

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000162/26
to the Commission
Billy Kelleher (Renew)
(15 January 2026)

Subject: Unverified debt collection demands by international couriers

The Unfair Commercial Practices Directive 2005 ⁽¹⁾ was introduced to regulate unfair commercial practices in business-to-consumer transactions. The directive was updated in 2019 to improve transparency between businesses and consumers and to ensure accountability for misleading practices.

Despite this, consumers are being subjected to unverified debt collection obligations imposed by international couriers, whereby consumers are forced to pay a reimbursement for import VAT and customs charges paid in advance by couriers. Such requests are made without providing any justified proof of payment or customs liabilities, yet consumers are still pursued for reimbursement by debt collection agencies.

1. Is the Commission aware of such practices and does it consider them to be in line with the EU consumer protection framework?
2. Does the Commission consider it necessary to address this aggressive practice and to require couriers to provide clear evidence of payment before unjustly demanding reimbursement from consumers?

Submitted: 15.1.2026

Answer given by Mr McGrath on behalf of the European Commission
(18 March 2026)

The Commission understands that the Honourable Member refers to situation where EU consumers buy goods from non-EU online shops and are requested by the courier firms, that manage the delivery of such goods, to pay VAT and customs duties.

Directive 2011/83/EU ⁽¹⁾ requires traders (including non-EU traders which target EU consumers) to inform consumers, before concluding the contract, about the total price of the goods inclusive of taxes and fees or, if such charges cannot reasonably be calculated in advance, the fact that they may be payable. Consumers do not have to bear additional charges of which they have not been informed.

The directive also provides consumers with the right of withdrawal from online purchases (subject to specific exceptions), without providing any reasons.

The consumer can exercise that right also before the delivery and refuse taking physical possession of the goods. Furthermore, Directive 2005/29/EC ⁽²⁾, which applies also to delivery firms, prohibits misleading and aggressive commercial practices towards consumers.

EU consumer protection rules are transposed in national laws and Member States' competent bodies deal with individual complaints.

The Commission is not aware of complaints regarding the problem raised by the Honourable Member. Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 ⁽³⁾ enables national authorities to alert and assist each on suspected consumer law breaches.

Comprehensive information on the calculation of customs fees and VAT, and on how this information is communicated to parcel recipients in the EU, is available online ⁽⁴⁾.

¹ OJ L 149, 11.6.2005, p. 22, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2005/29/oj>.

⁽¹⁾ The Consumer Rights Directive — Directive 2011/83/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on consumer rights, amending Council Directive 93/13/EEC and Directive 1999/44/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directive 85/577/EEC and Directive 97/7/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 304, 22.11.2011, pp. 64-88.

⁽²⁾ The Unfair Commercial Practices Directive — Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and amending Council Directive 84/450/EEC, Directives 97/7/EC, 98/27/EC and 2002/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council ('Unfair Commercial Practices Directive'), OJ L 149, 11.6.2005, pp. 22-39.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 OJ L 345, 27.12.2017, pp. 1-26.

⁽⁴⁾ https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/buying-goods-online-coming-non-european-union-country_en.