



To

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Mr Stéphane Séjourné

Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy

Mr Maroš Šefčovič

Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security; Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency

Brussels, 11 September 2025

Call for an effective trade instrument implementing the Steel and Metals Action Plan

Honourable President von der Leyen,

Honourable Executive Vice-President Séjourné,

Honourable Commissioner Šefčovič,

we are addressing you today in regard to the European Steel sector. A sector which provides more than 310,000 direct and 2,2 million indirect jobs in the European Union. Its output is essential for a variety of downstream sectors including defence, automotive, and construction. Steel production has shaped Europe for centuries and survived a multitude of crises - today yet again, the European steel sector stands at a crossroads.

In the March 2025 Steel and Metals Action Plan, the Commission announced a successor to the currently-in-place Steel Safeguard, which will expire on 30 June 2026. The Action Plan assures that the successor will “*provide a highly effective level of protection to the EU’s steel sector*”. This issue is of utmost importance - global overcapacities, which already hurt European industries today, are forecast to increase to more than 721 million tonnes by 2027 (OECD Data), which further exacerbates the urgency of this issue.

In this context, we would like to draw attention to the recently adopted “*Non-paper on the new trade protection framework for the European steel industry*”, endorsed by a group of eleven Member States, which sets out a comprehensive vision for the design of the new trade defence instrument.

The new trade protection framework must pave the way for European industry to get back to competitive utilization rates, in line with the 85% target set in the Action Plan. The framework must be operational as soon as feasible, ideally from January 2026. Import market shares

must be brought back to sustainable levels comparable to 2012-2013, which was a period preceding the global overcapacity crisis and can therefore best serve as the best available reference period for sustainable competitiveness of the European steel industry. The framework must also apply a meaningful tariff on imports out of quota, to effectively limit the imports to the targeted market shares. The new framework must provide for a comprehensive coverage of all relevant products and countries, including steel derivatives where appropriate. Lastly, the Commission should assess the effectiveness of a “melted and poured” rule of origin to address the issue of circumvention.

In addition to providing the highly effective protection to the European steel industry that is so urgently needed, the new framework must comply with the Union’s international obligations, notably by being WTO-compatible.

Lastly, we urge you to also consider the competitiveness of steel-using sectors. Next to a strong and highly effective trade safeguard for steel, measures to boost the competitiveness of steel-using sectors should also be adopted. The European Union cannot afford to lose competitiveness of one industry at the expense of another’s, but must act from a holistic approach.

We urge you to consider these recommendations in the upcoming legislative proposal, which we expect you to deliver with urgency and ambition, to secure the competitiveness of the European steel sector.

Sincerely,

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