
US tariffs: “Avoid trade wars and tackle global overcapacity in steel instead” urge MEPs

The EU should not engage in a trade war, but must be ready to defend its citizens, MEPs said in a Wednesday morning debate on planned US trade restrictions.

Political groups condemned US plans to impose new tariffs on steel and aluminium imports, on “national security” grounds, as unjustified. The debate showed wide support among MEPs for seeking a peaceful solution with the US and together tackling the underlying causes of global steel overcapacity and unfair trade practices by certain countries.

Speakers nevertheless suggested keeping all options on the table, should dialogue collapse, and voiced support for the possible countermeasures announced by the EU Commission last week. To avoid exacerbating matters, the EU response must be firm, but proportionate and stay in line with international law, they added.

MEPs also called on the EU to team up with other countries affected to strengthen its position and oppose protectionism.

Many speakers also called for EU-wide unity to protect citizens and warned member states against seeking individual exemptions. However, a few MEPs countered that the EU customs union is also protectionist, and described US President Donald Trump’s efforts to protect US steel industry workers as legitimate.

Commission Vice President Jyri Katainen said he expected that the EU, as a strategic ally, would be excluded from the tariffs as EU exports do not harm the US. He announced that the EU and the US had started working together on global overcapacity and this work would intensify soon.

Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said the EU neither wanted an escalation, nor shared the view that trade wars are easy to win. But if EU exports are not excluded from the scope of the US measures, a “firm but proportionate response” should follow, she said.

Catch up with the debate by VOD

Further information

[Trade MEPs condemn US restrictions on steel and aluminium imports \(02.03.2018.\)](#)

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Contacts

Bálint Péter LINDER

Press Officer

☎ (+32) 2 28 32584 (BXL)

☎ (+33) 3 881 73839 (STR)

📱 (+32) 470 88 08 77

🐦 [@EP_Trade](#)

✉ balint.linder@europarl.europa.eu
