

## Rule of Law vital for business and the single market

Commenting on the European Commission's third annual Rule of Law report issued today, Christel Delberghe, Director General Christel Delberghe said:

*"Retail and wholesale companies need a predictable and non-discriminatory environment to be able to provide an essential service to Europe's businesses and consumers. We welcome the Commission's work in highlighting where this is not working, where companies are not all treated equally by public authorities and where it is difficult or nearly impossible to get redress. **We would therefore ask the Commission in future reports to include a comprehensive separate section looking at the impact of such actions on business**".*

The 2022 Rule of law report reports on trends EuroCommerce has been observing over a number of years – a deterioration of rule of law in the EU affecting not only citizens but also businesses operating in the countries in question, but also making it difficult for those operating across borders, and thus undermining the single market. The problems facing our sector include:

- Issues around the independence of the national judiciary and lengthy procedures to seek redress against national authorities' decisions;
- access to the process of making decisions affecting our businesses (no or insufficient stakeholder consultation; regular procedures overridden by 'emergency' measures)
- legislation knowingly in infringements of EU law, or abusing implementation of EU legislation as a pretext to introduce rules incompatible with the measure and/or EU rules.

Retail and wholesale is an ecosystem comprising 5 million enterprises, both large and small, and is Europe's largest private sector employer, providing 26 million Europeans with rewarding jobs. Our sector can work as a driver of consumer demand and help build resilience and Europe's economic recovery in the face of the new economic shocks and inflation resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the aftermath of COVID. But it needs a stable regulatory environment, legal certainty and predictability to be able to invest in providing Europe's 450 million consumers with their daily essentials. The Rule of Law report can play a vital role in ensuring that legal certainty in all EU member states, and hence our request for more focus on business impacts in future reports.

**Contact:**

Daniela Haiduc – +32 473 56 29 36 – [haiduc@eurocommerce.eu](mailto:haiduc@eurocommerce.eu)

Neil McMillan – +32 479 40 22 41 – [mcmillan@eurocommerce.eu](mailto:mcmillan@eurocommerce.eu)

[www.eurocommerce.eu](http://www.eurocommerce.eu)

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*EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 27 countries and 5 million companies, including leading global players and many small businesses. 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.*