

Despite recession retail companies moving forward on sustainability

PRESS RELEASE

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Brussels: Tomorrow, 3 March, retail sector representatives will meet Commissioners Kuneva and Dimas to launch the Retail Forum at an event held in the Committee of Regions. This Forum is the first of two specific initiatives which make up the Retailers Environmental Action Programme (REAP).

Despite the recession, 20 companies and 4 federations will sign up to this new environmental programme drawn up by retailers. The Commission action plan on sustainable consumption and production and industrial policy required the establishment of a Retail Forum. REAP goes beyond this basic requirement with its second component which is a matrix of Environmental Action Points (MAP). This will encourage companies – to publicly record their individual sustainability commitments.

The Forum will be a focal point which will determine strategies for driving forward the sustainable consumption agenda. It will involve all the players while ensuring innovation and competitiveness in the commerce sector. The MAP matrix will stimulate competition among companies to show leadership on environmental sustainability around the three pillars of the matrix: what we sell, how we sell and how we communicate.

“More than any other sector, commerce is driven by competition and consumer demand, which particularly involves sustainability,” commented Xavier Durieu, Secretary General of EuroCommerce. “The winner in this exercise will undoubtedly be consumers and, in the long-term, society at large.”

Pierre-Olivier Beckers, President and CEO of the Delhaize Group, representing the European Retail Round Table (ERRT), will say, “We are delighted to launch this REAP initiative. Retailers are focusing more and more on sustainability not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because our customers – and our stakeholders - demand it. There is no alternative. Despite the very difficult economic climate, the move towards sustainable consumption will only deepen and accelerate. It is part of our strategy. Indeed, the younger generation of consumers and of our staff associates are even more demanding in terms of what they want us to do. They will keep the pressure on us into the future, a pressure we accept and welcome.”

All the relevant documents are available on our website:
<http://www.eurocommerce.be/content.aspx?PageId=41456&lang=EN>

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EuroCommerce and the commerce sector

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 31 European countries.

Commerce plays a unique role in the European economy, acting as the link between manufacturers and the nearly 500 million consumers across Europe over a billion times a day. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, generating 11% of the EU's GDP. One company out of three in Europe is active in the commerce sector. Over 95% of the 6 million companies in commerce are small and medium-sized enterprises. It also includes some of Europe's most successful companies. The sector is a major source of employment creation: 31 million Europeans work in commerce, which is one of the few remaining job-creating activities in Europe. It also supports millions of dependent jobs throughout the supply chain from small local suppliers to international businesses.

ERRT:

The European Retail Round Table was established to express the views of large retailers on a range of issues of common interest focused on EU public policy. Their businesses operate worldwide and represent a cross-section of the retail sector. Collectively, ERRT members have a turnover of more than €400 billion and employ 2.3 million people in over 40,000 stores.

ERRT Members: Asda Wal*Mart, C&A, Carrefour Group, Delhaize Group, El Corte Inglés, H&M, IKEA, Inditex, Kingfisher, Marks & Spencer, Mercadona, Metro Group, Royal Ahold and Tesco.
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