



*EU complains over breaches of almost all its free trade deals*

The EU says almost all the countries it has trade deals with are breaking those agreements and it is stepping up pressure for them to comply as part of an open, sustainable and assertive trade strategy, which places increasing focus on full and effective implementation of its free trade agreements.

All but one of the 67 countries with enhanced trade arrangements with the EU have implemented measures that contravene them, according to the first consolidated report on implementation of EU Trade Agreements recently prepared by the European Commission.

It follows the appointment on 24 July 2020 of the first Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (CTEO) in the Commission, to oversee and steer implementation and enforcement of EU trade agreements and arrangements, with a mandate to report to the European Parliament as well as to the Council and the public.

The Consolidated Report on Implementation of EU Free Trade Agreements, will be published annually and will cover countries with preferential trading arrangements which are limited in scope as well as comprehensive free trade agreements.

The Report covers four priority areas in implementation and enforcement:

1. Making full use of the opportunities provided by EU trade agreements;
2. Supporting the take-up of trade agreements by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises;
3. Addressing barriers and finding solutions; and
4. Bilateral and multilateral enforcement of trade commitments.

#### Resolving Disputes

The Commission stated that trading partners have progressively reduced import tariffs but often replaced them with non-tariff measures that restrict the entry of imported goods and services. The EU is therefore focusing its efforts on removing the trade restrictive measures of trading partners.

The EU reported a grand total of 462 trade and investment restrictive measures in 66 countries at the end of 2020. China had the largest number with 40, followed by Russia, Indonesia and the United States. Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) measures (109) was the largest category, accounting for a quarter of all measures recorded, followed by technical barriers to trade (TBT) (79) and tariff measures and quantitative restrictions (78).

The report indicates that “with respect to the **CARIFORUM-EU EPA**, lack of administrative capacity of the authorities/agencies remains an issue of concern as well as a lack of awareness of the agreement on the side of business and insufficient respect of transparency obligations”. It points to the development dimension of the EPA and notes that successful implementation of the EPA by CARIFORUM States depends significantly on the relevant development cooperation funding. It also asserts that “the new partnership programme under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe) of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, creates opportunities for such tailored support on the identified trade related challenges.” The report also identifies areas where the EU needs to do more, in particular as concerns greater Member States’ engagement, improved communication and support for business-to-business links and platforms.

*EPA IMPLEMENTATION UNIT, CARIFORUM DIRECTORATE*