

Trade barriers: EU removes record number in response to surge in protectionism

Commenting on the [report](#), Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** said: *“As the world’s largest and most accessible market, the EU is determined to ensure that foreign markets remain equally open to our firms and products. Given the recent rise in protectionism in many parts of the world, our daily work to remove trade barriers has become even more important. Ensuring that our companies have access to foreign markets is at the heart of our trade policy. Today’s report also underlines that effective solutions can be found within the international rulebook. As protectionism grows, EU enforcement of the rules must follow suit.”*

Thanks to the EU’s enhanced Market Access Strategy, 45 obstacles were lifted fully or in part in 2017 – more than twice as many as in 2016. The barriers removed spanned across 13 key EU export and investment sectors, including aircraft, automotive, ceramics, ICT & electronics, machinery, pharma, medical devices, textiles, leather, agri-food, steel, paper, and services. Overall, this brings the number of barriers eliminated under the Juncker Commission to 88.

Thanks to those barriers removed between 2014 and 2016 alone, in 2017 EU companies exported an additional €4.8 billion. This is the equivalent to the benefits of many of our trade agreements.

The report also shows that 67 new barriers were recorded in 2017, taking the total tally of existing obstacles to a stark 396 between 57 different trading partners around the world. This confirms the worrying protectionist trend identified in previous years. China displayed the largest increase in new barriers in 2017, followed by Russia, South Africa, India and Turkey. The Mediterranean region also showed a notable rise in barriers for EU companies. The nine countries with the highest number of trade barriers still in place are all G20 economies.

Examples of barriers eliminated in 2017:

- Recognition of safety standards used by the EU machinery industry in Brazil’s new safety legislation;
- Elimination of administrative barriers for services in Argentina;
- Removal of restrictions on copper and aluminium scrap, and paper in Turkey;
- Removal of animal and plant health and hygiene barriers related to bovine exports from some EU Member States to China, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan;
- Elimination of certain restrictions on poultry exports from some EU Member States to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Many more concrete examples are included in today's [factsheet](#).

Background

The Report on Trade and Investment Barriers is fully based on concrete complaints received by the Commission from European companies. It has been published annually since the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis.

In recent months the Commission has also launched Market Access Days in Member States in order to raise awareness amongst smaller companies of how the EU can help address the barriers they face.

Following the publication of the [Report on the Protection and Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights](#) in February, this is the second enforcement related report released by the Commission in 2018. Later this year the Commission will publish an Implementation Report of the different trade agreements in place.

In its “[Trade for All](#)” strategy, the Commission has made enforcement of trade rules a top priority along with a sharper focus on the implementation of trade agreements, so that our companies can compete on a level playing field when seeking export and investment opportunities in third countries. The EU has the tools and uses them to eliminate trade barriers, bring dispute settlement action, and impose trade defence measures in cases of unfair trade.

For More Information

[Report](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[Market Access Data Base – register of complaints](#)

[Case study](#)

[Report on the Protection and Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights](#)