

## **‘Single window’ a real step forward to simplifying customs procedures**

Speaking on the publication of the European Commission proposal on a ‘single window’ for customs today, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren commented:

*“Together with digitalisation of customs procedures, the Single Window will be a major help to businesses trading cross-border to reduce compliance costs and speed up customs processing. With business suffering under COVID, this is a very welcome step towards modernising customs and reducing regulatory burdens”.*

The Commission proposal will eventually enable economic operators to electronically lodge all the information required by customs and non-customs legislation for EU cross-border movements of goods through a single portal. The Commission has recognised the importance of better exchange of information and an improved risk assessment in its Customs Union Action Plan. This should help ensure that goods entering the EU are correctly imported and safe, and that fraud on products imported from third countries (customs duties and VAT) is significantly reduced. In this context, retailers and wholesalers attach very great importance to the proper implementation of the VAT e-commerce package on 1 July 2021 (already delayed from 1 January 2021 because of COVID-19), as agreed unanimously by all Member States.

Verschueren stressed that efficient and modern customs procedures are playing a central role in improving the competitiveness of European businesses of all sizes:

*“Bureaucratic burdens at the border weigh heavily on importers and exporters. Simpler, consistently applied customs processing will have a direct impact on trading costs, and we will be engaging fully in dialogue with the Commission on their very welcome Customs Action Plan.”*

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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.*