

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002050/25
to the Commission
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(21 May 2025)

Subject: Possible competitive advantages of Chinese e-commerce platforms and implications for the safety of European consumers

In recent years, a number of e-commerce companies based in third countries, particularly China, operating under a direct-to-consumer model, have benefited from significantly reduced international shipping costs. It was possible initially as a result of the preferential tariffs provided for by the UPU (Universal Postal Union) system, which continues to classify China as a developing country, despite its current economic position, and then through direct commercial agreements with European postal operators, on account of the companies' large shipping volumes.

This mechanism enables Chinese companies to obtain very low delivery tariffs, distorting competition. Despite the 2019 reform of the UPU, competitive inequalities and market fragmentation persist, penalising European operators and favouring those who do not adopt strict rules on product safety, traceability, liability and taxes.

At the same time, growing numbers of low-value consumer products, such as toys, are being placed on the market, and they often circumvent customs controls, exposing consumers — especially children — to potential health and safety risks.

In view of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of this state of affairs and what steps will it take to provide a level playing field in the internal market?
2. With a view to improving European consumers' safety, will it propose stricter controls on parcels from third countries?

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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(4 August 2025)

The Commission is aware of the issue raised by the Honourable Members and concerned about its impact on consumer health and safety as well as on unfair competition for EU producers.

The Commission therefore calls on the co-legislator to swiftly adopt the customs reform and to reinforce it with an e-commerce handling fee.

The Commission also announced a priority control area between customs, market surveillance and other authorities to control goods imported through the main marketplaces to assess compliance with EU legislation and trigger enforcement action.

The E-commerce Communication ⁽¹⁾ proposes measures to address challenges posed by e-commerce imports. It focuses on protecting consumers shopping online, making full use of the enforcement tools of the Digital Services Act ⁽²⁾, the Digital Markets Act ⁽³⁾, the General Product Safety Regulation ⁽⁴⁾ and the Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation ⁽⁵⁾, and proposes using digital tools as the Digital Product Passport ⁽⁶⁾ to supervise the e-commerce landscape.

The comprehensive reform of the Universal Postal Union remuneration system in 2019 put an end to the privileges of certain countries categorized as developing for cross-border shipping.

E-commerce sellers from these countries may now use either Postal Services Directive ⁽⁷⁾ universal service tariffs that are subject to affordability, transparency, cost-orientation and non-discrimination requirements or negotiate tariffs directly with postal operators on market terms.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=COM:2025:37:FIN>.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065, OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1-102.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1-66.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/988, OJ L 135, 23.5.2023, p. 1-51.

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2017/2394, OJ L 345, 27.12.2017, p. 1-26.

⁽⁶⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L_202401781.

⁽⁷⁾ Directive 97/67/EC (as amended by Directives 2002/39/EC and 2008/6/EC), OJ L. 15, 21.1.1998, p. 14-25.

One of the objectives of the future EU Delivery Act ⁽⁸⁾, that should replace the Postal Services Directive and the regulation on cross-border parcel delivery services ⁽⁹⁾, will be to ensure a level playing field between market participants, increase price transparency and support consumer rights.

⁽⁸⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — The Single Market: our European home market in an uncertain world, COM(2025) 500 final, 21.5.2025, p. 20.

⁽⁹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/644, OJ L 112, 2.5.2018, p. 19-28.