

Vital Briefing—Tariff Insights

European majority feel humiliated by Trump tariffs according to survey

By Thomas Thompson

According to a [survey](#) of 5,302 people in the five most populous European Union countries, 52 percent said that they feel “humiliation” as a result of the trade and tariff agreement concluded by the E.U. and the U.S. in August. According to the report released on September 9, the French were the most humbled, with 65 percent of respondents saying they felt humiliation.

The trade agreement by the White House and the E.U. calls for Americans to pay a 15 percent tariff on most goods imported from E.U. states, for the E.U. to eliminate its tariffs on U.S. industrial imports and for the E.U. to invest \$600 billion across strategic sectors in the U.S.

Tariff deal. European trade negotiators had said they felt relieved at the end of trade negotiations that dragged on through the summer because the new agreement rolled back the tariff rate to 15 percent from the then current rate of 25 percent. Once the E.U. starts dismantling its tariffs on U.S. goods, the tariff on automobiles would also fall to 15 percent from 27.5 percent. Trump threatened 30 percent levies on E.U. imports in May although he lifted them in early June before they came into effect.

Only eight percent of respondents said their dominant emotion regarding the trade agreement was relief. 77 percent of the Europeans interviewed for the survey felt that the agreement would be favorable to the U.S. economy and only 13 percent perceived that the agreement will be good for Europe.

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The survey, reported in the pan-European political and cultural journal *Le Grand Continent*, was conducted from August 30 to September 4 by French opinion firm Cluster 17. The survey revealed a high level of familiarity of the trade deal among Europeans, 71 percent of whom had heard of it. *Le Grand Continent* said that such a high level of awareness of an essentially economic initiative indicates that tariff and trade policy had transcended the commercial realm to feature on the political plain.

Dismantling tariffs. As the legislative process set in motion, the E.U. [claimed](#) on its website, “Already today, the E.U. applies zero or very low tariffs on 67 percent of US industrial goods.” The E.U. moved quickly on its existing industrial tariffs to help their auto exporters.

The August 21 joint U.S.-E.U. tariff statement [stipulated](#), “These tariff reductions are expected to be effective from the first day of the same month in which the European Union’s legislative proposal is introduced.” The E.U. moved

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started its legislative process 6 days later on August 27. The formal Commission proposal did not include the usual detailed assessment of the legislation [saying](#) instead, “The Union’s swift implementation as part of the political agreement with the United States is imperative to stabilize the trade relationship and solidify the

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commitments made by both the Union and the United States, ensuring that the Union operators will retain a competitive position on the United States market.”

The E.U. expects the 15 percent tariffs on automobiles will be back dated to August 1. Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security; Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency, [posted](#) on the E.U. website, “I particularly welcome the reduction of tariffs on cars and car parts to 15 percent, effective August 1, which will help our automotive industry stay competitive on the global stage.”

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The first act, titled “Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the adjustment of customs duties on the import of certain goods originating in the United States of America and opening of tariff quotas for imports of certain goods originating in the United States of America”

was accepted by the E.U. Commission on August 28.

The second E.U. act, Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the non-application of customs duties on imports of certain goods, will simply extend a temporary suspension of E.U. tariffs on imports of fresh lobster from the United States.

As of September 10, the first proposal was listed as “in progress” on the EUR-Lex website. The European Parliament and the E.U. Council must approve it before it can be effective. Formal deliberations in the parliament and council had not commenced.

In the meantime, the U.S. is to give certain product categories zero or near to zero sector tariffs although typically low most-favored-nation tariffs still will apply to imports from the E.U. The product categories extend from unavailable natural resources like cork to all aircraft and aircraft parts as well as generic pharmaceuticals and the pharmaceuticals’ ingredients and chemical precursors. The U.S. agreed in the joint statement to work with the E.U. to expand this list further in the future.