

New tariffs imposed by the US and countermeasures by the EU



Trade
Compliance

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The US government under Donald Trump has begun to implement its protectionist economic policy and has introduced tariffs on goods from the EU and other countries such as Canada and Mexico. During the election campaign, Trump had already promoted his idea to protect the American economy during his second term in office and combating a US trade deficit, inter alia through tariffs.

1. History of the trade conflict between the EU and the USA

Trump had already taken trade policy measures against the EU during his first term of office from 2017 to 2021 and announced on 8 March 2018 that he would impose tariffs on steel and aluminum originating in the EU with effect from 23 March 2018; these tariffs came into force on 1 May 2018 after a brief suspension.

Based on Regulation (EU) 654/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the exercise of the Union's rights regarding the application and enforcement of international trade rules, the European Commission then took countermeasures in the form of additional duties in the form of Implementing Regulations (EU) 2018/724 and (EU) 2018/886. The procedure was organised in two stages: Initially, tariffs of 10 percent and 25 percent were levied on goods in Annex I of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/724, and then, in a second step, further tariffs of up to 50 percent were imposed from 23 March 2021 or from the date on which the US measures were found to be WTO-incompatible

Following a WTO dispute settlement procedure, the EU and the USA under the Joe Biden administration agreed on 17 May 2021 to suspend tariffs and issued a declaration of intent with regard to imports of steel and aluminum. During the implementation, the European Commission suspended the trade policy measures introduced by Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/886 with regard to certain goods originating in the USA until 31 March 2025 with Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/2882 of 18 December 2023.

2. Resurgence of the trade conflict

With his announcement on 10 February 2025, Donald Trump has reignited the trade conflict with the EU. On the grounds of an alleged threat to US international security due to the volume of imported European steel and aluminum, all suspensions and exemptions were revoked as of 12 March 2025 and new additional tariffs were imposed. The measures announced are as follows:

With [Proclamation 9704 of 8 March 2018](#) and [Proclamation 9980 of 24 January 2020](#) , the USA introduced additional tariffs of 10 percent on aluminium products and later also on imports of aluminium derivatives during Trump's first term in office. With [Proclamation 10895 of 10 February 2025](#) , the aforementioned regulations are amended to the effect that an additional 25 percent ad valorem duty will now be levied on these goods from 12 March 2025.

Steel products from the EU are also affected. With [Proclamation 9705 of 8 March 2018](#) and [Proclamation 9980 of 24 January 2020](#) , the USA imposed additional tariffs of 25 percent on steel products made of steel and on imports of steel derivatives. With [Proclamation 10896 of 10 February 2025](#), these proclamations will also be amended to the effect that all imports of steel products falling under heading 9903.80 of Chapter 99 of the US Customs Tariff (HTSUS) will be subject to an additional 25 percent ad valorem duty rate.

3. Reaction of the European Union

The EU announced immediate countermeasures on 12 March 2025.

As a first step, the additional duties introduced by Regulations (EU) 2018/724 and (EU) 2018/886 and last suspended until 31 March 2025 will be revived on 1 April 2025. The duties set out in both Annex I and Annex II will enter into force immediately.

As the current US tariffs go beyond the measures adopted in 2018, the EU has also announced that it will likewise extend its measures. The Commission issued a [list of goods](#) that could be subject to the additional measures, including industrial and agricultural products, such as steel and aluminum products, textiles, leather goods, household appliances, household tools, plastics, wood products, poultry, beef, certain seafood, nuts, eggs, dairy products, sugar and vegetables.

All interest groups, economic operators and other stakeholders can comment until 26 March 2025 on the Commission's proposals. The introduction of the extended measures is planned for mid-April.

4. What's next

In addition to the tariffs on steel and aluminum, the Trump administration has announced further reciprocal tariffs on goods from the EU and other countries. The relevant US authorities have been instructed to analyze the tariffs and trade restrictions of other countries in comparison to the USA. If

this analysis reveals a disadvantage for the USA, the Trump administration intends to respond with countermeasures of the same amount (*"They charge us, we charge them."*)

While the reduction of tariffs and trade barriers has been the main goal of the international community since the introduction of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947 and later within the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the USA is continuing its protectionist course. Whether this will have the promised positive effects on the American economy remains to be ascertained. In any case, economic operators in the EU must be prepared for a further strain on trade relations with the USA.

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