

**Question for written answer P-003515/2016
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Francisco Assis (S&D)

Subject: EU-Mercosur Association Agreement

There is a political significance to the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement that goes far beyond its economic and trade benefits. The EU is in need of new partners to counteract the decline in its geopolitical influence. The Mercosur group is willing to make Europe its priority for now, but this situation may soon change and, should Mercosur backtrack, we may lose out on opportunities with the USA and China. Given the above, the exchange of offers that has been arranged for the second week of May is a most welcome initiative. Until just recently the EU had been blaming Mercosur countries for the deadlock in negotiations. Now it is the turn of EU countries to cause a major stumbling block, however, as they have raised concerns about quotas on agricultural products and have demanded that the agreement be deferred until a study into the impact on farming and other sectors has been completed.

Despite the sectoral interests and the opposition that may arise from them, will the Commission justify its broad mandate from the Council and prove that it is still committed to concluding the negotiations as soon as possible, given that the agreement concerned is so crucial for political and economic relations between the EU and South America?