CONSUMER SURVEY

ONLINE SHOPPING FROM OUTSIDE THE EU:
Consumers face extra charges

BEUC The European Consumer Organisation

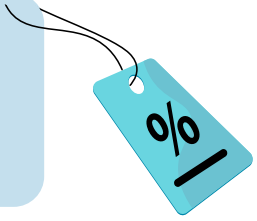
The Consumer Voice in Europe

On 1 July 2026, the EU introduced a temporary €3 customs duty on small parcels from outside the EU. Since then, consumers have encountered new challenges when shopping online. Under the new customs rules, the economic operator, not the consumer, must pay the duty directly to the customs authorities. BEUC members and European Consumer Centres collected consumer testimonies to understand their experiences when buying goods online from non-EU sellers and marketplaces. *

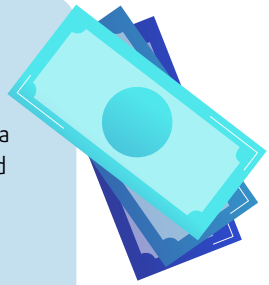
2,883 consumers shared their experiences with additional charges, whether businesses clearly communicated them, and the charging methods used.

KEY FINDINGS

Extra charges are common across orders.
43,3% of consumers reported paying additional charges on top of shipping costs.



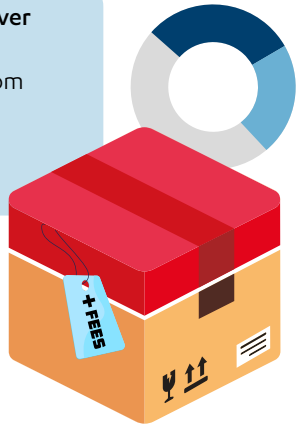
Businesses are charging consumers customs duties and other import-related charges.
Among consumers who reported extra charges, **40%** paid customs duties and **38%** paid import related charges. **11%** paid other charges, while **8%** were unsure what the fee was and **3%** said businesses had not clearly explained the charge



Platforms often fail to clearly communicate additional charges to consumers.
Among consumers who encountered extra charges, one third (**32%**) said they did not receive clear information about those charges before completing their purchase. Only **66%** reported that the charges were clearly presented.



AliExpress and Temu account for over half of reported purchases.
55% of reported purchases came from AliExpress (**29%**) or Temu (**26%**), making them the most frequently reported platforms.



Average order value ~ **43€**
Average additional fee ~ **5€**
Additional fee represents around **11%** of the order price

Consumers typically encounter extra charges at checkout.
84% of consumers who reported additional charges encountered them only at the payment stage. Another **13%** encountered additional charges after purchase (e.g., by email, SMS, app notification, or an online payment request from the parcel delivery company) and **3%** at delivery.



Platforms are responsible for most additional charges.
61,5% of respondents who paid extra fees said platforms or online shops requested payment for extra charges.



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*About the methodology: The survey was conducted in 9 Member States between July and September 2026. Contact: international@beuc.eu

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CONSUMERS ARE PAYING MORE THAN THE ADVERTISED PRICE

Extra charges only appeared late in the purchasing journey, most often at checkout. This is a classic example of **drip pricing**, where consumers discover unavoidable and mandatory costs only after they have already invested time in making a purchase. Such practices can influence purchasing decisions and make offers appear cheaper than they really are.

CONSUMERS LACK CLEAR INFORMATION ABOUT THE FINAL PRICE

Traders do not always provide consumers with clear and understandable information about the total amount they will have to pay. Unlike VAT, online marketplaces cannot collect customs duties directly from consumers. It remains unclear whether businesses must refund these charges when consumers return a product under their right of withdrawal.

CONSUMERS CANNOT EASILY COMPARE OFFERS

When traders exclude mandatory charges from the advertised price, consumers cannot easily compare **the full cost** of competing offers. Two products advertised at the same price may end up costing different amounts when platforms add customs-related charges, service charges, or other mandatory costs at checkout or unexpectedly at delivery. This undermines consumers' ability to compare offers effectively, make informed purchasing decisions and identify the best deal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT TERM

Platforms should stop splitting the purchase price from additional mandatory charges, making it harder for consumers to understand costs, compare offers and recover their money when returning a product. Customs duties should remain a matter between economic operators and customs authorities. Consumers should not have to understand or verify how customs duties are calculated or collected.

The European Commission and consumer protection authorities across the EU should act under the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive to ensure that consumers see **the total price, including all mandatory and unavoidable charges, from the moment they browse online**.

MID TERM

The Digital Fairness Act should clarify the rules by introducing an explicit prohibition of drip pricing in all circumstances and strengthen the enforcement of existing price transparency requirements. Businesses should display the total price upfront throughout the online purchasing journey, including when consumers browse, compare and pay.

The review of Consumer Protection Cooperation should strengthen authorities' ability to monitor platforms' practices in this area, enabling the European Commission to better coordinate cross-border enforcement efforts and respond more quickly to widespread harmful practices.

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