

N°245 | 6 December 2022

Dear readers, we are testing a new mailing system for our newsletters.

Feel free to [give us your feedback!](#)

The EuroCommerce Team

In this issue

- [EuroCommerce Conference on Sustainability](#)
- [Skills Partnership with UNI Europa](#)
- [Pact for Skills](#)
- [Store & distribution centre visit with Commission](#)
- [Ecolabel brochure webinar launch with BEUC & EEB](#)
- [‘Digital for SME’ OECD Roundtable in Paris](#)
- [HoC of Commissioner Schinas on Cybersecurity](#)
- [Enterprise Promotion Awards 2022 in Prague](#)
- [Trialogues concluded for GPSR](#)
- [2nd circular economy package & green claims delayed](#)
- [DG JUST on Consumer protection](#)
- [Commissioner Kyriakides on Farm to Fork with EP](#)
- [EP Agri Committee on Food security & food chain](#)
- [VAT and customs files publication postponed](#)

[EuroCommerce Conference: Sustainability - an opportunity in times of crisis](#)

On 29 November we hosted a [conference](#) on “Embracing transformation & uncertainty: ensuring retail and wholesale continue their essential role”. We engaged with high-level industry representatives and heard from the Commission about how they can support investments in the transformation of our sector in these currently challenging times.

During his opening statement, EuroCommerce President Juan Manuel Morales highlighted the fact that our sector is the largest private employer and important for the economic recovery of the EU. Franck Laizet from McKinsey and EuroCommerce Vice-President Jacques Creyssel discussed the outcomes of our transformation study and the large amount of investments needed for retail and wholesale of up to €600 billion until 2030. ‘We are truly in a sustainability revolution now. In a few years we will sell completely different products. We have to imagine a new world and we have no time to waste’, commented Mr Creyssel.

During the conference, a special panel debated why sustainability can be an opportunity in times of crisis and how to drive more sustainable development. All the panellists agreed that the sector is willing to drive sustainability transformation in the business, although investment needs are quite high ([EuroCommerce and McKinsey Investment Study](#)). Chris Guest (KingFisher) said that “as a home improvement

retailer, offering sustainable products has become more important than ever”. Consumers are more and more asking for sustainable products. For this to happen, Britta Gallus (Metro) believes that the integration between sustainability and business strategies is crucial. A recurrent theme in the panel discussion was the need for collaboration among different stakeholders and actors across the value chain. Net zero emissions can only be met via collaboration, said Doireann Breathnach (Accenture).

Antje Gerstein (HDE) reported that our sector is increasing its engagement with civil society organisations, as the sustainability transformation must be addressed across different stakeholders. Possible barriers to keeping sustainability on the agenda are the lack of standards and collaboration, and greenwashing. Regulation can be helpful in creating a level playing field, but a profound dialogue is also needed.

Next steps

We will continue our engagement on sustainability and add more best practices from the sector to our [sustainable commerce pages](#), while facilitating collaboration efforts on the European level.

Contact: [Sofia Ghezzi](#) or [Els Bedert](#)

Signing the Skills Partnership with UNI Europa

Together with UNI Europa we launched the Skills Partnership for retail and wholesale under the European Commission’s Pact 4 Skills initiative aiming to promote a culture of life-long learning in the build-up to the 2023 Year of Skills.

Despina Spanou, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Schinas at the European Commission was there to congratulate the sector on this accomplishment. The [Skill: Partnership covers apprenticeships, up- and re- skilling for workers across Europe. Commissioner for the Internal Market Thierry Breton said](#): *“This large-scale partnership under the Pact for Skills will help retail businesses embrace the green and digital transition, increase their resilience and remain competitive. Consumers will also benefit from a better performing retail ecosystem”*.



Left from right:
Christel Delberghe, DG
EuroCommerce
Despina Spanou, Head of Cabinet of
Commissioner Schinas
Oliver Roethig, Regional Secretary
UNI Europa

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit, commented: *“We welcome the new large-scale skills partnership for the ecosystem with the largest workforce in the EU. The Pact for Skills brings together all relevant players in the retail and wholesale value chain, to work together and tackle skills challenges in an inclusive and fair way.*

Next steps

The social partners will start to build the Skills Partnership. The Jobs & Skills committee will work on a work programme for 2023.

Contact: [Christiaan Boiten](#) or [Leena Whittaker](#)



**TRANSFORMING
THE EU RETAIL &
WHOLESALE SECTOR**

Transforming the retail and wholesale sector – new report

Research by EuroCommerce and McKinsey estimates that the triple transformation of sustainability, digitalisation, and skills by 2030, requires the EU retail and wholesale sector to invest up to €600 billion to meet its digital and sustainability challenges and bridge the gap with other regions in the world.

The retail and wholesale transformation is also an opportunity for Europe to meet its digital and sustainability ambition and build resilience.

Not investing is not an option! We need help and have identified 5 priority areas where support from the EU and local governments will trigger change.

[Read the report](#)

[Social partners, Commission discuss challenges under the Pact for Skills](#)

During a panel session at the EuroCommerce conference, incoming Jobs and Skills Committee Chair Raimund Lainer (SPAR Austria), former Chair Jeroen Burger (Ahold Delhaize) and Regional Secretary of our EU-level social partner UNI Europa Oliver Roethig discussed with Manuela Geleng, Director for Skills at DG Employment key challenges facing the retail and wholesale sector.

The main challenge for the Skills Partnership for the Retail Ecosystem to be developed under the Pact for Skills is to further promote a culture of life-long learning among the sector's 26 million employees. The social partners agreed that while many of the education and training infrastructure is in place, it needs to be modernised. Director Geleng encouraged the social partners to enlist the help of education and training providers and public authorities throughout Europe to make the Large Scale Skills Partnership a success.

Opportunities are needed to bring the business side and the worker side together in developing the incentives to upskills, building on collaboration and communication to overcome barriers. The measures that are put in place need to be effective, to encourage particularly SMEs so that programmes that can accelerate change can be rolled out (e.g. in the uptake of digital skills).

Contact: [Christiaan Boiten](#) or [Leena Whittaker](#)

[Visiting a store and distribution centre with European Commission representatives](#)

Together with the Colruyt Group, we welcomed a delegation of European Commission representatives for a site visit focused on sustainability, what this means for a food retailer, what the key challenges are and what the sector needs to support more sustainable food systems. During a full day, we visited a distribution centre and a store and followed up with dedicated conversations on sustainability, energy sustainable choice and cooperation with farmers.

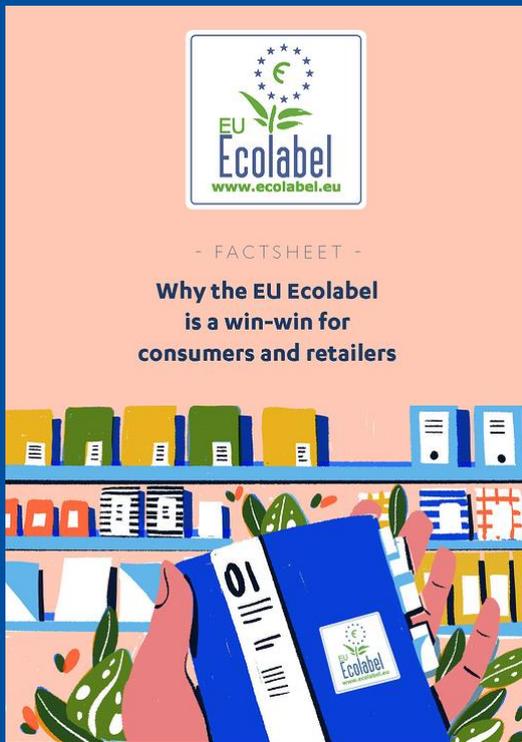


The Colruyt team was very open in showcasing their sustainability commitments and good practices to the participants from DG AGRI, DG SANTE, DG GROW, DG COMP and DG RTD.

Next steps

We are looking forward to organising more store visits in 2023 and stimulating lively discussions with European Commission DGs and MEPs.

Contact: [Daniela Haiduc](#)



[Learn more](#)

[Watch the Launch Webinar](#)

'The EU Ecolabel: what benefits for retailers?'

This year, the EU Ecolabel is turning 30. This EU-wide voluntary label promotes products of environmental excellence, based on reliable and scientific information. Since then, it has become the best-known ecolabel by consumers in many EU countries.

The number of EU Ecolabel products and licences keeps growing. As of September 2022, there were over 87,000 EU Ecolabel goods and services on the EU market. However, in many supermarkets, shops and e-commerce platforms across Europe, the EU Ecolabel (and equivalent national ecolabels) is still outnumbered by unverified commercial green claims.^μ

[Read more about how retailers can keep widening the EU Ecolabel offer](#)

[Webinar launches new EU Ecolabel brochure with BEUC and EEB](#)

On 23 November, we organised a webinar on the EU Ecolabel together with the European Consumer organisation BEUC and the European Environmental Bureau, Europe's largest network of environmental citizens' organisations. You can replay the event [here](#). The webinar was part of a broader communication around the 30th anniversary of the EU Ecolabel. During the webinar, Silvia Ferratini from DG ENVI presented the EU Ecolabel and the Commission's activities that are relevant for retailers and highlighted how retailers can nudge consumers towards more sustainable consumption habits by offering EU Ecolabel products all while staying ahead of future advertising rules. Emese Gulyás, from the Association of Conscious Consumers in Hungary presented the consumer point of view stressing that retailers can guide consumers through confusing greenwashing messages by choosing and offering EU Ecolabel products, while Kereto Gormsen from Dansk Erhverv shared the perspective of retailers on the label. He focused on the retailers' need for reliable data to choose the right EU Ecolabel products, identify the producer and test products in stores.

Next steps

We will make use of the new brochure in our communication and members that are interested in translating the brochure into other languages should contact us.

[4th 'Digital for SME' OECD Roundtable in Paris](#)

Our adviser for internal market, Savvina Papadaki, participated in the 4th 'Digital for SME' Roundtable organised by the OECD in Paris on 23 November. The meeting focussed on how digitalisation can help SMEs weather the “perfect storm” of disruptions in value chains, trade and energy supply, inflationary pressures, and tighter credit conditions. It represented an excellent opportunity to strengthen the attention of the international policy community on the long-term transformational needs of SMEs, including more sustainable and digitalised business models, approaches to data management, and uptake of advanced digital technologies (e.g., A.I., blockchain). It was particularly interesting to discuss new evidence and analyses on digital skills for SMEs and the evolution of hybrid retail, drawing on a survey undertaken by the OECD in cooperation with 'Digital for SME' partners. We also shared with the community the main areas of concern for retail and wholesale as illustrated in [our joint study with McKinsey](#) on the triple transformation.

Contact: [Savvina Papadaki](#)

Get involved and help get better deals for consumers!



Territorial Supply Constraints: join our upcoming campaign!

On 8 December, we will launch a campaign calling for action by the Commission to address territorial supply constraints (TSCs). Using an animated video, the campaign will draw a link between the cost-of-living crisis and the deliberate strategy of large multinational brand suppliers to fragment the Single Market, denying retailers the freedom to source and find the best deal for consumers. The video will link to a dedicated webpage explaining the problem and providing an easy way to call on policymakers to act. We encourage members to support the campaign by sharing the animation nationally and using the hashtag #SingleMarket4All.

If you want to support this campaign, please contact [Leena](#), [Niccolo](#) or [Daniela](#).

[Exchanges on cybersecurity with the Head of Cabinet for Commissioner Schinas](#)

We took part in a gathering organised by AECA - The American European Community Association - on cybersecurity, with an address by Despina Spanou the Head of Cabinet for Commissioner Schinas. The EU has been particularly proactive in cybersecurity but it identified risks in preparedness mechanisms that require the disclosure of data or sensitive information from businesses to public authorities, especially where public authorities may not have robust systems to protect such information. This is another area where the burden on operators from the wave of regulation that designates multiple types of enforcement and monitoring is becoming particularly crippling for SMEs.

Next steps

Our task force on cybersecurity will address all relevant topics in this matter. We invite interested members to join the task force.

Contact: [Leena Whittaker](#) or [Ilya Bruggeman](#)

[European Enterprise Promotion Awards 2022 in Prague](#)

Our Director for the Internal Market and Digital, Ilya Bruggeman, had the honour to represent us at the European Commission led SME Assembly. On this occasion, he handed over the European Enterprise Promotion Award for best performing SME in the category of 'Improving the Business Environment & Supporting the Digital Transition' to [LifeSciences@Work Venture Challenge](#) from the Netherlands.

Many hardworking European SMEs were awarded for their efforts in a number of categories including entrepreneurial spirit, skills, internationalisation, sustainable transition and inclusiveness. The Grand Jury Price went to the amazing project of entrepreneurial spirit 'love to be free' from UNIZO, the Belgian/Flemish SME association.

The award ceremony took place at the SME Assembly 2022 in Prague, which provided great insights and discussion on how SMEs innovate and compete and contribute to the digital and green transition.

Next steps

We will organise European awards for the retail and wholesale sector for our 30th anniversary next year. Details will follow soon.

Contact: [Ilya Bruggeman](#) or [Daniela Haiduc](#)

[Trialogues concluded for the General Product Safety Regulation](#)

On 28 November, negotiators from Parliament and Council reached a [provisional political agreement](#) to update the [EU's rules on product safety of non-food consumer](#)

[products \(GPSR proposal\)](#)). This regulation updates the current rules to ensure that products sold both offline and online are safe and up to European standards. Pending in depth analysis of the text, we note the following: a product can be sold only if there is a responsible economic operator established in the EU. The GPSR introduces obligations for online marketplaces. National surveillance authorities will be able to order online marketplaces to remove or disable access to offers of dangerous products without undue delay and in any event within two working days. Providers of online marketplaces will have to make reasonable efforts to check randomly for dangerous products. Furthermore, in case of a safety recall or warning, economic operators and online marketplaces will need to inform all affected consumers and widely disseminate the information; in addition to informing consumers of their right to repair, replace or an adequate refund. The GPSR modernises the rapid alert system for dangerous products ("[Safety Gate](#)" portal) to allow unsafe products to be detected more effectively and will be more accessible. Lastly, the position of the market surveillance authorities is strengthened.

Next steps

We will further analyse the agreement and inform you accordingly. The European Parliament and Council will need to formally approve the agreement before it will be published in the Official Journal. The new rules will apply 18 months after entering into force.

Contact: [Anne Birk Mortensen](#) or [Sofia Ghezzi](#)



SAVE THE DATE



63 RD UFEMAT CONGRESS

UFEMAT 20-22/04/2023 • DUBLIN • IRELAND

20 - 22 April 2023
DUBLIN IRELAND

Mark this date in your calendar now!
The official invitation with all details and registration form will follow shortly.

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE THEMES

-  **Due Diligence:** in collaboration with EuroCommerce
-  **Packaging:** "Recycled content in the packaging material"
-  **Safety at Work & Vocational Training Building Materials:** in collaboration with Constructiv and ISSA Construction (International Social Security Association)

"A vision for success"

63rd UFEMAT Congress
20 - 22 April 2023 | Dublin, Ireland

[Register now](#)

[Commission publishes second circular economy package on packaging and delays green claims proposal](#)

On 30 November the Commission published the second circular economy package of 2022, consisting of a [proposal for a Regulation on packaging and packaging waste](#) to replace the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and a [Communication about the EU policy framework on biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics](#). The packaging proposal aims to prevent packaging waste (e.g. by restricting unnecessary packaging and promoting reusable and refillable packaging solutions), boost high-quality recycling by requiring packaging to be fully recyclable by 2030 and to create a well-functioning market for secondary raw materials. The Communication wants to bring more clarity on biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics and sets out the conditions to ensure that the environmental impact of their production and consumption is positive. A proposal on substantiating green claims, originally also expected to be published, was delayed to 2023. Together with IFOAM Organics Europe, the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming, we [recirculated our joint letter from March 2022](#) to the Commission to highlight our concerns regarding the overlap of the green claims proposal with the ongoing discussions on sustainability labelling for food.

Next steps

We are organising an ad-hoc meeting to discuss the packaging proposal on 13 December and will keep you informed about developments relating to the substantiating green claims proposal.

Contact: [Nick Dornheim](#)

[Discussing consumer protection online with DG JUST](#)

Our Director for the Internal Market and Digital, Ilya Bruggeman, participated in a panel discussion organised by European Commission's DG Justice on consumer protection online, together with Ursula Pachl from BEUC - The European Consumer Organisation, Prof. Hans-Wolfgang Micklitz from the European University Institute, Antonio Mancini from the Italian Antitrust Authority and Egelyn Braun from European Commission. He called for better enforcement of the existing rules. Consumer trust is essential for retail and a safe and trustworthy online environment is fundamental. Effective and efficient EU Consumer Law provides a level playing field for all retailers. Therefore, enforcement authorities need to step up and test whether existing rules are fit for purpose and future proof. We need to help retailers, and all traders, to be compliant instead of introducing burdensome rules and higher fines.

Contact: [Ilya Bruggeman](#)

[Commissioner Kyriakides debates Farm to Fork with the European Parliament](#)

On 30 November 2022, Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, had an exchange of views with MEPs from the European Parliament's ENVI Committee on upcoming proposals under the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Commissioner highlighted the importance of the transition to sustainability and listed key initiatives to progress, namely **sustainable use of pesticides (SUR)**, **food information**, **sustainable food systems**, **food waste**, **new genomic techniques** and **animal welfare**. On pesticides (SUR), the Commissioner acknowledged that the sensitive areas and the setting of targets are controversial topics, but she argued that standing still is not an option and cooperation is key. Regarding Food Information, the Commissioner could not provide more information on the timeline of the proposal but ensured MEPs that technical work is ongoing. Veronique Trillet-Lenoir (MEP /Renew Europe) stated that the EU needed an ambitious nutritional labelling; it is our duty, as she said, to provide consumers with a "mandatory, harmonised, science-based and understandable label" and this legislation should help consumers lead healthier lifestyles rather than giving in to national pressure and interests. As to the Animal Welfare legislation, Commissioner Kyriakides said that this is a big priority of her portfolio, and a science-based proposal will be published after the summer of 2023. She assured MEPs that if a proposal is not included in the Commission programme 2023, this does not mean that it will not happen. The recording of the exchange is available [here](#).

Next steps

EuroCommerce will continue to monitor closely the Farm to Fork initiatives of policymakers.

Contact: [Marilena Papaeti](#) or [Els Bedert](#)



VACANCIES

We still have one open position:

[Adviser Jobs and Skills](#)

[EP Agri Committee examines food security and speculation in the food chain](#)

On 28 November, the Committee on Agriculture of the European Parliament discussed the matter of food security and specifically the work of the Commission

forum on food security (EFSCM -the European Food Security and Crisis Mechanism), of which EuroCommerce is a member.

The Commission's DG AGRI advised that the most important short-term driver of food security in Europe is food affordability, an issue we have stressed several times in the EFSCM meetings. The Commission identified climate change as the most important long-term driver of food security, committing once again to the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

When probed by MEPs on the issue of speculation by organisations in the food supply chain, DG AGRI's Michael Scannell noted that the Commission is looking into the issue, but no concluding evidence of speculation had been found so far. This echoes recent comments made by the OECD which noted that experts tend to be sceptical about claims of speculation.

Next steps

We will continue to engage with MEPs and the Commission on the retail and wholesale perspective on food security. DG AGRI is holding its annual Agricultural Outlook Conference on 8 and 9 December. You can find more information [here](#).

Contact: [Niccolo Ciulli](#)

Commission postpones publication of key VAT and customs files

The European Commission has announced at short notice that it would postpone the long-awaited publication of the VAT in the digital age initiative to 7 December 2022. The initiative is expected to bring new rules on VAT reporting obligations and e-invoicing, the VAT treatment of the platform economy and single VAT registration. On the latter, we have been pushing for a solution that allows the use of the VAT One-Stop-Shop for cases where own-inventory goods are stored in other Member States. We have launched a dedicated campaign and actively engaged with the Commission and Member States.

The Commission has now also announced that the planned Review of the Union Customs Code will only be released in the course of 2023. The review of the Union Customs Code's legal and IT framework will take stock of the state of play of implementation in all Member States and evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and coherence with related EU policies. Our position highlights the need for best practice in legislative creation and the most simple, effective processes and tools for both customs authorities and trade with the least impact on commercial operations. It also mentions taking the EU Customs Union to the next level and seizing global opportunities, especially those created through digitalisation and omnichannel commerce.

Next steps

Together with Ecommerce Europe, we will organise an event focussing on the single VAT registration aspect of the VAT in the digital age initiative on 25 January 2023.

Contact: [Harald Past](#)

Save the date

The 2023 EuroCommerce & EU meetings calendar will be available for our next edition.

Next EuroCommerce meetings:

7 December - IMCO Committee
13 December - Wholesale Interest Group

Previous Issues

[#244 - 22 November 2022](#)

[#243 - 8 November 2022](#)

[#242 - 25 October 2022](#)

[#241 - 11 October 2022](#)

[#240 - 27 September 2022](#)

Our next InBrief will be issued on
20 December 2022

Should you have any questions or
comments, please contact
[Rémi Guastalli](#).

Editor: [Christel Delberghe](#)



[Terms and conditions](#) | [Privacy policy](#)

Your personal data such as your name and contact details are collected by EuroCommerce for the purposes of managing membership, sending newsletters and policy updates and invitations to events. If you want to obtain a copy of the data we are processing, to rectify such data or to object to the processing as such, you can contact our Data Manager, [Fabienne Bastings](#).

EuroCommerce, Avenue des Nerviens 85, Etterbeek, Bruxelles 1040, Belgium

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)