

EU-Japan trade deal a welcome signal to protectionists

Welcoming the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement concluded today, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren said:

“Today’s trade agreement between the EU and Japan shows that, while some major players seemingly believe that the international trading system is on the ropes, the EU can deliver real benefits for businesses and consumers. This is the biggest bilateral trade agreement ever concluded by the EU, and I hope a strong signal ahead of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires next week that protectionists are pursuing an economic dead-end.”

EuroCommerce was one of the first business groups to press for a trade agreement between the EU and Japan. It is a mature market of great interest for European business, including the retailers, wholesalers and importers/exporters we represent. The substantial reduction, and in many cases elimination, of tariffs on goods between our two markets will encourage European companies, large and small, to look at the opportunities this agreement offers in addressing what is the 4th largest economy in the world, with 127 million consumers. Like many groups, we would have welcomed the inclusion in this agreement of provisions on data flows between Japan and the EU, and we hope that the Commission work on examining this further can proceed quickly.

Verschueren added: *“The conclusion of the agreement is not the end of the process, and we know that there is still a lot of legal detail to tie up. European traders, however, want the deal struck today to be implemented quickly. We will be pressing for the process for provisional application of the agreement to be speeded up, and also encouraging the Commission to continue work on addressing remaining non-tariff barriers which hinder trade with Japan.”*

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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.