

European Commission

EC-TBT Enquiry Point

DG Enterprise/F.1


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Website:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/tbt>

The list of national notification units and enquiry points of Member States appears on the Internet site of the EC-TBT Enquiry Point.

NB-57-03-289-EN-D

 The brochure entitled "The notification procedure created by the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade" (ISBN 92-894-6936-6) contains a more detailed description of the notification procedure.

In addition, the website at the following address:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/tbt/> gives access to general information on the Agreement and to a database containing the notifications made by Members of the World Trade Organization.

In this way, the Commission hopes to increase the participation of all those affected in this instrument of transparency, dialogue and cooperation at international level.

This publication is a document of the Commission departments and is not binding on the Commission.



European Commission

An instrument of market openness and good regulatory practice

The notification procedure created by the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade



Publications Office

Publications.eu.int

Enterprise Directorate-General

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/tbt/>

An instrument of market openness

Enterprises are the driving force in international trade. So that they can fully benefit from the growth in international trade, the tariff liberalisation undertaken must be accompanied by the removal of unjustified technical barriers.

Differences between the technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures adopted by various countries can result in the creation of obstacles to international trade.

The Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (**TBT Agreement**) is the main international instrument adopted to date in the field of technical regulations. The Agreement aims to ensure that regulations, standards and testing and certification procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles to international trade.

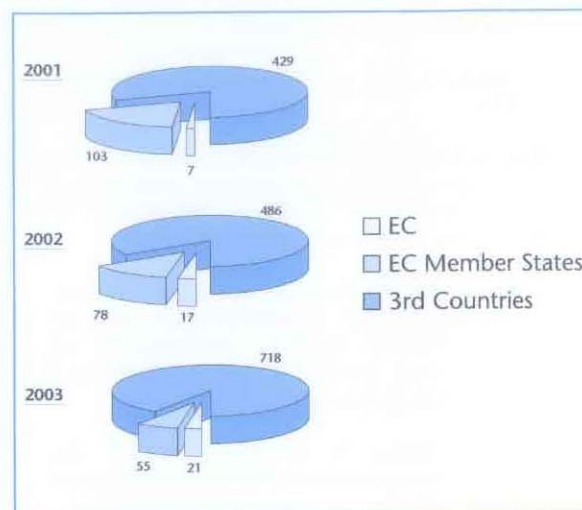
Transparency

The Agreement provides for a notification procedure which requires all Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to inform other Members, through the WTO Secretariat, of their proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures.

This procedure is a formidable instrument of transparency allowing all parties to the Agreement and economic operators to become acquainted with the technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures envisaged by other parties before these are adopted.

The notification forms and most of the notified texts are available to the public on the website of the European Union's notification and enquiry point (EC-TBT Enquiry Point) at the following address: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/tbt/>

Volume of notifications



Dialogue

The notification procedure is an instrument of reaction and discussion. It gives all WTO Members the opportunity to comment on the various laws of other Members containing technical regulations or conformity assessment procedures before these are adopted and to engage in a discussion so that, if necessary, their content can be amended.

The European Community's participation in the system, through notification and enquiry points, is extremely useful as it specifically allows the EC to be informed about proposals of third countries which may have an impact on exports of Community enterprises. It also allows a dialogue to be initiated with the authorities in these countries before the adoption of such measures.

The European Community must also fulfil its obligations under the Agreement by notifying proposals for which it is responsible.

Notification and enquiry points

Each WTO Member designates an authority responsible for the notification procedure and an enquiry point which can respond to requests for information made by other Members and supply the documents which they need.

The **EC-TBT Enquiry Point** ensures the European Communities' participation in the information and notification system for technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures established by the Agreement. The activities of the Community enquiry point are mainly aimed at increasing the participation of Member States and European enterprises in the notification procedure and at encouraging, by monitoring the measures notified by third countries, the integration of European enterprises within the world economy.

Participants in the TBT notification procedure

The authorities of the WTO Members which have the power to adopt technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures are clearly those most directly affected by the notification procedure. This procedure allows them to keep each other informed and to cooperate in order to prevent the creation of unnecessary technical obstacles to international trade.

However, it is enterprises which ultimately benefit from the growth in international trade. They therefore have an interest in making themselves heard and in using the system established by the TBT Agreement to reinforce their competitiveness.

Their participation in the system must therefore be encouraged in order that their points of view may be taken into account on the international scene.