



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

STATEMENT

Athens, 28 February 2014

"The EU is ready when Ukraine is ready": Statement by EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht on Ukraine

Press conference after the Informal Foreign Affairs Council/ Trade, Athens

The EU ministers and I today took time to discuss the latest developments in Ukraine with respect to the Association Agreement which remains on the table.

As most of you who follow trade matters are aware, one of the sparks that led to the developments we have seen in the last days and weeks is in fact the Association Agreement between Europe and Ukraine – whereby about 90 per cent of that agreement is in fact a 'trade deal'.

This is what former President Yanukovich decided not to sign-up to last autumn.

I myself – along with my colleagues – have been very clear on this in media interviews in the last days.

If and when Ukraine is ready to sign the deal, then the European Union is ready to sign the deal. The democratic future of Ukraine is for the Ukrainian people to decide including in respect of a future Association Agreement with the European Union.

We will react appropriately to any request from a new inclusive government committed to political and economic reforms. Any decision will be taken by The Council, taking into account the assessment of all relevant circumstances.

But most importantly at this stage, we should recall why this deal will be beneficial for all Ukrainians. Let me recall a couple of key figures on the expected benefits of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA): Ukrainian exporters will save almost half a billion euros annually in total due to reduced EU import duties – to be more precise: €487 million.

Ukrainian agriculture will benefit from cuts in duties: €330 million for agricultural products and 53 million euros for processed agricultural products.

And Ukrainian chemical exporters will make savings of €26.8 million– just to give you a couple of examples.

One important addition: This Association Agreement (AA), and its 'trade part', is an unprecedented blueprint for the modernisation of Ukraine's economy. This will bring higher standards in the political system, for the Ukrainian economy and very importantly for the people of Ukraine.

The Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) are not directed towards or against Russia. It is not because Ukraine would have closer relations with Europe that it cannot have economic relations with Russia. Not at all.

Technically, the DCFTA is not compatible with Ukraine becoming a member of the customs union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, but Ukraine is not. Apart from that, we even applaud that Ukraine would have closer economic relations with Russia.

For us, Ukraine is a sovereign country that can decide for itself with whom and to what extent it has relations. For us, Russia is not an opponent - I think we better should be partners with respect to Ukraine.