

Retailers and wholesalers press for competition rules to continue to prioritise consumers

EuroCommerce welcomed Commission Competition Director-General Olivier Guersent today to its latest Policy Talk. EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren, said:

“This is a great opportunity to exchange views with the Commission on a number of crucial aspects of Europe’s important competition policy. The retail and wholesale environment is transforming fundamentally, to become more digital and greener. Both are demanding major investments in our industry to remain competitive. At the same time, it faces continued pressures from multinational manufacturers and regulators. These put further strains on a sector already operating on very low and decreasing margins. For retailers and wholesalers to continue providing its suppliers and customers with an essential service, and a wide choice at very competitive prices, competition rules must continue to prioritise consumers.”

In his speech and exchanges based on audience questions, Mr Guersent dealt with the role of competition rules in supporting industry policy goals, the Commission approach to the biggest review of competition rules for many years, and the opportunity this presents to update them to address the challenges of digitalisation, sustainability and maintaining consumer purchasing power. He was also able to update the audience on key aspects of the review in respect of vertical and horizontal competition rules, as well as the Digital Markets Act, merger control and market definitions.

He also covered how the Commission will approach the ongoing problems faced by merchants in respect of an only partially regulated payments markets in which card schemes have been able to increase their fees to the tune of 1.5 billion euros annually over the last 18 months. This has already cancelled out all of the benefits of the caps imposed on consumer card payments under the Interchange Fee Regulation in 2015, and the fees go on rising.

---ENDS---