

## Digital – the biggest transforming reality for retail & wholesale

### - First EuroCommerce Digital Lecture -

Digitalisation is transforming retail and wholesale. Our sector employs 29 million Europeans, and offers a valuable entry point into the world of work for no less than 1 in 5 young people. European e-commerce saw 14% increase in revenue in 2017 and in the same year, as an EU average, 57% of consumers purchased online at least once. The future of retail and wholesale and how innovation is crucial for businesses to survive in the digital age were the topics of the inaugural EuroCommerce Digital Lecture which took place today in the margins of the European Business Summit.

On the occasion of this inaugural lecture, Kenneth Bengtsson, President of EuroCommerce, said: *“The digital revolution is changing the way people live, what they buy and how they buy it. Our sector is used to an ever-changing landscape of competition and consumer demand, and reinventing itself to meet those challenges. But the rate of change has accelerated and will continue to do so. This is why we dedicate our first EuroCommerce Digital Lecture to the topic of innovation.”*

Martin Wild, Chief Innovation Officer of the MediaMarkt-Saturn Retail Group, and the keynote speaker of the Lecture, commented:

*“The speed of digitalization keeps accelerating and it’s important for us to stay ahead. As customer experience and convenience are crucial, we, as retailers, have to innovate, experiment and get customer feedback fast. Retail in the future will include robots guiding us, augmented and virtual reality merging on- and offline worlds to create an all-new shopping experience, and artificial intelligence will help to hyper-personalize the customer experience. To support the crucial need for innovation, we created the international accelerator Retailtech Hub. It provides start-ups focused on retail-innovation with a platform to connect with established corporations.”*

Christian Verschueren, Director-General at EuroCommerce, added:

*“Forward-looking policies should help the transition and seek to establish a level playing field among operators and channels of distribution. It should also entail retailers and wholesalers to ensure they are able to embrace emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and blockchain. We also need a dedicated programme to help SMEs adopt the new technologies and have access to the expertise needed to go online. In this regard, we praise the recent Commission guide for revitalising the small retail sector and the efforts to support the transition. Equally crucial is working with educational and vocational training systems to ensure that young people and workers are equipped with the skills needed in the digital economy.”*

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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.*