

External Trade

What do I need to know before I start?

The Treaty of Rome provided full authority to the European Commission in negotiating trade agreements on behalf of member states and some of the first free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU, dating back to the 1970s, are still in force today, including those signed with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. The European Economic Community set a Common External Tariff in 1968 which defined among member states common tariff rates on the Community's imports from other parts of the world. A series of WTO negotiations including the Kennedy, Tokyo and Uruguay rounds then led to substantial tariff reduction for trade in manufactured goods. Multilateral trade negotiations take place according to the WTO procedures and since it often implies a long and difficult process, the Community made various bilateral free trade agreements with countries in the world, including with twelve Mediterranean countries, Mexico, Chile, and South Africa. The EU's Trade Policy, or Common Commercial Policy, aims at promoting trade among member states and at levelling their bargaining power on the global economic stage and it is the Commission's DG TRADE which is today responsible for implementing the Community's common trade policy.

Languages: Please be aware that although most documents available in our Archives are in French, English or German, some may be in other EU languages. In order to check the languages used in a fonds, please refer to our holdings page. Additionally, some fonds may contain a few files in a language other than those listed in the description.

What can I find at the HAEU?

Relating specifically to external trade policy, the fonds available at the HAEU are:

1) *EU institutions*

[ECSC High Authority](#) and the [Special Council of Ministers of the ECSC](#)

For early external trade matters, you may look into the inventory of the ECSC High Authority, particularly in the section '[Relations Extérieures](#)' which includes files dealing with the Community's competences and actions in developing trade relations with the rest of the world ([example](#)). You may also look into the inventory of the ECSC Special Council of Ministers.

[Council of Ministers](#)

In the HAEU inventory, external trade matters discussed in the Council of Ministers are discussed in the section 'Relations Extérieures' (example for the year [1973](#)) and in the section 'Union douanière' (example for the year [1960](#)). Since the Council of Ministers' fonds are

organized by year, you need to browse the fonds of each separate year to access the specific sections pertaining to external trade.

[Commission](#)

In the Commission's fonds, external trade matters are discussed both in the section for the [DG External Relations](#) and for the [DG Internal Market](#). In addition, you might want to look into the sections related to the [Secretariat-General](#) and the [Cabinets](#).

[European Parliament](#)

Concerning the Parliament's predecessor the Common Assembly, you might find it useful to consult the proceedings and reports of the parliamentary commissions concerned with the Community's external trade, including the parliamentary commission for the [internal market](#) and for the Community's [external relations](#). Concerning the early years of the Parliament, you may look into the proceedings and reports of the parliamentary commissions for the internal market ([1](#), [2](#)), of the parliamentary commissions concerned with the Community's external trade policy and its economic external relations ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)), as well as the reports of the [parliamentary delegations to third countries](#) and of the several parliamentary economic commissions ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). You may consult the proceedings and reports of the parliamentary commission for economic external relations (for the [1st](#), [2nd](#), and [3rd](#) legislature) as well as of the parliamentary delegations to third countries (for the [1st](#), [2nd](#), and [3rd](#) legislature).

[European Court of Auditors](#)

You might find it interesting to consult the ECA's [annual reports](#) (1977-1997), [special reports](#) (1978-1991) and [opinions](#) (1977-1997) as well as [internal documents](#), including [information documents](#) (1977-1994) and [working documents](#) (1977-1994).

[European Court of Justice](#)

According to the nature of the ECJ, these fonds include documents dealing with judicial affairs, namely procedure dossiers and sentences. You might find it interesting to consult some of its dossiers dealing with trade disputes, such as the [joint affairs 51/75-86/75-96/75](#), concerning notable industrial propriety and trademark.

[European Investment Bank](#)

The fonds of the European Investment Bank (EIB) include various files related to the Community's economic external relations and to the development of a common external trade policy. The fonds includes among others publications pertaining to financial operations in and outside of the Community, as well as documents related to trade agreements made between the Community and the rest of the world ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). In addition, the fonds comprises numerous

[economic studies](#) pertaining to the world economies and the Community's relations with other economic actors.

[Economic and Social Committee](#)

As with the fonds of the Council of Ministers, the inventory is organized by year, each includes a special section for economic affairs (example for [1975](#)) and for external relations (example for [1975](#)), both dealing amongst other matters with external trade policy at the European level.

2) *Corporate Bodies*

[European Free Trade Association](#)

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was established in 1960 as an economic union between non-EU countries, including initially Denmark, Norway, Austria and the UK, which later left the EFTA to join the EU. The history of EFTA is therefore closely related to the development of a common external trade policy in the Community and it could be worthwhile to consult the fonds of EFTA to understand the Community's economic relations with the Nordic countries, including the section on the [EFTA-EEC Joint Committee](#).

[Organization for European Economic Cooperation \(OEEC\)](#)

The OEEC saw the need to take action on the common external tariffs imposed on products coming from non-Common Market but OEEC countries and it might therefore be useful consult the OEEC's fonds to understand the different issues pertaining to the harmonization of external trade policies in the Community and vis-à-vis non-member states. In particular, you may look into the work of the OEEC's [Inter-governmental Committee on the Establishment of a European Free Trade Area](#), which had the responsibility for the [OEEC's Working Party No. 21](#) concerned with general economic matters of the FTA, and for the [OEEC's Working Party No. 22](#) concerned with FTA and agriculture.

3) *Individuals*

[Emile Noël](#)

Noël's private fonds includes numerous files on external trade policy, the work of the [DGXI for External Trade \(1969-1972\)](#), the [Community's external economic relations \(1960-1986\)](#), and the various [Economic Summits](#) attended by Noël. In addition, you may look into his notes on the European Council and Commission's meetings (1978-1987), as well as into documents related to the [work of the different DGs](#) of the Commission, during his time as Secretary-General.

[Jacques Delors](#)

Delors' private fonds includes numerous files concerned with the Community's external economic relations, the development of a common external trade policy and the different WTO trade agreements known as "rounds" (example [1](#), [2](#)). Since the fonds is organized chronologically rather than thematically it is advisable to search the database using words such as "commerce extérieur" or "external trade" and filter the results to limit the search to Delors' fonds.

[Klaus Meyer](#)

It could be helpful to look at Meyer's fonds, which includes various [files](#) relating to the Community's external economic relations and to the development of an external trade policy vis-à-vis non-member states and OEEC countries.

[Noël Salter](#)

You may look at Salter's private fonds, which includes files pertaining to the establishment of the [EEC association agreements](#) with other countries in the world, including Jamaica and India.

[Helmut von Verschuer](#)

Verschuer's fonds includes files on the Community's external trade policy (particularly for agricultural products) and to the negotiations of international free trade agreements, including the [GATT](#).

[Emanuele Gazzo](#)

Gazzo's fonds includes various files concerning the Community's position in the [international economic and political environment](#) and to the Community's [external economic relations](#) (particularly with the [US](#)).

[Edoardo Martino](#)

It can be useful to look at Martino's private fonds, which includes various files related to his work when he was in charge of [external relations](#), as well as documents pertaining to [international trade](#) and [issues](#) encountered by the Community in external trade.

[Angel Viñas](#)

It could be worthwhile to take a look at the Angel Viñas's fonds so as to examine the Community's external trade policy, as it comprises files concerning his career within the European Commission, as Director for Asia and Latin America Affairs, as Head of the EC Delegation to the UN, and as Director for Multilateral Relations in the Commission.

4) Oral History

In addition, take a look at the [oral history holdings](#), which comprise numerous interviews of European politicians and officials, including important figures and officials active in the development of a common external trade policy at the European level. Below, you can find a (non-exhaustive) list of persons interviewed who addressed the topic of EU external trade.

[Rolf Moelher](#)

[Laureano López Rodó](#)

[Paolo Clarotti](#)

[Jacob Myerson](#)

[John M. Leddy](#)

[Paul Luyten](#)

[Helmut Sigrist](#)

[Pierre Duchâteau](#)

[Alan Dukes](#)

[Axel Herbst](#)

[Raimundo Bassols Jacas](#)

[George Ball](#)

[Fernando Olivié González](#)

[Daniel Cardon De Lichtbuer](#)

[Berndt Von Staden](#)

[Roy Denman](#)

[Peter Denis Sutherland](#)

[Robert Toulemon](#)

[Ralf Dahrendorf](#)

[Michael O'Kennedy](#)

[Jean-François Deniau](#)

[Claude Cheysson](#)

[Edmund Wellenstein](#)

[Jean Flory](#)

[Michael Hardy](#)

[Robert Rotschild](#)

[Claude Desama](#)

[Malcolm Harbour](#)

[Nuala Ahern](#)

[Giles Chichester](#)

[Gary Titley](#)