



Department for International Trade

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By email: jonathan.woods@parliament.uk

12th July 2021

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 24 June to the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade, on behalf of your constituent, regarding concerns around the UK Government's approach to data protection in Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations. The Secretary of State asked me to respond.

Our vision is to lead the world in Digital Trade, creating a global digital economy that encourages innovation and investment, enables business of all sizes to succeed across borders, and that works for everyone. We also want to establish the UK as the best place in the world to start and grow tech companies and build on the UK's position as fourth in the Global Innovation Index 2020.

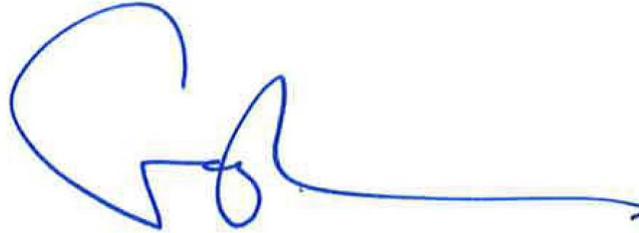
Secure and reliable exchange of data across borders is relevant to any business that engages in cross-border transactions, for example using the internet to produce and deliver goods and services. The UK seeks to include provisions in FTAs that facilitate the free flow of data, whilst committing all parties to provide a legal framework for the protection of personal data.

UK citizens will enjoy the same protections as they do currently for their personal data and nothing in the deal will change this. The UK will maintain its high standards of data protection, as set in the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Any transfers of personal data must meet these high domestic data protection standards. The provisions in our FTAs do not circumvent this requirement. By contrast, FTA provisions support UK objectives for trusted data flows: enabling cross-border data flows and avoiding unjustified data localisation, whilst ensuring high standards of data protection.

Joining FTAs will not undermine the safeguards that we have in place around health and care data. Health data, like other personal data, will continue to be protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (which incorporated EU GDPR into UK law). Identifiable health data is also protected by the common law duty of confidentiality.

Thank you again for your letter, and I hope this response is of reassurance to your constituent. The UK will attempt to secure trade agreements that recognise the principle that data must flow in a free, safe and secure manner across borders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'G' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

THE RT HON GREG HANDS MP
Minister of State for Trade Policy
Department for International Trade