

Press release
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FTA
Foreign Trade Association

EU RETAILERS URGE MEMBER STATES TO REJECT CONTINUATION OF DUTIES ON SHOES

“The duties imposed on imports of leather shoes from China and Vietnam were unnecessary two years ago and they remain unnecessary today”, said Jan Eggert, Secretary General of the Foreign Trade Association which represents European commerce on foreign trade issues. “The Community should not allow a de-facto extension of fifteen months or a subsequent extension of up to five years.”

Mr Eggert was speaking ahead of the September 17th meeting of Member States who will discuss the Commission’s proposal that it conducts a review to investigate claims by EU manufacturers that the duties should be continued. In October 2006, the Commission managed to obtain a 13 to 12 majority to impose duties but only after a two year term – rather than the more usual five years – was proposed. The investigation itself will run for fifteen months during which time the current duties, due to expire on 6 October, will continue.

“The fact of the matter is that today’s European shoe industry is simply not affected by imports from China and Vietnam” said Mr Eggert. “Shoes manufactured in Europe occupy a high-end, niche market whereas those being imported occupy the lower-end, everyday market. For this matter alone, anti-dumping duties are neither valid nor necessary.” Mr Eggert was referring to the provision within the EU’s anti-dumping legislation that states that once “dumping” (exporting products at a price below the domestic price) has been proven, injury to the EU industry as a result of the dumping must also be proven.

Mr Eggert also failed to see the benefit of the duties. “No-one will benefit from the continuation of these duties. Not the importers or retailers whom we represent and certainly not the consumer. Our members have suffered as result of the increased costs these duties have imposed upon them and have done all they can to prevent passing on this cost to the consumer. However, prices in China and Vietnam have been rising and should the duties continue as well, the state of play will inevitably change.”

Technically, the meeting on 17th September is only a consultation exercise. However, should a majority of Member States vote against a review, it would be unusual for the

Commission to reject that vote and continue regardless. Mr Eggert said “I hope that both Member States and the Commission make the only decision that makes sense and allow these duties to end on 6 October.”

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The FTA is the association for European commerce that specialises in foreign trade issues. It is committed to achieving its goal of a true free trade environment. For 30 years it has supported its members, consisting of national trade associations and companies from all over Europe, by providing expertise and up-to-date information and by campaigning on their behalf against protectionist measures in the European and international arena.

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