

Substantiating Green Claims: Retailers and wholesalers call for practicality

Today, the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection adopted their draft report on the Substantiating Green Claims Directive proposal.

Commenting on the outcome of the vote, EuroCommerce Director for Sustainability and Product Policy, Els Bedert, said: *"The retail and wholesale sector plays a key role in the transition to more environmentally sustainable production and consumption by providing consumers with choice and tools to enable informed decision making. Reliable environmental claims are highly important for our sector to communicate its sustainability efforts and maintain consumer trust. We welcome a simplified verification procedure for certain environmental claims to avoid unnecessary regulatory burdens that pre-approval might bring for retailers and wholesalers, including millions of SMEs."*

Retailers and wholesalers are fully committed to promoting environmentally sustainable production and consumption; and considerable investments have already been and still need to be made, in day-to-day business. As part of this, they continuously adapt to meet the sustainable consumption expectations of consumers, by providing appropriate tools to make environmentally conscious choices. And they help bring innovative products to markets through timely communication to consumers, which requires reliable green labels and claims.

The proposal fits within the framework of the Circular Economy Package. It is intended to develop further details on the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition (ECGT) proposal and has further linkages with other policies as part of the Green Deal. EuroCommerce stresses the importance of coherence, clarity, and legal certainty including with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and in relation to future work on Sustainable Food Systems. Striking a balance between the objectives of substantiating and communicating green claims with rules that are fit for purpose is essential for retailers and wholesalers.

The association asks legislators to consider the following three points during the next steps of the legislative process:

- Consider alternatives to a pre-approval verification procedure for certain environmental claims, applicable to all traders, that may include a presumption of conformity. SMEs should be allowed a grace period and a simplified verification process.
- Maintain coherence, clarity, and legal certainty among linked policies and legislative files. Future Union sector legislation should take precedence over the Green Claims Directive (e.g. Sustainable Food Systems).
- Set up a stakeholder platform to support the development of delegated acts.

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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.