

EU needs to lead in fight against protectionism

On the occasion of the European Trade Policy Day today, EuroCommerce urges the European Union to fight against the growing protectionist tendencies everywhere. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has noted a doubling in the number of restrictions imposed by national governments of G20 countries in the past five years. It is in particular worrying seeing the US government pulling away from existing and new trade agreements.

EuroCommerce Director-General noted: *“It is a misperception that protectionism can boost economies in the long run. On the contrary, it is a lose-lose situation for the economy and for consumers. Seeking to protect national champions shields them from competition that makes them sharper and trigger competition. Eventually, they lose out. So do consumers, as prices get higher and choice is reduced. Retail and wholesale thrive on competition, and it is the only proven way of ensuring that consumers get a good deal, and the economy can grow.”*

EuroCommerce supports the development of modern trading rules, preferably at the multilateral level. Importers and exporters worldwide are waiting impatiently for governments to show leadership and allow the WTO to deliver. Verschueren concluded: *“Despite the worrying signals we receive from some trading partners and also some EU Member States, there are also encouraging signs as the pending conclusions of the EU trade agreements with Japan, Mercosur and Mexico.”*

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading multinational retailers such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small family operations. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 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.