Product safety and regulatory compliance in e-commerce and non-EU imports

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The European Parliament adopted by 619 votes to 26, with 46 abstentions, a resolution on product safety and regulatory compliance in e-commerce and imports from third countries.

Increase in the number of non-compliant e-commerce goods

In 2024, 4.6 billion e-commerce items under the EUR 150 exemption threshold were imported into the EU in 2024, 91 % of which originated from China, amounting to up to 12 million small e-commerce items per day and amounting to almost twice the number recorded in 2023 and more than triple the number in 2022. This increase has exacerbated **compliance challenges**, particularly regarding product safety.

Members drew attention to the fact that most unsafe and illegal products are shipped to the EU in large quantities of individual, often small, packages, sold to EU consumers via **online platforms from non-EU countries, particularly China**. These products are difficult to control, and market surveillance authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to detect and withdraw them from the internal market.

Parliament is concerned that the dominant business model of some large non-EU online platforms is based on the rapid and large-scale production and distribution of fast and ultra-fast fashion products, prioritising speed and low costs over sustainability, safety and quality. Many of these products do not comply with EU legislation, and sellers who do not comply often evade proper enforcement or sanctions.

Addressing the challenges of compliance

The EU has put in place a robust regulatory framework, which also applies to products sold online, but **greater efforts are still needed** to ensure its full implementation. Members draw attention to the significant enforcement gaps due to the limited resources and insufficient digitalisation of customs and market surveillance authorities, insufficient data sharing between customs authorities, platforms and market surveillance bodies, and a lack of cooperation and coordination between them.

Under the Digital Services Regulation (DSA), online marketplaces are required to **track traders**, which should discourage traders from selling unsafe or counterfeit products, and they are obliged to comply with "compliance by design" rules. However, Members noted the rise of new sales practices via social media platforms, where this obligation is not effectively enforced. They therefore stressed that online platforms must take all possible measures to ensure full traceability of sellers and products.

Strict enforcement policies to combat non-compliant e-commerce products

In the short term, Parliament called on Member States **to increase funding and resources** for market surveillance authorities, customs authorities, consumer protection authorities, and digital services authorities to better address the challenges posed by dangerous and illicit products. It called on the Commission to foster **greater cooperation and the sharing of information** and data between competent authorities. Market surveillance authorities should increase the number and frequency of coordinated enforcement actions such as sweeps, mystery shopping exercises, and peer reviews.

Members stressed the importance of a more preventive system, a **mandatory digital product passport (DPP)**, increased customs controls, the use of digital tools, and clear guidelines for SMEs. They called for

stricter penalties, better protection of intellectual property, and measures to ensure fair competition in e-commerce.

Need for regulatory reforms

Parliament called on the Commission to review without delay the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Regulation and, in this context, to provide for clear measures to **strengthen enforcement powers** over non-EU traders and platforms and to ensure better coordination of EU and Member State actions and the exchange of information between authorities, as well as with third-country authorities. The Commission should be given direct powers to investigate and sanction certain breaches of consumer protection legislation with a significant impact.

Parliament supports the two proposals for Council acts aimed at removing the exemption threshold on customs duties for goods valued under **EUR 150** and therefore called on the Member States to speed up the negotiation procedure within the Council.

Members called on the Commission to explore ways to address issues related to **drop shipping,** which poses challenges for consumer protection, product safety and regulatory compliance. They also called for the creation of a new **EU Customs Authority** in 2026 to provide specialist support to Member States' customs authorities.

Parliament urged the Commission to carry out an impact assessment of the idea of shipping e-commerce items to the EU **in bulk**, as well as the establishment in the EU by third-country traders **of warehouses** for such goods before they are packaged for delivery to customers. This would strengthen the control of customs and market surveillance authorities and improve inspections and detection of non-compliant goods compared to shipments of individual packages. The Commission and the Member States should consider all possible options to encourage such practices.

The resolution supported the Commission's proposal to introduce a **handling fee of EUR 2 per item** from third countries, announced in its communication on e-commerce. However, Members called on the Commission to verify that this amount is proportionate and in line with WTO rules, and to ensure that this handling fee is not passed on to European consumers.

Increased use of IT tools

Parliament supports the responsible use **of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things** to scan and analyse product lists offered on e-commerce platforms, automate customs and market surveillance inspections and risk assessments, and integrate product compliance databases to conduct real-time checks between market surveillance and customs authorities. Members therefore called on Member States to allocate more resources to their customs authorities to foster the adoption of these new tools.

Members called for **information and awareness campaigns** on the purchase of unsafe products online and their possible consequences for health, privacy, the environment and competitiveness, paying particular attention to vulnerable consumers and periods of increased consumption.

Lastly, the resolution encouraged the Commission to strengthen diplomatic efforts and cooperation within international fora, in particular the WTO, the WCO and the G7, to counterbalance China's strategic expansion in digital governance frameworks.