

Retailers and wholesalers need competitive, secure data spaces to drive digital growth

EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren spoke today on the publication of the Commission draft Data Governance Act, which promotes data sharing and a common European Data space:

“All sectors and ecosystems rely heavily on data, and the ability to share it safely. Our sector has acted to embrace the opportunities of the data economy to meet ever-changing consumer demands and to help us grow our businesses. The COVID crisis has accelerated the already rapid digitalisation of retail and wholesale.”

The European data economy is set to be worth more than €1,000 billion in 5 years’ time and will be a major driver of the economic growth and global competitiveness Europe needs in the coming years to overcome the crisis.

The data economy helps our sector to foster innovation and improve services to consumers and business customers. We believe in the need to encourage international data flows with trusted partners that meet the safety, privacy and security requirements Europe’s citizens expect. Now, more than ever, international cooperation and data sharing will be needed to spur recovery.

That is why we are pressing for a framework for European-based, data driven eco-systems which can compete globally. Common European Data Spaces must provide legal certainty, secure privacy and cybersecurity, and competition safeguards. Much of this can be achieved with proper implementation of existing regulation, and promoting, within competition rules and protecting IP rights, cross-sectoral data sharing between different data spaces. This is a priority for a sector like ours which depends on a wide range of suppliers and is at the centre of many ecosystems.

Mandatory data sharing should only be a last resort in case of market failure; voluntary sharing should be the norm, and will be core to building a stronger data economy. But this needs trust among players and a secure, safe, and trustworthy environment for data sharing.

Verschueren added:

“Europe is lagging behind competitors in the US and in Asia in data. To bridge this gap, we need an approach which builds trusted European data spaces and strong European competitors. But this means striking a balance between keeping European data secure without closing off to European enterprises the scope for innovating, competing and growing on the international stage”.

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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.