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European textile sector calls for a stronger EU response to ultra-fast-fashion imports

A €3 customs duty is a first step – the EU now needs a meaningful handling fee reflecting the real cost of enforcement

JOINT STATEMENT

One year after the adoption of the Villepinte Declaration against Ultra-Fast Fashion, the European textile and apparel industry welcomes the abolition of the customs duty exemption for low-value consignments and the introduction of the temporary €3 customs duty.

These measures acknowledge that billions of direct-to-consumer parcels generate significant costs for customs and market surveillance authorities. However, the current mechanism alone is not sufficient to address the enforcement challenges created by these imports or to stop non-compliant products from entering the EU market.

"One year ago, right here, we were being told that nothing could be done. Since then, the €150 exemption has been abolished and a €3 customs duty has entered into force: proof that Europe can act when it decides to. But a €3 duty that is paid only once for ten identical garments is not a response commensurate with the scale of the problem. Our companies, our factories and our city-centre retailers are not asking for special treatment: they are asking for the same rules to apply to everyone."

Pierre-François Le Louët, Co-President of UFIMH — French Union of Fashion and Apparel Industries

The European Commission must now build on this first step and act decisively.

We therefore call on the European Commission and the Member States to:

- **Introduce a meaningful EU-wide handling fee.** The currently suggested level of around **€2–4 per parcel is too low** to make a meaningful contribution to the actual costs generated by these imports. The fee should be set at a level that more realistically reflects the costs of customs processing, risk analysis, logistics, market surveillance and product-safety enforcement. **A level in the**

region of €10 per parcel provides a more realistic indication of the scale required to make a meaningful contribution to these costs, while the final amount should remain proportionate and be based on a robust assessment of actual enforcement needs.

- **Make those generating the costs contribute to them.** Revenues from the handling fee should strengthen customs controls, market surveillance, product-safety enforcement and risk analysis. The fee must remain clearly linked to these enforcement costs and should not become a general tax or sustainability charge.

"Every parcel entering the Union generates a cost: customs controls, product safety, market surveillance and waste management. Today, that cost is borne by European taxpayers and by the companies that comply with the rules. A €10 handling fee is not a tax: it reflects the real cost of a business model that has so far passed its external costs on to others."

Lionel Guérin, Co-President of UFIMH

- **Make online platforms accountable.** The Commission should accelerate the application of the **Deemed Importer** approach and ensure that platforms facilitating imports into the EU take clear responsibility for customs compliance. Responsibilities should also be made more coherent across customs, product-safety, market-surveillance and digital legislation.
- **Close the B2C–B2B loophole.** Stronger rules for small parcels must not simply encourage platforms to switch to bulk imports, EU warehouses or fulfilment centres. Goods sold to European consumers must face effective controls regardless of the logistics model used.
- **Require equivalent core customs data for B2C and B2B imports.** Customs authorities need sufficiently detailed information to identify products, assess risks and enforce EU rules effectively.
- **Take account of Europe's integrated value chains.** The Commission should provide appropriate treatment, where legally possible, for countries closely integrated into the European economy through the **EU Customs Union, the EEA or similar partnerships**, where equivalent controls are in place and circumvention can be prevented.
- **Do not introduce further economic measures before assessing the combined impact of the €3 duty and the handling fee.** The immediate priority should be stronger enforcement, clear accountability and better customs data.
- **Reduce the burden on compliant European companies.** Stronger controls at the EU border must go hand in hand with a stronger competitiveness agenda. European manufacturers and retailers cannot continue facing increasing regulatory, administrative and cost burdens while non-compliant products enter the Single Market without equivalent scrutiny.

“The European textile industry represents 1.3 million jobs and 200,000 companies, the vast majority of them SMEs, applying some of the most demanding social and environmental standards in the world. They cannot compete with flows of goods that partly escape our rules and our statistics. We are asking for two simple things: that these parcels are declared to customs as precisely as any other goods, and that the costs of controls are financed by those who make them necessary.”

Mario Jorge Machado, President of EURATEX — European Apparel and Textile Confederation

The objective is to protect the integrity of the Single Market by ensuring that third-country operators compete under the same rules and compliance requirements as European companies.

The EU must ensure that every company selling products on the European market is identifiable, accountable and subject to effective controls, regardless of whether goods enter through individual parcels, bulk shipments or European warehouses.

A stronger handling fee is an important part of this response. To be effective, however, it must be set at a level capable of making a genuine contribution to the market-surveillance, customs and logistics costs generated by these flows. In this context, €10 per parcel is a more realistic benchmark than the currently discussed €2–4 range, while the precise level should ultimately reflect the actual costs incurred by public authorities and enforcement systems.

"One year after the Villepinte Declaration, the first concrete steps are in place. This is a good start, and France has clearly been a driving force. But there is no reason to ease the pressure: ultra-fast-fashion platforms are more agile, faster and often more inventive than our procedures. To restore fair competition, we must keep acting together — as French and European federations, alongside our international partners. Alone, we raise the alarm; together, we carry weight."

Olivier Ducatillion, President of UIT — Union des Industries Textiles

The long-term solution must combine effective enforcement, clear responsibility for third-country platforms and a genuine level playing field for European industry.

List of Signatories:

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UNION FRANÇAISE DES INDUSTRIES MODE & HABILLEMENT

UIT
Union des Industries Textiles

EURATEX
THE EUROPEAN APPAREL AND TEXTILE CONFEDERATION