

Resolution on EU trade and investment negotiations with the United States of America

2013/2558(RSP) - 23/05/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on International Trade on EU trade and investment negotiations with the United States of America. It recalls that on 12 March 2013 the Commission proposed authorising the opening of negotiations and draft negotiating directives for the consideration of the Council.

The strategic, political and economic context: Parliament considers that it is crucial for the EU and the US to realise the untapped potential of a truly integrated transatlantic market, in order to maximise the creation of decent jobs and stimulate sustainable and balanced growth potential. It notes that according to the Impact Assessment Report prepared by the Commission, an ambitious and comprehensive transatlantic trade and investment partnership, once fully implemented, could bring significant economic gains as a whole for both the EU (EUR 119.2 billion a year) and the US (EUR 94.9 billion a year).

The EU-US High Level Working Group (HLWG) Final Report: Members fully endorse the recommendation in the HLWG Final Report to launch negotiations for a comprehensive trade and investment agreement. They support the view that, given already-existent low average tariffs, the key to unlocking the potential of the transatlantic relationship lies in the tackling of NTBs, which consist mainly of customs procedures, technical standards, and behind-the-border regulatory restrictions.

Negotiating mandate: Parliament supports an agreement with the US that would support the creation of high-quality jobs for European workers, and open up new opportunities for EU companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to sell goods and provide services in the US, and ensure full access to public procurement markets in the US. It calls on the Council to authorise the Commission to start negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement with the US. However, Members call for the exclusion of cultural and audiovisual services, including those provided online, to be clearly stated in the negotiating mandate.

Parliament wants the negotiations to:

- include strong protection of precisely and clearly defined areas of intellectual property rights, including geographical indications;
- take account of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) provisions on the protection of personal data;
- address the current restrictions on maritime and air transport services owned by European businesses, including in relation to foreign ownership of airlines and reciprocity on cabotage, as well as maritime cargo screening;
- address the environment and labour aspects of trade and sustainable development, whilst recognising that achieving common standards is likely to present both technical and political challenges, and emphasising that the common goal should be to ensure that there is no diminution of environmental ambitions;
- include financial services with particular attention to be paid to equivalence, mutual recognition, convergence and extraterritoriality.

Parliament emphasises the sensitivity of certain fields of negotiation, such as the agricultural sector, where perceptions of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), cloning and consumer health tend to diverge between the US and the EU. The agreement must not undermine the fundamental values of either side, for example the precautionary principle in the EU. Members call on the US to lift its import ban on EU beef products, as a trust-building measure.

The role of Parliament: Members remind the Commission of its obligation to keep Parliament immediately and fully informed at all stages of the negotiations. They recall that Parliament will be asked to give its consent to the future TTIP agreement, and that its positions should therefore be duly taken into account at all stages.