

Joint action needed to tackle problems of plastic waste

Speaking today ahead of the European Parliament vote on the Plastics directive, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren warned that the directive needs to be implemented properly and to avoid distorting the Single Market:

“We are as a sector already actively doing our bit in reducing plastic waste, but to do so effectively we need consistent implementation, and the engagement of the whole supply chain and public authorities to achieve real reductions in single-use plastic and marine litter. Without a proper waste management infrastructure and sufficient recycling facilities we will not achieve a circular economy or the objectives of this directive”.

While retailers and wholesalers have doubts about certain parts of the final compromise, particularly on waste and litter management systems, we welcome the flexibility that the directive allows for economic actors to use alternative or existing measures to reach the waste management targets under the directive. But above all, the Commission needs to issue clear guidelines to ensure that the directive is implemented consistently and in a way which is workable.

Retailers and wholesalers have actively engaged in decreasing the volume of plastics used in their stores and in the supply chain and thus their impact on the environment. A number of our members have made pledges on plastics reduction with the [European Commission](#), and others committed through the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#) or the [Consumer Goods Forum](#).

In concrete terms, these commitments mean the absolute elimination of unnecessary single-use plastics items, higher levels of recycled content in products, and innovative approaches such as “natural branding”, with laser printing directly on the peel of fruit and vegetables to eliminate plastic stickers or other packaging.

Verschueren added:

“Looking beyond today’s vote, the Commission will have important work to do in producing implementation guidelines to ensure consistent rules across Europe on crucial elements of the directive like the definition of single-use plastics and the criteria on the clean-up costs of litter, and ensuring commitment by the whole supply chain.”

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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 global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. 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.