CLOSING THE CUSTOMS LOOPHOLE FOR LOW-VALUE E-COMMERCE IMPORTS

European Economic and Social Committee

Recent EESC achievements



The rapid growth of platforms such as Temu and Shein has brought billions of low-value parcels into the EU, many containing products that do not comply with European safety and consumer-protection rules. In 2024 alone, 4.6 billion consignments worth no more than EUR 150 entered the EU – around 12 million every day. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) called for urgent action to prevent these imports from putting consumers at risk and placing European businesses at an unfair disadvantage.

In the opinion 'Call for fair competition with regard to third country platforms, adopted in September 2025, the EESC called for the EUR 150 customs duty exemption to be abolished and for the EU customs reform to be implemented without delay. It also insisted that third-country platforms appoint an EU-based economic operator with full legal liability for the products they sell.

The Committee then made third-country e-commerce the focus of its European Consumer Day in December 2025. Held under the title 'Europe for sale? How global marketplaces are changing our society – and what must be done right now', the event brought together representatives of EU institutions, national governments, consumer organisations and civil society. It helped build support for a coordinated European response by confronting policymakers with evidence of the scale of unsafe and non-compliant imports and their impact on consumers and European businesses.

The EESC's call for swift customs action was subsequently reflected in concrete EU measures. In November 2025, the Council agreed to eliminate the EUR 150 customs duty threshold. It then formally approved an interim customs duty of EUR 3 on items in low-value parcels, which has applied since 1 July 2026. Once the EU Customs Data Hub becomes operational, currently expected in 2028, these goods will be subject to the normal EU customs tariffs.

This decision represents the clearest progress on one of the EESC's central demands. The Committee reinforced the case for faster customs reform at a decisive moment, highlighting how the exemption encouraged unfair competition and made it harder for authorities to control the enormous volume of goods entering the Single Market.

Closing the customs loophole is an important step, but it will not by itself stop unsafe products from reaching consumers. The EESC will therefore continue to press for stronger market surveillance and coordinated enforcement, as well as clear legal responsibility for platforms and an EU-based operator who can be held accountable when products fail to comply with European rules.

"Europe is not for sale. We have the facts. We have the toolbox. We have the mobilisation. Now we need resolve. Because what is at stake is the integrity of our market, the safety of our citizens, and the fairness of our economy."

Emilie Prouzet, EESC member

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