

## **SMEI - Make the Single Market the priority at times of crisis**

Following the launch of the Commission’s proposal for a Single Market Emergency Instrument (SMEI) Christel Delberghe, Director General of EuroCommerce said:

*“The SMEI should focus on the proper functioning of the Single Market in times of crisis – it is the best way to ensure that consumers have access to daily essentials. During the COVID pandemic, and now with the war in Ukraine, the Single Market has shown itself to be Europe’s strongest asset, especially at times of crisis. During COVID some Member States adopted emergency measures that disrupted international supply chains, restricted the opening of stores, or prevented cross-border workers from going to work. This made it difficult for retailers and wholesalers to serve their customers at a time they particularly needed it.”*

EuroCommerce welcomes the proposal, including the scrutiny of whether national crisis measures are proportionate. But EuroCommerce is concerned about the possible impact of burdensome mandatory data-sharing during a crisis where businesses will have to focus on remaining operational or even struggling to survive. The focus of the SMEI should be on keeping the Single Market functioning and supporting businesses and consumers and quickly responding to rapidly changing conditions, according to EuroCommerce

Furthermore, the very extensive powers given to the Commission and Member States to intervene in normal market processes under exceptional circumstances, need to be used proportionately, and what would trigger them needs to be much better defined than at present. Retailers and wholesalers have been able to keep their customers supplied with what they need despite the disruption of the COVID pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Action which would undermine their ability to do so, such as disproportionate government or EU intervention in what they should buy or unrealistic demands for data, would be counterproductive to the aims of SMEI to keep supply chains working.

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