

Brussels, 11 March 2026

Business Coalition urges the EU to act now – Deemed Importer obligations must not be delayed to 2028

JOINT STATEMENT

European traders and industry are deeply concerned about the rise of imports of small consignments. The introduction of the ‘deemed importer’ in 2028 comes too late. We call upon the EU and its Member States to introduce a legal obligation on foreign operators to appoint a legally responsible person or entity in the EU for e-commerce imports without any further delay.

The extraordinary growth of e-commerce in recent years has led to an exponential number of small packages of low-valued goods entering the EU, each of which needs to be accompanied by an individual customs declaration since the entry into force of new VAT rules for e-commerce in 2021. In 2022, for example, almost 1 billion customs declarations for low-value goods were filed. The sheer volumes of e-commerce are testing customs' limits.

Many of the products arriving here contravene the rules in force in the EU. Infringements like VAT fraud, breaching health and safety EU standards, violation of intellectual property rights and misleading claims fuel unfair competition within the Single Market, disadvantaging businesses that follow the EU's high standards. Such unfair trade practices, linked to small consignments, are corroding entire industrial value chains, eroding our economic strength and resilience and put the consumer health at risk. Additionally, they threaten shops all over the EU, accelerating the depopulation of town centres.

Against this background, we welcome that the EU, with the new Union Customs Code (UCC), plans to introduce the so-called “deemed importer”, i.e. holding platforms responsible for ensuring that customs duties and VAT are paid at purchase as well as for non-financial obligations.

However, if the “deemed importer” is introduced only in 2028, this will come too late. In 2025 alone, 5.8 billion parcels were imported into the EU. In the coming years, the pressure on our industries of competing with non-compliant traders which bear no responsibility for non-compliance, will mount to an unbearable extent and threaten the livelihood of even more economic operators, with massive consequential job losses.

The introduction of an obligation to appoint a legally responsible person or entity in the European Union who can be held accountable is long overdue. This can be established much earlier than 2028 by a simple EU Regulation at short notice, long before the ‘deemed importer’ and other elements of the UCC are introduced. Technically easily feasible, it is just a question of political will.

We also acknowledge the forthcoming European Product Act, which aims to further strengthen the overall framework for product compliance and market surveillance. We stress that compliance with European Union Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations must be effectively enforced, including in relation to online sales and third-country sellers. Online marketplaces and any legally responsible EU representative should be subject to clear and binding enforcement mechanisms to ensure that products placed on the EU market comply with applicable EPR requirements (including packaging, WEEE, batteries and textiles), thereby preventing free-riding and safeguarding a level playing field. These initiatives will only deliver their full effect in the medium term.

If properly defined and implemented, these new concepts have the potential to help address gaps in online product compliance.

We, the undersigned, urge the EU and its Member States to put in place such a Regulation without delay.

List of Signatories:



Applia – Home Appliance Europe



CEC – European Footwear Confederation



Cosmetics Europe - The personal care association



EBCA - European Branded Clothing Association



ECOS – European Coalition on Standards



EFIC - European Furniture Industries Confederation



EURATEX - European Apparel and Textile Confederation



EXPRA – Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance



Independent Retail Europe



LightingEurope – The voice of the Lighting Industry



Repair&Share



Svensk Handel – Swedish Commerce



TIE- Toys Industries of Europe



WEEE Forum



ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável