

## Bilateral safeguard measures in trade agreements: Council agrees its position

On 24 October 2018, EU ambassadors meeting in the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) agreed on the Council's position on measures to streamline **the inclusion of safeguard measures in trade agreements** with a view to guaranteeing their effective and consistent application.

Bilateral safeguard measures linked to a trade agreement (allowing for the temporary withdrawal of tariff preferences) are intended to **protect a particular domestic industry** from an increase in imports of any product which is causing, or which risks causing, serious injury to that industry.

We are strongly convinced of the political value and economic interest of free trade agreements. But we also want a Europe that protects, and thanks to this legislation we will be better able to safeguard vulnerable products and areas from any temporary negative impact of imports.

*Margarete Schramböck, Austrian federal minister for digital and economic affairs and president of the Council*

The European Parliament's committee on international trade voted on its report on 11 October 2018 and announced its decision to enter into negotiations in the plenary on 22 October. Negotiations between the two institutions should start soon with the **aim of finding an agreement by the end of 2018**.

The EU regularly concludes trade agreements with third countries, most of which include bilateral safeguard clauses or other mechanisms for the temporary withdrawal of tariff preferences or preferential treatment. Up to now, the bilateral safeguard mechanism has been proposed **separately** in conjunction with each trade agreement. Whereas now, a **consistent horizontal framework** for the inclusion of such provisions in new agreements is being proposed.

The Council position follows the logic behind the Commission proposal but lays emphasis on the specific nature of some **sensitive products and of areas** that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of imports, such as the EU's outermost regions. The Council position also acknowledges the Commission's **need for flexibility** in negotiating the inclusion of safeguards in trade agreements with third countries.

- [Commission proposal](#)

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