Council of the European Union

Background brief
21 November 2025

Foreign Affairs (Trade) Council

24 November 2025, Brussels

PRESS

EN

Chair: Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Denmark's minister for foreign affairs

Commission representative: Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for trade and economic security

Starting time: +/- 9:00

Media opportunities:

- Doorstep by Minister Rasmussen: +/- 8:45
- Press conference/point with Minister Rasmussen, Commissioner Sefcovic, Secretary Lutnick and USTR Greer: +/- 15:00 [TBC]
- Press conference with Minister Rasmussen and Commissioner Sefcovic: +/- 15:45 [TBC]

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Main agenda topics:

The main points of the Council meeting include the review of the state of play in **EU-US** and **EU-China trade relations**, as well as a stocktaking of the **ongoing bilateral trade negotiations** with a number of partners, with a focus on India. Over lunch, ministers will be joined by **US Secretary of Commerce**, **Howard Lutnick**, and **US Trade Representative**, **Jamieson Greer** to discuss transatlantic trade cooperation.

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Meeting page on the Council website

Press conferences, doorsteps and other public events in video streaming

High quality photo and video material

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EU-US trade relations (in non-public, restricted session)

EU trade ministers will be updated on the state of play of and prospects for **EU-US trade relations**. In light of ongoing intensive engagement with the US. The focus will be on the latest developments and the way forward. No formal decisions are expected at this stage.

Following the political agreement of 27 July 2025, the EU and the US issued a **Joint Statement** on transatlantic trade and investment on 21 August, providing a platform for further engagement and restoring a degree of stability and predictability in EU-US trade. It does so by establishing a clear tariff architecture, notably a maximum, all-inclusive 15% US tariff ceiling for the vast majority of EU exports, alongside reduced tariff levels for selected sectors such as aircraft, generic pharmaceuticals and certain raw materials. It also confirms intention to pursue joint work on addressing overcapacity in steel and aluminium, strengthening supply-chain security, reducing non-tariff barriers and expanding cooperation on digital trade, standards, and economic security, among others.

The EU and the US are currently in the process of **implementing the commitments** set out in the Joint Statement. In this respect, the US administration issued an executive order applying the 15% all-inclusive tariff rate on EU cars and car parts retroactively from 1 August 2025 and exempting some key EU products from the new US reciprocal tariffs, including aircraft and aircraft parts and generic pharmaceuticals. On the EU side, the work on legislative proposals to eliminate tariffs on US industrial goods and provide preferential market access for certain agrifood products, as well as to prolong tariff-free treatment of lobster, is well underway.

Over lunch, ministers will be joined by **US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick** and **US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer**, to discuss transatlantic trade cooperation.

EU-US trade: facts and figures (infographic)

Joint Statement on an EU-US framework on an agreement on reciprocal, fair and balanced trade

EU-China trade relations (in non-public, restricted session)

Ministers will also exchange views on the state of play of and future prospects for **EU-China trade relations** based on the most recent developments, including the announcement by Chinese authorities of new **export controls on rare earth elements** and their subsequent year-long suspension. The EU and China **together account for almost 30% of global trade** in goods and services, and for over a third of global GDP. However, in 2024 the **EU's trade deficit** with China reached €305 billion.

At the 25th EU-China summit in July 2025, the EU raised its concerns about **ongoing systemic distortions** and growing manufacturing overcapacity and reiterated its call for progress on longstanding **market access issues,** including in priority sectors such as meat, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Nonetheless, the EU confirmed its readiness to continue to engage in **constructive dialogue** to find negotiated solutions.

China remains a **partner, competitor, and systemic rival** for the EU, including in trade matters. The EU continues to work towards ensuring a level playing field so that the trade and economic relationship is balanced, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial. At the same time, the EU is reducing critical dependencies and vulnerabilities — including in its supply chains — and is actively pursuing diversification.

The absence of a level playing field has contributed to the widening of the EU's trade deficit with China, which has grown from €100 billion to over €300 billion in the past ten years. The economic relations are unbalanced due to a significant asymmetry in our respective market openings. In addition, China's economic model has brought about systemic distortions with negative spillovers to trading partners.

EU-China trade: facts and figures (infographic)

Ongoing trade negotiations (in non-public session)

Ministers are expected to take stock of the EU's **ongoing bilateral trade negotiations**.

The main focus of the discussion will be on the ongoing talks with **India**. In May 2021, the EU and Indian leaders agreed to resume negotiations for a balanced, comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement, formally relaunching talks in June 2022.

After three years of intense negotiations, ministers are expected to discuss what a balanced outcome with India should look like, in light of the political objective set by President von der Leyen and Prime Minister Modi to conclude negotiations by the end of 2025 or early 2026. The goal is to achieve a commercially meaningful package centred on core market access for industrial goods and the removal of non-tariff barriers. The discussion will also take place against preparations for the **16th EU-India Summit**, expected in January 2026, and the broader ambition of the **new Strategic EU-India Agenda** to deepen economic ties and deliver a modernised forward-looking partnership.

Ministers will also consider **other forms of cooperation** in parallel to "classical" trade negotiations, with different degrees of engagement and enforceability. These include sustainable investment facilitation agreements (SIFAs), memoranda of understanding on critical raw materials, digital trade agreements, clean trade and investment partnerships (CTIPs) and cooperation with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) countries.

EU-India trade relations (infographic)

EU trade by country/region (European Commssion)

EU trade negotiations (infographic)

EU trade agreements (background information)

EU trade policy (background information)

Other points (AOB)

- The European Commission will present the 2025 annual report on the implementation and enforcement of EU trade policy and the 2025 annual progress report on simplification, implementation and enforcement
- Sweden, along with other member states, will call for the Commission to put forward a proposal on additional import tariffs on products coming from Russia and Belarus
- Lithuania will inform ministers on the situation at the border with Belarus, including the closure of the border and the impact on freight traffic