

2026 Strategic Foresight Report – EuroCommerce response to the Call for Evidence

Over a billion times a day, retailers and wholesalers distribute goods and provide an essential service to millions of businesses 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.

It is based in Europe and as a contributor to 10% of the EU's GDP, the sector is a player that needs to be considered in shaping the long-term role of the EU in a rapidly changing and uncertain world. What retail and wholesale needs to strengthen its competitiveness, resilience and attractiveness and its potential should be considered in shaping the foresight strategy.

The answers to the questions posed in the Call for Evidence are based on our position paper, 'Beyond Manufacturing: A New Competitiveness Agenda for the EU in partnership with retail and wholesale'¹. This explains in more detail why the below elements should be prioritised in the 2026 Strategic Foresight Report.

How can the EU shape its long-term role in a rapidly changing and uncertain world?

Prioritise the Single Market across goods and services.

The competitiveness of the EU lies in a deeper, better-enforced Single Market. This requires fewer duplicative reporting obligations, consistent application of rules, and a "better regulation" discipline that checks the impact of initiatives on competitiveness and avoids codifying fragmentation.

Base economic security on trade openness.

Resilient, diversified supply chains and trade openness, coupled with targeted action to remove risks (e.g. protection of strategic trade routes) and proportionate and predictable rules to attract trade, can strengthen the EU by improving the competitiveness and resilience of its businesses.

Invest in people and places to address the demographic challenge.

Closing skills gaps, boosting use of AI, and giving retail and wholesale the breathing room to invest (e.g.

¹ [Beyond Manufacturing: A New Competitiveness Agenda for the EU in partnership with retail and wholesale - EuroCommerce](#)

via a more proportionate regulatory environment) could support transition offering opportunities to workers and the overall EU labour market. With a presence across the EU and the possibilities the sector offers for first jobs and career progression, retail and wholesale can play a role through inclusivity, workers of different ages and skills, in a variety of different geographies.

Which areas of leverage (especially those that are new or so far unexploited) could help the EU shape its long-term role in the world?

A focus on services and enforcement

The Single Market for services remains under exploited and this potential, recognised in the Single Market Strategy, could help strengthen the EU and in particular strengthen its key asset, the Single Market. This requires commitment to enforcement to ensure that it functions optimally as well as a level playing field, ensuring non-compliance with EU rules is prevented².

Regulatory predictability and exploit this as a competitive advantage

Effective EU regulation that is practicable, workable, avoids duplication, checked for indirect effects and maintains competitiveness, flexibility and correctly allocates responsibility, creates a predictable and stable, trusted environment for business growth and attractiveness for investment.

Recognise the demand side of EU businesses, which can drive innovation in green and digital technologies.

Retail and wholesale are a ready market for innovation able to scale circularity, low-carbon logistics and digital technologies across value chains. Better recognised and harnessed, this market could help the EU attract investment and innovation. Focusing on the companies grounded in the EU, that require physical proximity to its customers, such as retail and wholesale can lead to opportunities to meet the EU's climate, digital or skills goals.

Which narratives about the European Union can help the EU shape its long-term global role.

"Open Strategic Sovereignty powered by the Single Market."

Linking economic security that comes from trade openness and importance of the Single Market, that enables scale and boosts the competitiveness and resilience of EU companies so they and the Single Market become a strategic strength.

"A regulatory environment of trust and predictability"

A return to a predictable and stable regulatory environment, where legislation is thoroughly impact assessed and practical and workable, generating proportionate burdens and effectively enforced, could be a competitive advantage for EU.

² [#Compliance4All – Retailers call for a level playing field - EuroCommerce](#)

“A partner for innovation”

Exploiting the opportunities of the ready market for innovation that can be provided by sectors such as retail and wholesale, can enable innovative ideas to scale.

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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 businesses 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.