

Retailers and wholesalers to engage in Pact for Skills

On the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Commission's Pact for Skills, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschuereen announced today that retailers and wholesalers will accept the invitation to organise the Pact for Skills for the Retail Ecosystem (including wholesale):

"The Pact for Skills is a great opportunity for retailers and wholesalers across Europe to demonstrate their already considerable commitment to the up- and reskilling of the European workforce. We welcome the recognition by the European Commission of retail and wholesale as an important ecosystem driving Europe's economic recovery, and our ecosystem's strong record in equipping its workforce with a wide range of skills."

As the first private sector employer, retail and wholesale directly provide 26 million Europeans with rewarding jobs. It continues to offer opportunities to many young people to grow their skills and develop their careers. Retail and wholesale run some of the most innovative and popular vocational education in Europe, such as digital apprenticeships supporting e-commerce operations. Equally important, continuous learning in the workplace ensures our current employees remain up to date with new technologies and rapidly changing consumer preferences by combining formal, informal and non-formal learning.

EuroCommerce will be opening a renewed dialogue with the Commission on digital, sustainability and soft skills in four key areas: Vocational Education and Training (VET), Upskilling, Reskilling and Higher Education. We will be offering a detailed outline of its contribution to the Pact for Skills in the coming weeks, following consultations with the other partners in the ecosystem.

This decision follows the Commission Roundtable on Skills for the Retail Ecosystem in April this year with Commissioners Breton and Schmit, where senior executives from 8 retail companies shared how their companies are investing in up- and reskilling of their employees against a backdrop of a rapidly changing world of work and the digital and green transformation of retail and wholesale. EuroCommerce and its social partner UNI Europa have, for some time, been calling upon the Commission to help SMEs navigate this transformation by co-funding efforts to equip their employees with the skills needed to operate in this rapidly changing sector.

Christian Verschuereen concluded:

"Retail and wholesale is a people business, employing people and serving people. The future of physical retail will be about combining 'high tech and high touch'. Our employees will need to be able to deal with sophisticated technology of increasingly digital and automated systems, while offering a positive customer experience with people skills based on expert advice and personal service. The Pact for Skills can help our member companies and associations exchange good practice and experience in providing skills and training within the ecosystem, help reinforce these efforts, and exchange experience with other ecosystems."

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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.