

Retail and wholesale – supportive policies can help us help Europe in the energy crisis

Ahead of the Informal Energy Ministers’ meeting today, EuroCommerce Director General Christel Delberghe alerted European decision-makers to the impact of the energy crisis on the retail and wholesale sector, but also signalled its ability to help in finding solutions:

“Retail and wholesale - and its customers - are being hit hard by skyrocketing energy prices. We welcome the underlying principles of the Commission package of measures being discussed today to deal with gas supplies during the winter. But we ask that retailers and wholesalers, who need uninterrupted energy to provide an essential service to their customers, are treated as a priority sector in any power reduction measures, and that they are supported in switching to alternative sources and increasing the energy efficiency of their buildings.”

Retail and wholesale is a significant user of energy in cooling, heating, ventilation and refrigeration needed in providing an essential service to their customers. Our sector can be part of the solution and is already active in reducing its use of electricity and gas and switching to alternatives. It has the capacity to help accelerate the energy transition. To address the short-term challenges of high energy prices, and to achieve these longer-term objectives, our sector needs to be recognised nationally and at EU level as energy intensive, to benefit from the support needed, from a supportive regulatory framework, to accelerate investment.

We therefore call on the Commission and member states to act on 5 major priorities:

- Provide transparency under the Temporary Framework for State Aid to help companies to respond to the energy crisis
- Produce guidance on how to implement the 3% threshold under the Energy Taxation directive to ensure non-discriminatory access to state aid support, both to meet the short-term challenge of spiralling energy costs, improve energy efficiency of our premises, and to invest in the longer term in access to and generating alternative energy.
- Adopt measures such as tax or VAT reductions urgently to reduce current energy costs.
- Pursue the changes proposed under REPowerEU to streamline and accelerate issuing of permits and allow viable investment to maximise our capacity to generate alternative energy and share this where this exceeds own-use needs.
- Match obligations under REPowerEU and in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive realistically with the ability of operators to bear the cost of the considerable investments these involve, along with availability of equipment and skilled labour in installing solar panels or e-mobility charging stations. The present targets do not take account of this.

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