

## Hearing of Commissioner-designate Maroš Šefčovič



Maroš Šefčovič during the confirmation hearing 2024 © European Union, 2024 - Source: EP

**On Monday, the International Trade and Constitutional Affairs committees questioned Šefčovič, Slovak candidate for Trade and Economic Security/ Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency.**

The committee chairs and political group coordinators will meet without delay to assess the performance and qualification of the Commissioner-designate.

In his [introductory statement](#), Mr Šefčovič reminded MEPs that trade is "marked by stark competition over disruptive new technologies, and the weaponisation of economic dependencies", making trade a "geostrategic tool". With the US election imminent, the Commissioner-designate said: "Regardless of the outcome of the US elections, I will put forward an offer of cooperation". He added that the EU will have to solve its disputes with the US, citing steel and aluminium, and protectionist elements in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

On inter-institutional relations, he committed to enhancing the Commission's cooperation with Parliament, not least through the [soon to be revamped Framework Agreement](#). Mr Šefčovič also referred to a Commission's commitment to follow-up on Parliament's [indirect legislative initiatives](#), ensure that comprehensive justification would be provided for the use of the extraordinary procedure of [Article 122](#), and facilitate progress on Parliament's call for a full [right of inquiry](#). Further, he announced an expansion of the EU's Transparency Register's scope "to all managers".

### China

Mr Šefčovič described China as the most challenging trading partner, one with which the EU needs to rebalance its relationship. He told MEPs that, after EU's duties on electric vehicles made in China, [in place since last week](#), Commission negotiators are now in talks with Chinese counterparts on price undertakings. "EU is not interested in trade wars, we are looking for rebalancing our relationship with China in areas where we feel our relationship is not fair," Mr Šefčovič said, citing overcapacity, subsidies, and the lack of level playing field.

### Mercosur, Israel and FTAs

MEPs grilled the Commissioner-designate over the ongoing negotiations with [Mercosur](#) countries, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Mr Šefčovič pledged to continue work on free trade agreements (FTA) with Mexico and Australia, and said he wants the EU to be more present in Thailand, the Philippines and India. Responding to MEPs, he pointed to the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) with Angola and the Economic Partnership Agreement with Kenya as new types of agreements that could help the EU.

Asked by MEPs if the EU was breaching international law as it keeps its trade ties with Israel under the EU-Israel association agreement, Mr Šefčovič said that the agreement "can be changed only by unanimity" among member states.

### Priorities for interinstitutional relations

Many MEPs highlighted the importance of treaty change based on [Parliament's proposals](#) which were inspired by the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#). The Commissioner-designate said that the key to moving forward on this is getting a clear position by the European Council: they will work with the new presidency of Antonio Costa to this aim.

The debate revolved around the need for reforms to prepare for enlargement and to activate the ["passerelle" clause](#) in key policy areas, as well as transparency, with some MEPs bringing up worrying reports about Commission practices. Other topics included better cooperation with national parliaments and applying the findings of the Draghi report in the EU's institutional architecture.

### Press point

At the end of the hearing, the Chair of the Committees of International Trade, Bernd Lange, and Constitutional Affairs, Sven Simon, held a press point outside the meeting room: watch it [here](#).

## Next steps

Based on the committee recommendations, the Conference of Presidents (EP President Metsola and political group chairs) is set to conduct the final evaluation and declare the hearings closed on 21 November. Once the Conference of Presidents declares all hearings closed, the evaluation letters will be published.

The election by MEPs of the full college of Commissioners (by a majority of the votes cast, by roll-call) is currently scheduled to take place during the 25-28 November plenary session in Strasbourg.

## Further information

[Dedicated hearings' page](#)

[Introductory statement of of Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner-designate for Trade and Economic Security, and Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency](#)

[EP Think Tank on the confirmation hearings of the Commissioners-designate: Maroš Šefčovič](#)

[Recording of the hearing](#)

[Committee on International Trade](#)

[Committee on Constitutional Affairs](#)

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