

EN

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Answer given by Mr Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
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The Commission is committed to make full use of the trade defence instruments to help EU industry compete with imports on a fair basis and to reflect the EU's economic security in the conduct of relevant investigations and in the design of possible measures. Safeguards limit imports from all origins, regardless of whether they are dumped and/or subsidised. Possibilities for quicker and more systematic imposition need to be considered in light of legal conditions and procedural requirements set out in Regulation 2015/478¹.

Normally, safeguard investigations are initiated based on a request from Member States containing sufficient evidence that an increase in imports is causing serious injury or threat thereof to the EU industry. Even an investigation initiated by the Commission at its own initiative requires evidence and data from the EU industry, and therefore does not amount to a fast-track initiation procedure.

The normal duration of a safeguard investigation is nine months, but provisional measures may be imposed soon after initiation in critical circumstances where immediate action is necessary. Definitive measures must be supported by a qualified majority of Member States. This high threshold of required support needs to be considered at the outset of any potential safeguard investigation.

The Commission is aware that unfair competition can significantly impact small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To assist such companies, the Commission regularly reaches out through initiatives such as Market Access Days and Access 2 Markets² to inform and advise on the role of trade defence. This is complemented by the SME helpdesk and targeted information available on the Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security website³.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2015/478/oj/eng#:~:text=Regulation%20%28EU%29%202015%2F478%20of%20the%20European%20Parliament%20and,NL%2C%20PL%2C%20PT%2C%20RO%2C%20SK%2C%20SL%2C%20FI%2C%20SV%29.>

² <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/>.

³ https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/enforcement-and-protection/trade-defence/help-smes_en.