



The Market Access Partnership – removing obstacles to doing business outside the EU (Communication on Market Access)

Why a new Market Access Partnership now?

Business in the European Union is holding its own in global trade. European exporters are still responsible for more than a fifth of world trade – more than the US and more than emerging economies like China, India or Brazil. A strong European performance in foreign markets is helping to deliver growth and jobs in Europe, as well as bringing choice and lower prices to overseas markets.

But in a global economy, things can't be taken for granted. As traditional trade barriers – in the form of quotas and duties on imported goods– have been falling, European businesses find they still have to deal with a wide range of other barriers that put up the cost of doing business, or stop them from selling to a particular market altogether. Local rules that discriminate against exports, or special taxes or charges on foreign goods can make it hard for EU exporters to compete. The same is true when intellectual property rights are poorly protected.

This is why the European Union has decided to renew its efforts to help EU businesses get their goods and services into new markets.

While some rules exist at an international level – for example, rules agreed by the World Trade Organisation in Geneva or in our bilateral trade agreements with our trading partners – we need to make sure those rules are applied, and we need to make sure business knows what it can do when it runs into unexpected barriers. But tackling these issues can be complex and time-consuming. It requires parallel action both in Europe and even more importantly locally in the markets of interest outside the European Union.

How will the Market Access Partnership help?

The Market Access Partnership updates the approach followed over the last tens years. It focuses in five areas:

- **Strengthening the network of market access experts** to ensure better cooperation between the Commission, Member States and business;
- **Focusing on concrete problems** that EU companies face and **clearer priorities** on which barriers and markets matter most;
- **Using the EU's global and bilateral trade deals** not only to open markets further, but to ensure they stay open and that problems can be easily addressed;

- **Creating Market Access Teams in Brussels and on the ground** in key markets drawn from European Commission delegations, Member State embassies and business organisations;
- **Making more information available** in particular by improving the existing Market Access Database, which provides business with a snapshot of barriers in key markets as well as information about the conditions to expect when doing business in that market, for instance about tariffs and import formalities.

By setting clearer priorities and by acting more effectively both within the EU and on the ground in third countries, we should be able to tackle barriers with new energy and apply more resources and expertise to particular problems. At the same time, the partnership avoids creating new heavy machinery or committees that could distract from the real goal of actually increasing business opportunities.

Why is this being done at EU level – surely Member States and business know best what needs to be done?

Trade policy is one of the areas where the EU has replaced action at national level with action by the EU as a whole. By negotiating as 27 countries we can strike better deals than acting alone. Having the same trade rules for the whole of the Union ensures that people and businesses across the EU have the same chance to benefit from open markets. The same goes for promoting open markets abroad – by acting together we have greater leverage to remove barriers, and can get a clearer view in setting priorities.

What are the next steps?

Politically, the EU's Council (representing the Member States) has endorsed this approach and the European Parliament will also issue a supportive report.

The Commission has already made good progress – with the Member States and business - to intensify this partnership and see how they can add value. A first priority will be sharing information and working together towards the removal of trade barriers. This is done by establishing local Market Access Teams in certain key markets and setting up working groups and expert networks in Europe. And because we don't need to change existing rules to move ahead, we will be moving ahead more quickly.

The Commission will also be launching, together with Member States and business partners, awareness campaigns about the renewed partnership – particularly for SMEs. It is also updating its Market Access Database (<http://madb.europa.eu/>), including new improvements in the way we record barriers and provide feedback on what is being done in a given case.

DG External trade – December 2007