

However, longer term prices are set by the supply and demand balance controlled by OPEC: too much supply on the market means prices will drop slowly but steadily, and too little supply means prices will rise. In either case there can be significant fluctuations within or outside the price band since there is no official cooperation between consumers (oil importers) and producers to balance the market. Indeed, price fluctuations can be viewed as an integral part of the price setting mechanism in that they help to mask the real reason for price increases.

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TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE: PROTECTION OR CONSTRAINT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE?

Methods of non-tariff regulation are the main obstacles to the free movement of goods across the border at the present stage of international trade development, because methods of tariff regulation of trade are much easier to eliminate. The most interesting category of non-tariff barriers for economists all over the world is technical barriers to trade. These are the widely divergent measures that countries use to regulate markets, protect their consumers, or preserve their natural resources, but they also can be used to discriminate against imports in order to protect domestic industries.

The legal basis of technical barriers is a technical regulation. It is a document which lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods, including the applicable administrative provisions, with which compliance is mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labeling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method.

Legitimate purposes of establishing technical barriers are to provide high-quality export products, production requirements, to protect the lives and safety of people, animals and plants, as well as protection of the environment and national security requirements. However, there are many cases when technical restrictions are used for protectionist purposes. Governments of many countries use technical regulations in order to prevent the penetration of highly competitive imported products in the domestic market.

In this regard, over the past twenty years a lot of work to create a variety of international legal acts in the field of technical regulation has been done. The most important treaty in this sphere is the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade administered by the World Trade Organization. It encourages countries to use

international standards where these are appropriate, but it does not require them to change their levels of protection as a result of standardization. The TBT Agreement requires each WTO Member to provide other Members the opportunity to participate in the development of mandatory standards-related measures, which helps to ensure that standards-related measures do not become unnecessary obstacles to trade. In particular, the TBT Agreement requires each Member to publish a notice in advance that it proposes to adopt a technical regulation or conformity assessment procedure.

In 2013 alone, WTO Members notified 1,626 new or revised technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures. For comparison, in 2000 there were 608 notifications, in 2004 – 640, in 2008 their number reached 1,263. Thus, we can ascertain the general growth of concern. In our opinion it can be attributed to several factors. Among them is increased attention to the rulemaking; increased fears that the proposed measures can be used as a form of hidden protectionism. Also the general growth of concern can be attributed to a growing understanding that the discussion in the TBT Agreement, as well as bilateral discussions on the margins of the meeting of the Committee, may yield results in solving trade problems.

In this way we can make a conclusion that technical barriers provide complex protection for international trade participants and ensure a high quality of tradable goods. However, such problems as the lack of harmonization of international standards and differences in the legal bases of various countries remain unresolved. And in this connection they act as constraint of international trade. To overcome this constraint governments and international organizations should work together in the following fields: international unification, harmonization of norms and standards; mutual recognition of national norms and standards; establishing common international legal rules of technical norms.

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WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT SHADOW ECONOMY?

Many scientists believe that the most unexplored phenomenon in the world economy is shadow, or illegal activity. There is hardly any sphere of life as little investigated as this. Shadow economy is hard to reveal, but it is even more difficult to estimate its scope as all information, which may be collected, is either inaccurate or confidential.