



Ressort: Special interest

Trade with the US: EU Council authorises negotiations

Brussels, 15.05.2019 [ENA]

The Council approved mandates for the Commission to open negotiations with the United States on two agreements:

a trade agreement limited to the elimination of tariffs for industrial goods only, excluding agricultural products;

an agreement on conformity assessment that would have as its objective the removal of non-tariff barriers, by making it easier for companies to prove their products meet technical requirement

"Today's adoption of the EU negotiating directives gives a clear signal of the EU's commitment to a positive trade agenda with the US and the implementation of the strictly defined work programme agreed by Presidents Trump and Juncker on 25 July 2018. But let me be clear: we will not speak about agriculture or public procurement. Another important element is that the environmental and social impact of the agreement will be fully taken into account during the negotiations.

Stefan-Radu Oprea, Minister for Business Environment, Trade and Entrepreneurship of Romania and President of the Council

The Council also decided to make both decisions authorising the opening of negotiations with the US and the accompanying negotiating directives public.

The EU is now ready to launch negotiations with the US. They will cover a strictly limited set of issues stemming from the July Joint Statement of Presidents Juncker and Trump. The mandates also clarify that the negotiating directives for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreed in June 2013 must be considered obsolete and no longer relevant.

The Commission will negotiate on behalf of the EU, ensuring appropriate communication with all relevant EU stakeholders, including civil society and economic operators. The final agreement will need be concluded by the Council after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

The Commission should produce a sustainability impact assessment as soon as possible which would examine the potential economic, environmental and social impacts of this agreement, also in light of the commitments of the EU in international agreements such as the Paris agreement on climate change. The

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findings of this impact assessment should be taken into account in the negotiating process.

As far as the agreement on the elimination of industrial tariffs is concerned, the objective is to increase trade between the EU and the US, to improve market access and to generate new opportunities for jobs and growth. The mandate given by the Council ensures that negotiations will take full account of particular sensitivities for certain goods, such as energy-intensive products and fisheries products, as well as the environmental impact arising from the differences in the EU and US regulatory frameworks.

The mandate also ensures that the EU will not conclude negotiations with the US as long as the current tariffs on EU exports of steel and aluminium remain in place, and that it would be able to suspend negotiations unilaterally if the US were to impose further trade restrictions against European products.

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