



Press Release

Brussels, 7 June 2017

EU launches trade investigation against Turkey following complaint by the European paper industry

Today the EU has decided to launch investigations against Turkey for breach of EU-Turkey Customs Union and WTO rules confirming the validity of a complaint lodged by the European paper industry.

CEPI, the independent voice of the paper industry in Europe, presented a trade complaint (Trade Barrier Regulation (“TBR”)) to the European Commission on the [24 April 2017](#). The complaint concerned the unfair non-automatic import licensing system established by Turkey concerning, inter alia, EU exports of certain varieties of paper including office paper, books, envelopes and paper used for direct mail marketing (otherwise known as uncoated wood free (“UWF”) paper). This is both the first time a TBR complaint has been launched in almost ten years and the first time CEPI as an industry association has lodged a trade complaint.

“Today’s launch of this investigation is an indictment of the Turkish authorities’ reluctance to maintain a level-playing field when it comes to free trade. Turkey should withdraw, in the spirit of the EU-Turkey Customs Union and its WTO commitments, any unfair trade barriers” say Sylvain Lhôte, Director General at CEPI.

The unfair non-automatic import licensing system puts at risk over €150 million worth of EU exports of these varieties of paper. At a time when global free trade is under increasing pressure the European paper industry urges the Turkish authorities to stand on the side of free trade. The paper industry already exports 22% of its entire produce outside the EU and will continue to remain an advocate for free trade and take a firm stance where this is put at risk.

What can be expected next?

Within a five to seven month period the Commission will now engage in a detailed investigation of the concerns raised by CEPI resulting in a report which may warrant the launch of WTO proceedings.

Background to the trade complaint:

Following an inconclusive safeguard investigation on UWF imports in 2014-2015, Turkey extended in 2016 an existing import licensing system which targeted €150 million of EU exports of UWF paper products.

The Turkish non-automatic import licensing system with regard to UWF paper is based on an arbitrary price threshold and creates a significant and unfair obstacle to EU-Turkey trade. As such, the contested system poses a clear violation of WTO and EU-Turkey Customs Union Agreement.

Publication in the Official Journal of the European Union: the link to the publication can be consulted [here](#).

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About CEPI

Through its 18 national associations the Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) gathers 495 companies operating 750 paper mills across Europe producing paper, cardboard, pulp and other bio-based products. CEPI represents 22% of world production, more than €80 billion of annual turnover to the European economy and directly employs over 175,000 people.