

27/05/2020

Mrs Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Subject: Urgent action to defend the European steel sector

Dear President of the European Commission,

The European steel industry and its value chain have been under extreme difficulties for a long time. This is the reason why the European Commission started the Second Review of the EU Steel Safeguard on March 2020. With the outbreak of COVID-19, the situation has precipitated tremendously, with the steel demand falling by more than 50% and many steel companies deciding to significantly cut their production. This has resulted in over 40% of the EU steel labour force being affected by short-time working hours and temporary lay-offs.

On 8 April 2020, we sent a letter addressed to Commissioner Hogan, asking to urgently amend the EU Steel Safeguard, taking into account the current COVID-19 context. We were convinced that a Second Review of the Safeguard would be the most effective and fastest reaction to defend this crucial sector of our economy. We, indeed, believed that allowing imports in large volumes while recovering from the current crisis, could cause additional devastating damage to the steel industry, especially considering its original fragile situation.

Unfortunately, up until today, the European Commission has not yet acted in support of the EU Steel industry. In recent months, the steel sector has not only been in increasing difficulty, but the Commission has also been failing to provide an effective response at a time when rapid and extraordinary measures are desperately needed.

Currently, our biggest concern entails the fact that in the absence of action at European level, Member States will be able to legitimately resort to the adoption of safeguard measures at their borders. Indeed, the possible restoration of national measures will undermine what the European Union has achieved until now, while the inertia of the European Commission today may condemn not only a crucial sector of our industry, but the whole European single market.

Furthermore, we would like to underline how the loss of a key sector such as steel and the entire supply chain linked to it, could severely undermine the effectiveness and utility of the EU industrial strategy and of the Recovery Package.

Drawing on the experience of the last month in how a strong political willingness can lead to extraordinary measures, we hereby request an action in defence of our industry.

Europe and its steel companies desperately require urgent action; The European Institutions must act rapidly and beyond extreme technicality in order to defend our economy and our companies.

Thanking you for your many efforts to help Europe to cope with this unprecedented crisis, we appreciate your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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