



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Remarks by Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis at the press conference on the EU anti-coercion instrument

Brussels, 8 December 2021

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to announce the proposal for an EU anti-coercion instrument today.

This powerful new tool would represent an important step for our strong, ambitious EU trade agenda.

It sends a clear signal to our partners that:

The European Union will stand firm in defending itself;

The European Union will not hesitate to push back when we are under threat; and

The European Union will shape the tools we need to protect our values.

The new EU trade strategy, which we presented in February, sets out our ambition for the EU to act more assertively in the international trade arena.

This is necessary because, simply put, we are operating in a conflictual geopolitical environment.

The weaponisation of trade for other geopolitical purposes is a fact. Indeed, it has been the case for some time already.

It is also a fact that in recent years, the EU and its Member States have been targets of economic intimidation.

This is where one country pressures another country into changing their policies by restricting, or threatening to restrict, trade or investment.

Economic intimidation can take many forms.

It could be countries using explicit coercion against the EU.

It could be by twisting other rules, through, for example, selective border or food safety checks on goods from a given EU country.

Or it could mean state-sponsored boycotts of goods of certain origin.

The EU needs proper tools to tackle these types of threats head-on.

This is why we are now proposing the anti-coercion instrument to the European Parliament and Council. We have consulted widely with a broad range of stakeholders in the run-up to this proposal, we are aware of the sensitivities and we have calibrated our proposal carefully.

So, I want to emphasise that this tool is first and foremost a deterrent.

Let me outline how it will work in practice.

The Commission will become aware of a possible economic coercion, either through its own global monitoring, or in contact with Member State or a business or association.

Next, we will make an assessment, and carefully decide what level of interference we are dealing with.

Then, if the assessment points to coercion, we will engage with the country in question, making every effort to find a solution via negotiation, possibly also mediation and adjudication.

We will seek to cooperate with other international partners that share the same concerns.

When, and only when, dialogue and international cooperation do not result in removal of the coercion, will we apply countermeasures.

The selection and design of these countermeasures will be carefully calibrated and targeted, after

detailed consultation with relevant stakeholders and the green light of Member States.

They will be balanced, proportionate, and within the framework of international law.

And we can stop or amend our countermeasures at any time, if this is in the EU's interest.

Potential countermeasures include traditional trade instruments linked to tariff treatment and import duties for goods.

But we can also look at services or investment restrictions, exclusion from public procurement and access to Union-funded programmes.

We will also work with other countries to address global concerns about economic coercion, as we have done at the G7.

By adopting this tool, the EU would send a clear message that we will not accept intimidation tactics that could jeopardise our key policies.

There is a broad consensus among our stakeholders that this is the right thing to do. This is clear from the results of the public consultation.

The future anti-coercion instrument will help us to respond to the geopolitical challenges in the coming decades, keeping Europe strong and agile.

Thank you.

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