

EU scraps import duties for medical equipment

April 3 2020

The European Commission announced on Friday that it would temporarily waive customs duties and VAT on imports of sorely-needed medical equipment to help in the fight against the coronavirus.

"This will make it financially easier to obtain the [medical equipment](#) that doctors, nurses and patients desperately need," the EU's executive arm said in a statement.

The measure, which will also apply to Britain, will be enforced for a renewable period of six months with retroactive effect to January 30 when the pandemic first emerged in Europe.

"By abolishing customs duties and VAT on imports of these products from third countries, the European Commission will contribute to making these products more accessible," said the EU's Economic Affairs Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni.

Europe last month became the world's epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak with more than 10,000 deaths, many for lack of medical equipment such as respirators.

"To give you an example, in Italy, customs duty of 12 percent and a value added tax of 22 percent is levied on some [face masks](#) or protective garments that we [import](#) from countries like China," said EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen.

"We need a lot of this equipment, and it can be expensive," she said.

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Citation: EU scraps import duties for medical equipment (2020, April 3) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-eu-scraps-import-duties-medical.html>

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