, the UK should aim to be a model good global citizen: actively pursuing good causes, good ideas and trying to build consensus around them."

Michael, International

This view was particularly the case in relation to submissions received on international development. The Party's membership expressed a clear view that the government was wrong to close the Department for International Development, especially at a time of such global uncertainty with Covid-19. Moving forward, members articulated a commitment to the undying objectives of development aid and pragmatic international steps to achieve them.

"Labour's development policy is built around the UN's sustainable development goals. Our foreign policy should follow this, and build alliances to implement them."

Luke, South East

On development, members want to see the party remain committed to independent spending on international aid. Championing the Sustainable Development Goals maxim of "leaving no one behind" members recognised that while there has been progress, that has not been progress for everyone. Members want Labour to be bold in our approach to the challenges in the Global South, unafraid to look at new ways of thinking, and take on new ideas particularly from partner nations themselves. This, submissions suggest, is key to breaking down the structural barriers that continue to exist for many people worldwide. Submissions reinforced the view that development policy has a key role in tackling gender inequality, and reinforcing human rights.

"The empowerment of women is an essential part of the fight for global justice."

High Peak CLP

An important part of this bold reimagining of the UK's role in the world is building that bridge between our own communities, working people worldwide and the global trade union movement. By demonstrating that much of what we strive for here in the UK to improve our communities and families are the same solutions to protracted problems of poverty and economic inequality in the Global South.

"A progressive and truly international response requires policies that connect the UK's own actions with its international commitments."

Deena, Greater London

"Quality public services provide the most efficient and effective means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing poverty and inequality around the world, whilst strengthening human rights and building fair, democratic and resilient societies."

UNISON

Above all this means being outward looking and future focussed, taking a longer-term view of emerging threats to peace, stability and economic security both at home and overseas. We must also make the argument to our voters that this approach is not only different from the Conservatives, but in their interest.

"For the past 10 years this country has been turning increasingly inward. We need to be outward facing again, and present this in a positive way."

Jenny, Yorkshire and The Humber

Reflecting on the need to be future looking, submissions on coronavirus noted the failure to prepare for a scenario that was already identified as a tier one security threat. Members felt there is a significant need to take a wider view on what we understand to be security, widening the terms to include human security, food security, health security and environmental security threats, both at home and overseas:

"The requirements for future defence of the UK will need to expand within the UK to include cybersecurity, environmental security and a new pandemic. Outside the UK, it will also need to play a leading role in environmental security and, in the event of large environmental disasters causing mass migration, the protection of refugees."

Moray CLP

Within that wider view on security, submissions returned to the overriding theme that members want to see principles underpinning our policy that protects people, and this is no different for the people behind our defence, development and foreign policy.

"If British troops are committed then the public, especially the working class whose sons and daughters have to do the fighting, rightly demands that British service personnel should have proper protection and should not be exposed to unnecessary danger brought about by poor procurement and other governmental shortcomings."

Unite the Union

In that same spirit, and concluding this report, submissions reflected a wide range of views and concerns but what brought them all together and above all inform the 10 principles is what has driven Labour from its creation - a progressive movement that puts people first.

“Protect human rights & citizenship rights, gender equality, end racism. We need global citizenship education in all countries, that everyone can understand, on the importance of human rights and their universality, the right to citizenship, and the importance of communities and individuals respecting and protecting all people's lives and dignity without exception.”

Marge, Greater London

Concluding remarks from the co-convenors, Lisa Nandy MP and Kathy Abu-Bakir

Throughout this consultation it has been fantastic to see how passionate the Labour movement is about international policy and the desire to fix injustices around the world. The principles agreed in this document will help us to achieve that aim, and act as a roadmap as we respond to events around the world.

Reflecting on the submissions received, what really shone through is our movement's concern for the welfare of people, particularly working people. Failures of global governance are fundamentally stories about people facing adversity as they try to find ways to live peacefully and do the best for their families. These are the same values that families live by across the UK, and for that reason we are more committed than ever to connect our voters with our internationalist values.

Defending that right to live in peace is important to our members, with the highest number of submissions about annexation of Palestinian territories. The Shadow FCO team publicly stated that annexation is profoundly wrong, as a violation of international law and several UN Security Council Resolutions, and called for a ban on goods from the illegal settlements in the West Bank. Israel has since backed away from immediate threats of annexation, which is to be welcomed. However, the only way to secure a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is through a two-state solution, and any moves that undermine trust in any future peace negotiations must be resisted.

Labour remains committed to the policy of formally recognising the State of Palestine.

Members also raised concerns for the peace and freedom of Kashmiris, highlighting concerning incidents of harassment of journalists, human rights abuses and violence. Labour's position on Kashmir remains unchanged, we support and recognise previous UN resolutions on the rights of Kashmiri people. If we are to find a lasting settlement to end this ongoing conflict, that can only be achieved if India and Pakistan work together, with the people of Kashmir. Without this approach the hardship and violence that we have seen escalate over the past year will sadly only get worse.

Issues of sovereignty, self-determination and personal freedoms were raised in several submissions relating to both Hong Kong and the serious allegations of ethnic cleansing against the Uyghur people.

Labour wants to see the Government standing up for BNO passport holders in Hong Kong and demanding a guarantee from China that their travel not be restricted on illegitimate grounds. More broadly, we have called for a coherent and consistent strategy for dealing with China across government departments, including imposing sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the persecution of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang. The evidence of ethnic cleansing is a scar on the conscience of the world. The UK Government must proactively engage our democratic allies to ensure a robust, international response. We cannot be bystanders.

As submissions also highlighted, the Government's inconsistent approach to export licenses has allowed the sales of weapons to states known to be committing human rights abuses, while at the same time putting out contradictory statements about supporting human rights. Labour opposes arms exports to states accused of human rights abuses, and this includes weapons used to fuel the devastating war in Yemen.

It was encouraging to see members writing in to support Labour's moves to stand up for the principle of independent aid, in light of the Government's decision to close DFID. Shadow Development Secretary Preet Kaur Gill MP, kept the Commission regularly updated on the work of her team challenging the Government's decision and representing the development sector. The British people are rightly proud of the impact UK aid and development has had in supporting the world's poorest and most vulnerable. Preet has been clear that the Government must now show that it is committed to the principles DFID was founded on and wants to see development policy used more widely to entrench human rights, and dismantle systemic injustices on issues such as gender inequality.

John Healey MP, the Shadow Defence Secretary, also kept the Commission updated on the work he was doing pressing the government to protect jobs and livelihoods in the UK, calling for major UK defence projects, such as Fleet Solid Support Ships, to be built in Britain. He also led discussions on how to reach out to the armed forces community so their voices can be better heard in our policy making, with the relaunch of Labour Friends of the Forces.

It is working people who make up the majority of the British defence sector, from manufacturing to those serving on the frontline, and as with working people worldwide Labour will show them our full support, particularly during the economic crisis arising from lockdown.

Above all the submissions showed us that our members are willing us to confront a complex world, filled with injustices. Now is the time to step up and show genuine global leadership to make that world safer, fairer and better.

Post Script

Following the drafting of this report, the Commission met to discuss its findings the day after the US General Election. The Commission welcomed the election of Joe Biden as the next President of the United States. The Commission asked Labour's shadow frontbench to forge a strong working relationship with the new administration to press for a more progressive engagement in global affairs. The Commission expressed optimism that the new President would demonstrate a fresh commitment to the climate emergency, peace in the Middle East and the Iran Nuclear Deal, along with more respect for international forums and global cooperation on a Covid-19 vaccine.

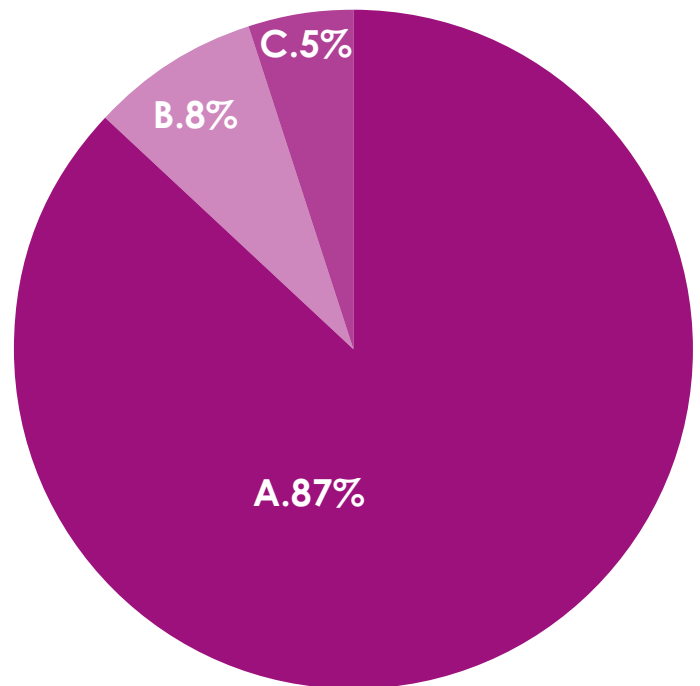
Submissions

In 2020 the International Policy Commission received and considered submissions on the following topics:

- A**
 - Africa
 - Agriculture
 - Aid
 - Armed Forces
 - Arms trade
 - Art
 - Asia
 - Australasia & Pacific
- B**
 - Brexit
- C**
 - Child poverty
 - Citizenship
 - Climate change
 - Conflict
 - Coronavirus
 - Crime
 - Cyber security
- D**
 - Data Protection
 - Debt
 - Defence
 - Digital
 - Diplomacy
 - Disability equality
 - Discrimination
- E**
 - East Asia
 - Electoral reform
 - Environment
 - Equality
 - Europe
 - European Union
- F**
 - Fisheries
 - Food
 - Food poverty
 - Foreign policy
 - Free movement
 - Free trade
- G**
 - Gender violence
 - Global health
 - Globalisation
 - Green New Deal
- H**
 - Health and safety
 - Human rights
- I**
 - Immigration
 - Industrial strategy
 - International development
 - Israel and Palestine
- J**
 - Justice
- M**
 - Mental health
 - Middle East
- N**
 - NATO
 - North America
 - Nuclear deterrence
 - Nuclear power
- P**
 - Planning laws
 - Poverty
 - Privatisation
- R**
 - Race equality
 - Refugee crisis
 - Refugees
 - Regional development
 - Research and Development
- S**
 - Sanctions
 - South America
 - Syria
- T**
 - Tax
 - Technology and science
 - The economy
 - Trade
 - Trade agreements
 - Trade Unions
 - Travel & Tourism
- U**
 - United States of America
- V**
 - Vaccines
- W**
 - War crimes
 - Women's rights
 - Worker's rights

Breakdown of who sent in submissions

- A.** Individuals – 87%
- B.** Local Parties – 5%
- C.** Organisations – 8%



Breakdown of how submissions were received

- A.** Labour Policy Forum – 95%
- B.** Email – 5%

