

## **Retail and wholesale need mobility solutions to support local communities**

With the Commission’s publication of its proposed Urban Mobility Framework today, EuroCommerce Director General Christel Delberghé underlined the importance of retailers and wholesalers as the vital backbone of local communities and in keeping town centres alive.

*“Town centres are sensitive ecosystems in which retail and wholesale, hospitality and other services rely on and interact with each other. A town with a wide range of shops is an attractive place to visit and live and one in which other businesses can prosper. If not, the life of the town risks ebbing away. We are asking the Commission to ensure that the mandatory Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in their proposal involve consultation of all parts of the community including local businesses. This will be vital in creating a balanced approach to sustainable access for customers and deliveries which can allow retailers and wholesalers to continue to serve and maintain the vitality of the community.”*

We fully support measures to make access to towns sustainable, but this needs to ensure a mix of transport solutions for people coming to town to shop, and for the businesses serving them. Convenient and affordable public transport and other soft access solutions will be an important part of creating sustainable urban mobility. But some purchases will need provision of some parking and access for private cars. Last-mile deliveries to town-centre businesses, or from those businesses to consumers, will need optimised access for lorries and vans if the businesses are to continue to be able to operate from the town.

Retailers and wholesalers have long been recognised as the backbone of both urban and rural communities. A survey undertaken in Germany<sup>1</sup> showed that over half of respondents’ main reason for going into a town was for shopping. Another study in Spain<sup>2</sup> showed that 90% of Spanish consumers buy their groceries on foot. Local retail and wholesale provide an essential service to the community, along with an important source of local employment. They interact with entertainment, restaurants and cafes to make a visit to the town centre an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. A town with empty premises quickly becomes less attractive and with it the local community suffers, as we have seen in many places across Europe. SMEs operating in or delivering to town centres are especially vulnerable; many have been hit hard by Covid 19 restrictions and need support to invest in the digital and sustainability transformation. It is therefore essential that retailers and wholesalers are part of the design of sustainable mobility plans.

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<sup>1</sup>[Standortmonitor 2020](#), HDE

<sup>2</sup>[Los supermercados, el modelo más sostenible de distribución alimentaria](#), ASEDAS

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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.*