

24 June 2025

Joint Response of UNI Europa and EuroCommerce to the European Commission's Consultation on the Quality Jobs Roadmap

EuroCommerce and UNI Europa, the two European social partners representing employers and workers in the retail and wholesale sector, welcome the European Commission's initiative to develop a Quality Jobs Roadmap.

This joint response only covers part of the themes addressed in the consultation. It focuses on areas where we have long-standing cooperation and joint action through the Large-Scale Skills Partnership for the Retail Ecosystem, under the EU Pact for Skills.

Investing in Skills and Lifelong Learning

Retail and wholesale employ 26 million people in Europe, making the sector a major employer in the private sector. 1 in 7 are young people. As a sector present across every territory, region and community, retail and wholesale offer huge potential to support the EU's competitiveness, labour and skills agenda. Workers and businesses alike face fast-changing demands due to digitalisation¹, meeting sustainability goals, and evolving customer expectations. These shifts are further underpinned by evolving demographics, including an aging population, an increase in single households, and the growing middle class. Concurrently, the growth of urban populations is also a driving force behind these changes.

Traditionally, retailers and wholesalers have developed a strong track record in building up the skills employees need to succeed in the workplace. Today, retail and wholesale offer a wide variety of job opportunities and chances of promotion from the shop and warehouse floor to marketing, data science, analytics, digital innovation and jobs that put sustainability initiatives into practice. New skills and entirely new roles are likely to emerge, requiring a workforce with practical, work-based experience to succeed in their careers.

To keep pace with these developments we think the Quality Jobs Roadmap should:

- Ensure the contribution of all stakeholders, as well as, to the extent possible and when consistent with national law and practice, joint and constructive work on the design of the different phases of training projects.

¹ The 2030 "[Digital Compass](#)" for the EU's Digital Decade policy programme set the objective of ensuring that 80 % of Europeans ages 16 to 74 would have at least basic digital skills by 2030. [Eurostat](#) figures indicate that in 2021, only 54 % of this age group possessed at least basic digital skills.

- Ensure greater recognition of vocational experience and qualifications, including informal, non-formal, and blended learning.
- Expand apprenticeships to better prepare workers for the omnichannel nature of retail and wholesale.
- Improve public education systems, including IT infrastructure, especially in rural areas.
- Ensure digital education access for all learners and align curricula with the evolving needs of the sector.
- Improve access to/knowledge of the available funds and schemes for EU upskilling and/or reskilling initiatives to achieve the digital and green transition and to promote resilience.

Strong Apprenticeship Pathways

The retail and wholesale sector is a leading provider of apprenticeships in nearly every EU country. These are key entry points for young people into quality jobs. To strengthen these opportunities, we call for the Roadmap to ensure:

- Modernisation of apprenticeship curricula to match real labour market needs, especially in e-commerce and sustainability.
- The sharing of best practices across countries to spread successful models.
- Increased visibility and value of apprenticeships as a quality option for young people in both rural and urban areas.

Attractiveness of the sector

At the same time, we need to promote the sector's attractiveness, especially for high-skilled professionals in digital and sustainability roles. Better public understanding of retail and wholesale career paths will support recruitment and retention in a fast-changing world. At the same time, we consider the roadmap an opportunity to enhance the competitiveness of EU companies and their contribution to the economy, while ensuring this is accompanied by robust labor standards and inclusive economic development.

It is important to enhance the sector's appeal, particularly for highly skilled professionals in digital and sustainability roles.

We believe that a greater public understanding of career paths in retail and wholesale will help support both recruitment and retention of employees. Highlighting the significance of retail and wholesale as one of the top employers in rural areas, along with the value of its apprenticeship programmes, can attract local talent to both urban and rural regions. Promoting a positive image of the sector, emphasising its essential role, stability, specialised jobs, and exciting career opportunities in emerging fields like e.g., e-commerce.

Advancing and strengthening skills development in retail and wholesale goes hand in hand with adequate wages, stable employment, work-life balance, and effective social dialogue. These conditions are key to attracting and retaining a skilled and resilient workforce.

Looking Ahead

At the EU level, we are part of the [Skills4Retail project](#), bringing together education and training providers, companies, and trade unions to develop a new VET curriculum. We launched the [Retail Pact for Skills](#) in November 2022, to promote upskilling and reskilling across the workforce.

Social dialogue at sectoral and company levels remains essential for achieving meaningful employment outcomes, ensuring that skills development and job design measures are implemented inclusively. It also plays a vital role in shaping vocational education and training curricula, supporting apprenticeships, and ensuring that workers have a voice in the design and delivery of training opportunities.

Together, we are committed to:

- Promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all.
- Building a strong skills partnership with relevant stakeholders.
- Monitoring skills supply and demand, and anticipating skills needs.
- Fighting against discrimination and working towards equal opportunities for all.
- Raising awareness of and enhancing the attractiveness of the retail and wholesale sector.

We welcomed the launch of the Union of Skills, as skills are central to the future of the Quality Jobs Roadmap. We believe that the exchange of best practices among the 44 European Social Dialogue Committees could be highly beneficial. This exchange would not only highlight the diversity of sectors and their specific needs but also contribute to lifelong learning and potentially lead to the creation of synergies.

We are committed to working with the Commission to help make the Quality Jobs Roadmap a success, and to ensure it reflects the needs and contributions of Europe's largest private sector.



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