Exceptional trade measures for countries and territories participating in or linked to the Stabilisation and Association Process

2025/0108(COD) - 14/05/2025 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to ensure the sustainable economic development of Western Balkan partners.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the Western Balkans have benefited from autonomous trade measures since 2000, even before the Union concluded a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with its Western Balkan partners.

Council Regulation (EU) 2024/823 establishes a system of autonomous trade measures between the Union and the countries and territories of the Western Balkans by exempting certain agricultural products originating in the Western Balkans from customs duties and charges having equivalent effect and by granting certain wine products originating in the Western Balkans access to a global tariff quota.

The current autonomous trade measures for the Western Balkans provide two benefits: 1) the suspension of specific duties for all fruit and vegetables subject to the entry-price system and, 2) access to a global tariff quota for wine, which is available on a first-come, first-served basis once the countries concerned have exhausted the national quota provided for in their respective SAAs. However, Regulation (EU) 2024 /823 expires on 31 December 2025.

Despite their limited scope, the current autonomous trade measures remain important. The system of autonomous trade measures provides valuable support to the economies of Western Balkan partners and does not have negative effects for the EU. The EU should therefore continue to support vulnerable economies in the region.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes to continue **supporting vulnerable economies in the Western Balkans region** by extending the period of application of Regulation (EU) 2024/823 by a further five years, **until 31 December 2030**.

In addition to extending the period of application of the Regulation, amendments to Regulation (EU) 2024 /823 are proposed to clarify its **rules on the suspension and temporary suspension of benefits**.

The entitlement to preferential arrangements would be subject to:

- the involvement of beneficiary parties in effective administrative cooperation, including as required for the verification of evidence of origin, with the Union in order to prevent any risk of fraud;

- the readiness of the beneficiary parties to engage in effective economic reforms and in regional cooperation with other countries involved in the Stabilisation and Association process, in particular through the establishment of free trade areas in accordance with Article XXIV of the GATT 1994 and other relevant WTO provisions.

In the event of non-compliance, the Commission may **suspend**, in whole or in part, the right of the beneficiary concerned to benefit from the advantages granted under the Regulation.

The Commission may, taking into account the particular sensitivity of the **agricultural market**, adopt appropriate measures by means of implementing acts if imports of agricultural products cause serious disturbances in Union markets and their regulatory mechanisms.

Where the Commission considers there to be sufficient evidence of fraud or of a massive increase in imports into the Union above the usual level of production and export capacity, it may, under certain conditions, take measures to suspend, in whole or in part, the arrangements provided for in the Regulation for a period of three months.

Lastly, given that the unilateral preferences granted to Kosovo are included in the EU-Kosovo SAA, which is the last SAA to enter into force on 1 April 2016, the autonomous trade preferences no longer include any trade concessions in the fishery sector. For the sake of clarity, it is therefore proposed to delete the obsolete references to fishery markets and fishery products in Article 3(2).