

Building in energy efficiency – proportionate rules and support for retail and wholesale vital

Commenting today on the European Commission proposal to revise the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, EuroCommerce Director General Christel Delberghe explained how retailers and wholesalers are already contributing to the improvement of the built environment, and highlighted the need for support for our sector to help meet the directive’s objectives:

“We fully support the objectives of the directive. For many years retailers and wholesalers have been upgrading our shops and warehouses regularly to use energy more efficiently and to switch to renewables wherever possible. But, as a sector operating at very low margins, and with 99% of our companies SMEs, we are calling on the Commission and member states to ensure that the obligations on companies are proportionate and that they have adequate support in financing the investments needed to fulfil its objectives”.

Retailers and wholesalers have been active in the roll-out of energy-efficient stores, fundamentally changing their logistics and their own operations to minimise energy consumption, and offering customers charging stations for electric cars, scooters and e-bikes. Wholesalers serving the construction sector and craftsmen are playing their part in providing advice and energy-efficient materials to help make a difference to the environmental impact of the built environment. While much of this also makes commercial sense, the investments involved, and potential regulatory burdens, are significant. For the directive’s and the renovation wave objectives to be achieved, this needs to be addressed.

This is a particularly difficult step for SMEs and many retailers and wholesalers still trying to recover from the impact of the pandemic. Easier access to financing, and support from national recovery plans under the Next Generation EU programme, to cover upfront costs, availability of skilled local staff and better information would help our sector in taking the steps necessary to implement further improvements. We call on the Commission and Member States to ensure that retailers and wholesalers are also able to benefit from such support.

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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.*