

Press release
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FTA
Foreign Trade Association

COMMISSION FACES UNPRECEDENTED OPPOSITION ON SHOES DUTIES

“This is a clear indication of the opposition to these unnecessary measures” said Jan Eggert, Secretary General for the Foreign Trade Association that represents European commerce on foreign issues. “This is a good result for the European importers and retailers whom we represent and also for the European consumer.”

Mr Eggert was speaking following the discussions at today’s Anti-Dumping Committee when, for the first time ever, a Commission proposal to open an expiry review was rejected by a majority of Member States (15 to 12).

In October 2006, after numerous alternative proposals had been rejected, the Commission were finally able to get the approval of Member States to impose anti-dumping duties on imports of leather shoes from China and Vietnam but only after a reduced term of two years, instead of the more usual five. “It was clear to me two years ago that there was no argument in favour of imposing duties” said Mr Eggert. “Simply put, the European industry is not damaged by these imports. However unfortunate some may consider it to be, the days of Europe manufacturing lower cost, everyday footwear are over and production has moved overseas to countries such as China and Vietnam. Europe is now almost exclusively responsible for high cost, niche market footwear that does not compete with these imports.”

Mr Eggert was referring to the provision with EU anti-dumping legislation that says in order for anti-dumping duties to be imposed, not only must “dumping” (exporting products at a cost below the domestic price) be proven, but also that the imports are injuring the European industry. In addition, it must also be shown that imposing duties is in the “interest of the Community” (which is normally restricted to manufacturers but should include importers, retailers and consumers).

“We worked hard to prevent the measures being imposed in 2006 and felt partial vindication that it was only by a last minute effort by the Commission that it was able to impose the current two year term”, said Mr Eggert. “Subsequently we have been in close contact with both the Commission and Member States to indicate our opposition to any extension to the

duties – including the 15 months they would continue to run during the procedure of a review. It is important to recognise the fact that the thousands of importers and retailers are also part of the Community and have an important role to play within Europe.”

By voting in such a way, although not binding on the Commission, Member States threw the Commission a curve ball which it did not see coming and they had to conduct frantic discussions. The conclusion? Nothing is expected today and those discussions continue.

The FTA urges the Commission to accept the overwhelming view of the Community and allow these duties to expire.

Contact: Stuart Newman (tel. +32 (0)2.741.64.04)

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.

IMPRESSUM / CONTACT

FTA - Foreign Trade Association
168, Av. De Cortenbergh
B-1000
Bruxelles

Tel: 0032-2-762 05 51
Fax: 0032-2-762 75 06
Email: info@fta-eu.org
Internet: www.fta-eu.org