

Karel De Gucht

European Commissioner for Trade

Speaking Points: Anti-dumping cases state of play and perspectives

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

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Mr. Chairman,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

I am happy that the European Parliament shares our view that the defence of EU production against international trade distortions should be considered as a necessary component of an open and fair trade strategy.

I share your view that trade defence instrument decisions must continue to be founded on technical and factual elements, and I am confident we have one of the most effective and fairest trade defence systems in the world. I am aware that in anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations there are many interests at stake and that some stakeholders attempt to influence the decision. Nevertheless, I can confirm that the decision making process is effective and transparent, based on factual evidence and thorough analysis.

I acknowledge that recently third parties have tried to influence our decision making by pressurising complaining industries or even, member states and companies operating in these third countries. I strongly condemn such actions. In this context, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty provides an opportunity to address this problem.

I would like to assure you that the number of TDI cases remains stable over the medium and long term. We managed to avoid any significant increase which could have happened as a result of the world recession and ensured that the anti-dumping instrument would not be used for protectionist purposes.

Most recent statistics show that the number of cases in the EU remains lower than in our main trading partners. China remains by and large the main source of unfair trade (around 35% of cases launched by the EU are against China). I am determined to take action where this is necessary, and this includes anti-subsidy action.

Trade defence instruments are there for good reasons. In the absence of international competition rules and of other rules associated with well functioning markets trade defence instruments are the only possible means of protecting our industry against unfairly traded goods. We seek to use these rules in the most efficient way for our industries. The existence of time limits ensures quick action for the industry and predictability for exporters. I intend to keep our instruments effective and fair to the benefit of all economic operators concerned.

The international rules on trade defence are being renegotiated in the World Trade Organisation. The EU position there is clear: we want to maintain the effectiveness of our instruments while protecting our business against protectionist actions by others. These WTO negotiations as well as changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty are important for any review of our rules we would wish to undertake.

As regards SMEs, trade defence instruments indeed represent a challenge for SMEs both in terms of costs and complexity. There is a need to reduce the administrative burden for SMEs in trade defence investigations. This is why I have commissioned a study that is looking at the specific difficulties that SMEs are facing when dealing with TDIs, and at possible solutions to alleviate these difficulties.

Regarding the institutional aspects you will have noted that the Comitology proposal submitted by the Commission in March, provides that the European Parliament will be fully informed as to the committee proceedings. Also, the Commission will provide information on the proposed measures on which the committees are asked to deliver an opinion, the final measures as well as information on the final adoption by the Commission. At any time, the European Parliament can obtain further information if this is requested.

In this context, let me confirm that the Commission is effectively ready to make a proposal on the alignment of the trade defence instruments with the new system of control of delegated and implementing acts (this is the so-called trade omnibus). However, as you are aware, there is significant discussion between the institutions on the overall issue of implementing acts.

The Commission is carefully following the discussion and gauging, on the basis of contacts with the other institutions, when such a proposal should be adopted by the Commission. However, let me be clear that the issue is only when the proposal will be made, not if.

Finally, regarding the use of trade defence instruments by third countries, we have indeed observed an increase since the beginning of the economic crisis.

I would like to assure you that we closely follow trade defence actions by third countries and take action when necessary. Such action includes intense monitoring, effective support of affected EU exporters or even starting a dispute settlement procedure at the WTO.

In many cases the Commission's actions lead to the termination of the investigation without the imposition of measures. In other cases, these interventions often result in a lower measure for the EU exporters concerned.

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Members of Parliament,

The Commission is well aware of this House's interest in trade defence instruments. I welcome this opportunity to have a debate with you, and I will keep you informed on future developments.