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US-EU Trade Talks Focus on 15% Tariff as Wine and Spirits Face Ongoing Uncertainty

Brussels meetings aim to resolve disputes over tariffs and non-tariff barriers, with steel and tech regulation also on the agenda

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American trade officials are scheduled to visit Brussels on Monday for meetings with European Union leaders, as both sides continue to negotiate over tariffs on wine and spirits. The U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick, and the U.S. Trade

Representative, Jamieson Greer, have been invited to attend the EU Council of Trade Ministers. They are also expected to meet with several senior officials from the European Commission, including Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic and Vice President for Technological Sovereignty Henna Virkkunen.

The meetings come after months of difficult negotiations between Washington and Brussels. In late July, both parties reached a commercial agreement that set a 15% surcharge on European products entering the United States. This rate is higher than before Donald Trump returned to office but lower than what the current administration had previously threatened. Despite this agreement, several issues remain unresolved and are still under discussion.

European officials are expected to use these meetings to push again for exemptions from U.S. tariffs on key sectors of their economy, particularly wine and spirits. These products are significant exports for several EU countries, and industry groups have warned that continued tariffs could harm producers and disrupt trade flows.

A spokesperson for the European Commission said Friday that talks with the United States are ongoing at both political and technical levels. The U.S. government has repeatedly called for the removal of what it describes as "non-tariff barriers" imposed by Europe to protect its own producers. These barriers include sanitary or safety restrictions and regulatory obstacles that can make it harder for foreign goods to enter the European market. The EU committed in this summer’s agreement to address some of these concerns.

Another topic on the agenda is steel. The EU announced unprecedented measures in October to protect its steel industry from massive overcapacity in China, including doubling tariffs on Chinese imports. However, EU officials have confirmed several times that they are willing to exempt the United States from these new measures and seek an alliance with Washington to better withstand competition from China.

The ongoing discussions reflect broader tensions between the U.S. and Europe over trade policy, regulation of major American technology companies, and strategies for dealing with global economic challenges. Both sides have signaled a willingness to find common ground but acknowledge that significant differences remain, especially

regarding tariffs on wine, spirits, and other sensitive products.

The outcome of Monday’s meetings could have important implications for transatlantic trade relations and for industries on both sides of the Atlantic that depend on open markets and stable rules. As negotiations continue, businesses in Europe and the United States are watching closely for signs of progress or further conflict in one of the world’s most important economic partnerships.