



EU countermeasures on US steel and aluminium tariffs explained

Brussels, 12 March 2025

On 12 March, the United States imposed tariffs of up to 25% on imports of steel, aluminium, and certain products containing steel and aluminium from the European Union and other trading partners. In response, the Commission is launching a series of countermeasures to protect European businesses, workers and consumers from the impact of these unjustified trade restrictions.

Context: measures and countermeasures imposed under the previous Trump administration

In June 2018, the first Trump Administration introduced tariffs on European steel and aluminium exports (known as "section 232" tariffs), targeting €6.4 billion of EU goods* (€8 billion based on 2024 flows and values). In January 2020, additional tariffs, affecting around €40 million* of EU exports of certain derivative steel and aluminium products, followed. The EU responded to these with a targeted package of so-called "rebalancing measures".

In 2018, the EU countermeasures were structured into two sets of measures (Annexes I and II), each affecting different product categories. Annex I targeted €2.8 billion worth of US goods, while Annex II was to target €3.6 billion worth of goods. A similar EU response followed the second set of US tariffs in 2020.

Concerning the 2018 rebalancing measures, while Annex I came into effect immediately in June 2018, Annex II was scheduled to enter into force in June 2021. Before the scheduled implementation of Annex II, the EU suspended all measures (i.e. both Annexes) until 31 March 2025. The 2020 EU rebalancing measures will also be coming back on 1 April. This followed discussions with the US which agreed to suspend its 232 tariffs on EU exporters within a certain quota. This provided both sides with space to work together on a longer-term solution through a global arrangement that would address carbon intensity and global overcapacity.

The new US measures

The US measures implemented on 12 March consist of three key elements:

- Reinstating the June 2018 section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminium products. These covered different types of semifinished and finished products, such as steel pipes, wire and tin foil.
- Increasing the tariffs imposed on aluminium from the original 10% to 25%.
- Extending the tariffs to other products, notably:
 - Steel and aluminium products, such as household products like cooking ware or window frames.
 - Products that are only partly made of steel or aluminium, such as machinery, gym equipment, certain electrical appliances or furniture.

In addition, the US Secretary of Commerce will establish by 12 May 2025 a system whereby the US will continue to extend the list of steel and aluminium derivatives products subject to additional duties of up to 25%.

The US tariffs will affect a total of €26 billion of EU exports, which corresponds to approximately 5% of total EU goods exports to the US. Based on current import flows, this will result in US importers having to pay up to €6 billion in additional import tariffs.

The EU's response

The Commission has launched a swift and proportionate response, designed to defend European interests through two countermeasures:

- The reimposition of the suspended 2018 and 2020 rebalancing measures;
- The imposition of a new package of additional measures.

Reimposing suspended countermeasures

On 1 April 2025, the 2018 and 2020 rebalancing measures will automatically be reinstated once their suspension expires on 31 March. For the first time, these rebalancing measures will be implemented in full. Tariffs will be applied on products ranging from boats to bourbon to motorbikes.

A new package of additional measures

Since the new US tariffs are significantly broader in scope and affect a significantly higher value of European trade, the Commission launched on 12 March the process to impose additional countermeasures on the US. These will target approximately €18 billion worth of goods, which will then apply together with the reimposed measures from 2018. The objective is to ensure that the total value of the EU measures corresponds to the increased value of trade impacted by the new US tariffs.

The first step in this process is the launch of a two-week consultation with EU stakeholders. These consultations will ensure that the right products are chosen for inclusion in the new countermeasures, ensuring an effective and proportionate response that keeps disruption to EU businesses and consumers to a minimum.

The full process to impose the additional countermeasures is as follows:

- 12 March - Stakeholder consultations begin:
 - The list of targeted products proposed by the Commission is published on the DG TRADE website.
 - The proposed target products include a mixture of industrial and agricultural products:
 - Industrial products include i.a.- steel and aluminium products, textiles, leather goods, home appliances, house tools, plastics, wood products.
 - Agricultural products include i.a.- poultry, beef, certain seafood, nuts, eggs, dairy, sugar and vegetables.
- 26 March and following days:
 - Stakeholder consultation concludes.
 - The Commission consolidates and assesses the stakeholder inputs.
 - The Commission finalises its draft implementing act and consult the Member States on it:
 - The legal basis for this act will be the Enforcement Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 654/2014), as we consider the US measures to be safeguards.
 - This process will follow the comitology procedure, whereby EU Member States will be invited to endorse the proposed measures before they are adopted.
- Mid-April - the adoption process concludes and the act imposing the countermeasures enters into force.

* Values presented in 2018 prices.

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Press contacts:

[Olof GILL](#) (+32 2 29 65966)

[Ana APSE-PAESE](#) (+32 2 29 87348)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)