

The Temu Paradox: How the Working Man Pays Exorbitant Prices for His Compression Stockings and Hearing Aids

By Frank , 14 July 2026

The Temu Paradox: How the Working Man Pays Exorbitant Prices for His Compression Stockings and Hearing Aids



By Frank Dumon

Recently, I met a friendly, older man who had trouble walking, leaning on a walking stick that had probably seen more years than the average Belgian prime minister. I noticed he was wearing compression stockings, just like me, and I told him so. A moment of recognition between two fellow sufferers in the decay of the human vein. Then he asked me, with the suspicion of someone used to life trying to screw him over one more time, where I bought them. I answered truthfully: for years at Temu for €8 a pair, and they are of excellent quality.

He was shocked by that. His eyes grew wide behind his thick glasses. Because at the Christian Mutualité (sickness fund), he pays a whopping €50 as a "member's preferential price". The Works of Mercy, indeed. No wonder they are multi-

billionaires. Just like their sister organization, the Farmers' League (Boerenbond). I even worked for them in Vietnam. From 1982 to 1984. And it doesn't count toward my pension because they never paid my social contributions. Just file a criminal complaint, I'm used to it.

And if he is unlucky enough to lose his 'preferential' status, or if he simply chose the wrong sickness fund, he has to go to the pharmacy. The 22 pharmacies in Ostend ask for €59 or more for them without batting an eye. That's why there are so many. A small pharmacy easily makes €10,000 net profit per month. Just ask billionaire and Ostend resident Marc Coucke, who also bought his shampoos, vitamins, and food supplements in China and, just like Lapperre, marked them up by 50 times. More on that later.

Meanwhile, the Christian Mutualité warns on the VRT about fraudsters posing as CM employees, because scammers are trying to extract personal data, money, and passwords from members of the Christian Mutualité by pretending to be employees of the health fund. The mutualité urges its members to be careful. [This is reported by the CM in a press release](#). Talk about sarcasm.

"But they measure everything, don't they?" he asked, searching for a shred of hope in the endless bureaucracy of care. "They say the measurement is free, right?" I had to laugh. A dry, sarcastic laugh that blew away over the dike. They supposedly measure for free, but there isn't much measuring to do. Choosing between small, medium, large, and extra large. The sizes are listed. With a tape measure from Action, you can do it yourself in three seconds while staring at the sea. But fine, for that €59 you at least get a pharmacist who offers you a lollipop and tells you that you've been a good boy. An emotional service that Belgians apparently love to pay for.

The Medical Mafia and the Storms of This World

The same absurd theater plays out in the world of hearing aids. A friend of mine, whose hearing was slowly but surely being drowned out by his wife's nagging and the news on the VRT, went to a well-known chain. A minimum of €1,500, he was told. For that money, you get two pieces of plastic that fit in your ear, a free cloth to wipe them clean, and the promise that you will hear the world again in 'high definition'.

However, if you buy the exact same functionality—amplifying sound so you can hear the postman coming—on Temu or Alibaba, it costs €40 for the best quality. Yes, you read that right. Forty euros. For the amount Mr. Lapperre charges for a single earpiece, you can buy a whole stock on Alibaba, including spare batteries, a cleaning kit, and even a few pairs of compression stockings for half a nursing home.

The greedy lobby groups in the healthcare sector are now, of course, sounding the alarm. They are pulling the alarm bell, beating the drum, writing open letters. They are holily shocked that the working man has discovered he has been ripped off for decades by a system that has turned medical necessity into the most lucrative sector of the West. But instead of examining their own margins, they point an accusing finger at the East. Abolish the hairdressers, beauty salons, and pharmacies in Ostend, and the shopping streets become empty oases.

The Green Conscience of the European Customs



And lo and behold, the European Union comes to the rescue! The EU sanctions specialists and customs experts have now come up with a brilliant plan: impose an extra package tax on Temu, Shein, Alibaba, and so on. And do you know what the best part is? The excuse. They claim to do this to save the environment. Because those 'expensive' air freight transports from China are to blame, they claim.

It is truly a masterpiece of Orwellian doublespeak. Suddenly, they are upset about the CO2 emissions of a small, cheap package of compression stockings and hearing amplifiers, while the same European Commission weekly deploys entire fleets of private jets and business-class flights to fly to the next climate or NATO summit.

For each of the 40,000 useless EU bureaucrats (EU institutions employ over 60,000 officials including translators, lawyers, and scientists), there are nine policy advisors (spouses, friends, and acquaintances, but especially mistresses) who write their reports, while they constantly travel the world to preach their useless opinions to like-minded idiots. But this completely escapes them. Their ecological footprint is so large you can see it from space, yet it is the cheap package of the widower from

Ostend that damages the ozone layer. European 'green' politics is nothing more than a mechanism to make the poor pay for the sins of the rich. You are no longer allowed to buy cheap stockings on Temu, because that is bad for the earth. But you are allowed to keep driving your old diesel car to work, because the European auto industry must be protected.

America Bombs, Europe Sanctions, China Produces

Thus, we live in the West in a world that can be perfectly summarized in three sentences: America bombs, Europe sanctions, and China produces. It is the ultimate, perfect triad of modern geopolitics. We in Europe have retreated into a morally elevated bubble of sanctions, embargoes, and ethical guidelines. We are so ethically responsible that we economically strangle ourselves. We refuse to do business with the world because it is not 'nice' enough, while we ourselves financially fleece our own population. And who benefits? China. They just keep producing. They are laughing their heads off in Beijing as they flood the European market with goods that we are no longer allowed or able to make ourselves. And if we then try to import that one, small, cheap package to keep our aging bodies a little more comfortable, we slap a customs tax on it. For the environment. Naturally.

The Illusion of Net Income

In this country, we have the highest tax rates in the world. It is an unwritten law, a kind of hard-won right of the state to milk the citizen until not a single drop of blood can be squeezed out. And it doesn't stop at income tax. Oh no, that would be too simple. That would be too transparent. No, it is a layered system of financial extraction, designed by the greatest neo-liberal grabbers who secretly call themselves 'social democrats'.

When we buy a head of lettuce, we have to pay VAT on it. Value Added Tax. A tax on the value that the farmer, the transporter, and the supermarket have added. But the only one who truly adds value is the working man who earns the money to buy that lettuce. And that working man is plucked from all sides.

Thus, an average working man keeps barely 25% of his gross salary, after deducting all sorts of taxes, road taxes, property taxes, excise duties on gasoline, tobacco, and alcohol, and the endless list of municipal taxes. Twenty-five percent. You work five days a week. One day is for yourself. The other four days you work exclusively for the state, for the sickness fund, for the pharmacist, for the EU bureaucrat writing a report on how you should live your life.

You pay for the highways where you sit in traffic. You pay for the trains that don't run. You pay for the windmills that ruin your view of the sea and yet deliver no power when the wind doesn't blow. And if, after all those years of hard work, you have to put your legs up because your veins are giving out, you have to fork out another 50 euros for a pair of stockings that you can get in China for a pittance.



The Business Class of the Bureaucrat

And do you know who gets to manage all that money? Who gets to oversee that enormous flow of funds? The ladies and gentlemen of the EU administration. They are exempt from all of this. They do not pay excise duties on their expensive wines in the Brussels European Quarter. They do not have to pay €50 for compression stockings, because their insurance covers everything, paid by the taxpayer. They rake in exorbitant salaries, supplemented by daily allowances, expense allowances, and pensions that the average Belgian worker can only stare at with envy.

While the old man in Ostend now continues to trudge along the dike, leaning on his stick, with his €8 Temu stockings that fit just as well as those from the mutualité, somewhere above his head an EU Commission jet flies toward Strasbourg. On board: officials discussing a new directive on the ecological impact of cheap stockings. They are drinking champagne, because they have saved the environment once again.

And the working man? He pays the bill. He pays for the stockings, he pays for the hearing aids, he pays for the VAT on the lettuce, and he pays for the bureaucrat's business class. It is a beautiful system. As long as the working man keeps believing that it is all for his own good.

<https://youtu.be/8w3GcbD88KA>