

EuroCommerce's DG stresses policy and investment needs at World Retail Congress

EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren is speaking at the World Retail Congress conference in London today, and said

“COVID is a global pandemic and its impact is global, particularly for a people-facing sector such as retail. We have heard from many of our members in Europe that a worrying number of shops will not stay open once current support measures end. This is in part the result of repeated and unpredictable government lockdowns over the last 18 months, but also a symptom of the acceleration by the pandemic of the fundamental transformation of the sector to digital and online sales. Retailers small and large, suffering from historically low margins, need urgent government support to make the investment necessary for digitalisation and sustainability. This is an economic and social imperative needing decisive action not only for our sector but all the other parts of the economy and the local communities we serve.”

He is speaking to OECD G20 and G7 sherpa Nicolas Pinaud, and in a panel with Matt Shay, President and CEO of the US National Retail Federation, and Helen Dickinson, CEO of the British Retail Consortium, on issues surrounding the measures needed to maintain the signs of positive recovery in recent months, in part due to government support.

The panel with Christian Verschueren, Matt Shay and Helen Dickinson is part of the regular WRC Industry Leaders' Forum exchanges, bringing together the heads of some of the world's most important retail trade associations in order to hear how they see the current challenges and the action they are taking to support their members. They will discuss the impact of COVID on the sector, what governments can learn from it, and the government support needed to avoid a crisis in a sector dependent on, but also a driver of consumer confidence and growth.

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 28 countries and 5 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale is the link between producers and consumers. Over a billion times a day, retailers and wholesalers distribute goods and provide an essential service to millions of business and individual customers. The sector generates 1 in 7 jobs, offering a varied career to 26 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.