

## **EuroCommerce at World Retail Congress: 'Engage with politicians and keep asking for open markets'**

Speaking this morning at the World Retail Congress in Amsterdam, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren said: *"Over the next five years, the new European Parliament and Commission will need to address multiple challenges, both external and internal, for Europe. Globally, and in many of our markets we see a worrying increase in protectionism. Populist voices offer simple but wrong solutions to complex issues, and risk the welfare of the people they claim to represent. The retail and wholesale sector is a major player in building Europe for the next generation, but also uniquely vulnerable to adverse economic and policy movements. This is particularly true when we all face fundamental changes – in business models, in the way customers buy, in supply chain relations and the competitive landscape, driven by digital technology and changing consumer demand."*

Retailers, wholesalers, importers and exporters, all rely on goods and services moving freely across Europe - and the world. In Europe, the single market is our most effective tool for growth and jobs, yet it is being nibbled away at by populist policies. The international trading system, which has brought so much prosperity to the world over the last 70 years, is being undermined by the same protectionist approaches.

Verschueren added:

*"Trade wars are destructive, and do damage to economies and individuals. As a sector, we need to communicate to a wide audience the benefits of open markets and free trade, both within Europe and globally. This means preserving and building on a fair and balanced system to allow countries all around the world to trade on their strengths in a way which benefits everyone."*

The EuroCommerce Director-General spoke at a session with leaders of international retail associations from China and USA on how to ensure that the voice of retail is strong and clear in advocating the approaches at national, European, and global level needed to drive positive change in policies. Verschueren commented: *"We need a clear voice of retail across the world to combat short-sighted protectionist policies. Politicians are increasingly asking retailers to speak out for the benefit they bring to societies. This is what we do and are encouraging the leaders to do more themselves as well, collectively through our associations, and individually as company leaders."*

EuroCommerce is partnering for the second year with the World Retail Congress (WRC) in their annual event. The Congress brings together leaders from across the industry to discuss the future of global retailing.

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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.*