



Trade Barriers Report: EU continues to open up markets outside Europe in midst of rising protectionism

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Thanks to the European Union's successful intervention, European companies generated €8 billion in additional exports in 2019. The high number of new restrictions that hinder EU exports shows however that protectionism has become deeply ingrained in global trade. These are some of the findings of the Commission's annual [Trade and Investment Barriers Report](#) published today.

Commissioner for Trade Phil **Hogan** said: *"Ensuring respect of the existing international trade rules is one of my top priorities. Our action to enforce trade rights and eliminate trade barriers brings tangible benefits for EU companies, including small ones. In 2019, our joint efforts regained for them €8 billion. Yet, we have also been facing a worrying sea change in world trade. Barriers affect EU export sectors of particular importance and obstacles spread across regions. While we focus all our efforts on the post-COVID economic recovery, this calls for new impetus to enforcement. It is essential to keep global trade flows open."*

Coordinated efforts by the Commission, Member States and EU business organisations in the framework of the Market Access Partnership, allowed European companies to regain in 2019 important export markets. This benefited among others EU farmers and food producers, for instance:

- Beef exporters from France, Ireland and The Netherlands regained access to China; producers from Ireland and Croatia recovered access to Japan and Dutch pork producers can now export also to Mexico;
- Polish producers of baby milk powder can now export again to Egypt;
- Belgian pear producers regained access to the Mexican market.

However, EU companies face also a multiplication of new unlawful barriers in sectors of strategic importance for the EU, notably in information and communication technology, electronics, auto and other high-tech industries. The total number of existing trade barriers around the world amounts to 438, out of which 43 were introduced last year by 22 different countries. The highest number of trade restrictions concern access to the Chinese and Russian markets (respectively 38 and 31 measures). China also imposed the highest number of new restrictions in 2019, followed by South Mediterranean and Middle East countries.

Background

The Commission's Report on Trade and Investment Barriers has been published annually since the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis. It is part of the Commission enforcement efforts in the area of international trade rules. The report offers a detailed analysis of the types of barriers causing most problems to EU's companies and the sectors where results have been achieved.

The report is based on information reported by European companies. To increase awareness of the available export support, the Commission established the Market Access Days initiative, bringing together EU companies, national trade associations and trade experts from the Commission and Member States to discuss concrete market access problems on foreign markets. In 2019, sessions were held in the Netherlands, Lithuania, Portugal, France and Latvia in which hundreds of companies participated.

Given the need to step up enforcement efforts in the area of trade, a Chief Trade Enforcement Officer will soon be nominated to coordinate and steer all EU enforcement actions. This will include the establishment of a single entry point for trade enforcement issues to respond faster and more effectively to trade restrictive practices by EU trading partners. Furthermore, on 16 June, the Commission launched a [public consultation](#) to review EU trade policy, seeking among others proposals on how to improve EU enforcement efforts to help small businesses facing unjustified export restrictions in countries outside the EU.

For More Information

[Report on Trade and Investment Barriers](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[List of barriers covered in the report](#)

[Case study](#)

[Market Access Data Base: tool for reporting of trade barriers](#)

[Enforcement of trade rules by the EU](#)

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