

**INVITATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
ON WEDNESDAY 18 AND THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2026 IN BARCELONA**

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the President, Mr Tobias WASMUHT, we have the pleasure of inviting you to our General Assembly and Annual Conference that will take place **as usual in the third week of March, i.e. on Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 March 2026 in Barcelona.**

Barcelona Comerç, our member association, kindly supports this event and has helped prepare an interesting programme.

**Wednesday 18 March** – All participants are first invited to have lunch, followed by the General Assembly (please note that participation in the General Assembly is reserved to the leadership of the member organisations), the opening by Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) of the European Commission, a briefing on the Spanish market and on Barcelona Comerç, and a visit of some unique independent stores on Wednesday afternoon. Barcelona Comerç offers participants the possibility to visit La Pedrera – Casa Milà (an Art Nouveau masterpiece by Antoni Gaudí) before dinner.

The meeting venue is Hotel Catalonia Eixample 1864 (C. Roger de Llúria 60 – 08009 Barcelona), in the famous Art Nouveau district Eixample in the centre of Barcelona. **Rooms have already been pre-booked** (see [registration form](#) and information on page 2).

**Thursday 19 March** – The **Annual Conference on “Independent Retail, Heart of the Community”** will start at 8.30. We count on the participation of Dolors MONTSERRAT, Spanish Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Secretary General of the European People’s Party, Vice-Chair of the Group of the European People’s Party Presidency, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Petitions (PETI), member of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety (ENVI).

The **first session** will be dedicated to **Championing diverse and attractive high streets and lively local communities** with inspiring presentations from Ireland, France, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic; and the **second one** to **Tackling unfair competition from non-EU platforms to preserve local retail** with a panel discussion. The last presentation of the day will be an entertaining keynote speech by Giuseppe Stigliano, a well-known global *marketer* with a “Mediterranean soul”.

Please note that **the programme on 18 March, except for the General Assembly, as well as the Annual Conference are open to external guests and to all members and staff members of your organisation. We invite you to extend this invitation to your colleagues, members and retailers in order to enable them to have fruitful and constructive exchanges with their foreign peers.**

You will find all the practical information on page 2 (accommodation, costs). [The registration form is available online](#). Participants are kindly requested to fill it in **BY WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY**. Should you need additional information, please contact Laurence ([laurence.dessouroux@independentretailleurope.eu](mailto:laurence.dessouroux@independentretailleurope.eu), +32 2 732 46 60).

We look forward to seeing you in Barcelona!

Kind regards,

Else GROEN, Director General

## 1. ACCOMODATION

Rooms have been reserved at the Hotel Catalonia Eixample 1864 (C. Roger de Llúria 60 – 08009 Barcelona). From El Prat International Airport, you can

- take a taxi. Depending on the traffic, the transfer to the hotel will take between 25 and 50 minutes;
- take the direct [Aerobus line](#) to Plaça de Catalunya (a bus every 5 minutes from 7.15 a.m. to 10.30 p.m., a 35 minutes ride).

The price of the rooms amounts to **160€** per room and per night for a **single occupancy**, VAT, city tax and breakfast included. For a **double room** the price amounts to **190€**.

We have reserved rooms from 17<sup>th</sup> until 22<sup>nd</sup> March – for those who wish to stay over the week-end.

Your rooms have already been pre-booked (see [registration form](#)). Participants are kindly requested to pay directly the hotel for their rooms when they check out at the end of their stay.

## 2. PARTICIPATION FEE

The participation fee, which amounts to **275 euro per participant**, covers the costs of Independent Retail Europe for the organisation of this event (meeting room, lunches, etc.).

We would be grateful if you could transfer this fee in euros to our bank account at the bank ING (Avenue Marnix 24, 1000 Brussels) BE24 3630 0638 2438 (BIC: BBRUBEBB).

Please instruct your bank to debit any bank charges for the transfer to the payer.

## 3. VISIT OF LA PEDRERA – CASA MILÀ (GAUDÍ'S BIGGEST HOUSE)

Barcelona Comerç kindly invites the participants to visit the Casa Milà. Please make sure to register for this visit, so as to enable them prepare it in the best way and know the number of participants in advance.

## 4. LANGUAGES

To facilitate the preparation of the seating plan for the dinner, we kindly ask you to indicate in the registration form what languages you speak (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, etc...).

## 5. LEAVING BARCELONA ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON

The Annual Conference will end early enough to enable all participants to fly home on that day. Please note that it's an individual departure to the airport. Buses and trains to the airport leave from stations close to the hotel.

Participants can book their departure flights [from 17.30 onwards](#).