

## Keep Europe safe, but keep goods flowing

Speaking today about decisions in some EU countries to close a number of their borders, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren said:

*“Retailers and wholesalers rely on many thousands of suppliers across Europe to ensure that Europe’s consumers can have the daily essentials they need. We have consistently lived up to that obligation all through the COVID pandemic. We also fully support all measures necessary to stop the spread of the virus and its new variants. But this can be done without making border crossing impossible for lorries carrying the goods consumers need. We therefore wish to remind all member states of the real problems which arose for goods traffic and cross-border workers last year when borders were closed, and of the important guidelines the Commission issued to resolve those problems. We all want people to be safe, but also able to have the things they need to help them have as normal a life as the present - abnormal - circumstances allow.”*

The first wave of the pandemic last year sparked off a series of border closures which member states believed would help stem the spread of the COVID virus. In doing so, they initially gave little thought to the impact of such closures on cross-border flows of goods which consumers and industry needed to have available every day. They also prevented many thousands of workers living one side of the border from getting to their workplaces on the other side. The Commission acted quickly to issue harmonised guidelines which set up ‘green lanes’ for goods traffic and special arrangements for cross-border workers. Those are still valid and vital in the second wave we are experiencing now. We are therefore asking member states, not least those which also act as transit routes for exports from other EU countries, to adhere to those guidelines, and adopt proportionate measures to keep their citizens safe while not unduly hindering the flow of goods and cross-border workers within the single market.

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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.*