

## Coronavirus - Statement

The following statement was issued today on behalf of the European retail and wholesale sector by Christian Verschuere, Director-General of EuroCommerce:

*First, I want to **pay tribute to the 29 million people working in our sector**, who have been working extra hours and giving up holidays to make sure that customers receive the service they need in these exceptional times. Retailers and wholesalers have been working with all parts of the supply chain to ensure that there are adequate supplies of the things European citizens need every day.*

*Second, coming into contact daily with millions of customers, we have taken a wide range of steps to support public authorities in seeking to **minimise the risk of infection to customers and to our own staff**. We are cooperating with and supporting all public authorities – at European, national and local level, in the measures they are taking to limit the spread of the virus. We are calling on our social partners to cooperate with us in protecting our employees.*

*Third, we support and reiterate recent calls from European Commission President von der Leyen and Commissioner Breton to governments and customs authorities **to keep borders open for lorries carrying the goods that people need on a daily basis**. We ask that governments follow the Commission guidelines issued today calling on member states to ensure the free circulation of food, including livestock, medical supplies and protective equipment. All our members have been clear that we have enough supplies ready to meet demand for food and daily essentials, but this **could be compromised if disproportionate measures are taken at country borders** to make it impossible for deliveries from one member state to another. Also, in some border regions, vital workers in retail and wholesale live in one member state and work in another: we ask that national authorities allow these employees to get to work and carry on serving customers.*

*Fourth, our supply chains depend on regular and smooth, on-time deliveries, and these need to be maintained unless there are real risks involved. In a number of member states, retailers, manufacturers and farmers have joined together publicly to underline their commitment to these initiatives. Retailers have been clear that they will show **flexibility and understanding if suppliers are delayed in delivering to them**.*

*Fifth, retailers have also been cooperating to share information on supplies and arranging deliveries to the homes of people who cannot get out. We are pleased that governments and competition authorities have indicated that, under these very special circumstances, they **might waive normal competition rules to allow such exchanges in order to save lives**, and keep supplies flowing. We ask that they indeed allow such cooperation to take place while the coronavirus crisis continues.*

*Finally, we wish to reinforce the message from governments to all Europeans that **it is not necessary to buy large amounts of daily necessities**. Food retail shops remain open everywhere, albeit with some restrictions in some countries. Emptying the shelves of a product creates a vicious circle of panic buying, and that is a pattern of demand that makes replenishment more difficult. We appeal to consumers to act with restraint and solidarity - and leave some products for others who need them as well."*

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*EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.*