

Retail and wholesale welcome Parliament mandate on Eco-design

EuroCommerce – the association representing retailers and wholesalers in Europe - supports the European Parliament’s draft report on Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation which will be voted on for final approval in plenary on 12 July.

The proposed regulation on Eco-design for Sustainable Products (ESPR) establishes the framework for setting eco-design requirements for specific product groups, with a view to significantly improving their circularity, energy performance and other environmental and sustainability aspects. The retail and wholesale sector serves as the link between manufacturers and Europe’s 450 million consumers as well as with business customers. The ESPR will introduce design requirements for all products in Europe (except food and medicine), and the sector will be highly impacted.

Christel Delberghe, Director General of EuroCommerce, summarises:

“The European Parliament Report contains good elements on environmental and sustainability aspects, and we are broadly supportive of these. We are also in favour of clear roles and responsibilities. Our sector plays a key role in nudging consumers to support sustainability and has already made a range of private and global commitments to provide more sustainable products. As the design phase of a product is central to reducing its environmental impact, we are ready to contribute to such an effort by starting to apply the eco-design approach to a broader range of product groups.”

In particular, EuroCommerce appreciates the Parliament’s focus on second-hand products, which will be an important factor for more sustainable and ecodesign products. The Report also stressed the importance of fighting against premature obsolescence and notes that Ecodesign requirements should ensure that manufacturers do not limit the durability of their products, which is a progress EuroCommerce supports. EuroCommerce points out that trade-offs among the different eco-design requirements should be considered (e.g., recyclability vs durability, sustainable products vs durability or recyclability) as compliance with one requirement could affect compliance with another one, as well as climate and environmental performance.

Retailers and wholesalers see the Digital Product Passport (DPP) as a great opportunity to modernise and digitalise product information and a good tool for consumers to access information and believe DPPs should be founded on open and international standards, interoperability, and proportionality. Consumers should eventually be able to compare information contained in the DPPs online. For the green transition, there is a need for traceability and transparency for all stakeholders in a supply- and value chain, and the end consumer.

For the trilogue, EuroCommerce is hoping for further improvements to the text. Specifically on Article 2, where there still is an unclear definition of “Substances of Concern (SoC)”. On the Destruction of unsold consumer goods (Article 20), the scope and exemptions remain equally vague and require clarification. It is also necessary to keep the exemption, so that some products do not fall into the category for destruction, in particular, for unsold products such as seasonal goods, and defective, counterfeit, and remanufactured/recycled products.

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 27 countries and 5 million companies, including leading global players and many small businesses. Over a billion times a day, retailers and wholesalers distribute goods and provide an essential service to millions of business and individual customers. The sector generates 1 in 7 jobs, offering a varied career to 26 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.