

## PRESS RELEASE

# Independent Retail Europe's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrates the major benefits the independent business model brings to society

Yesterday, Independent Retail Europe's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary event celebrated the major benefits the model of groups of independent retailers brings to society and its critical contribution for SME retail competitiveness. Together with high-level policy makers from the European Parliament and European Commission, independent retailers presented the uniqueness of the [business model of groups of independent retailers](#), what it contributes to an inclusive and sustainable society, and the need for better recognition of its importance by EU policy makers.

**Thomas Nonn, President of Independent Retail Europe**, emphasized the vital role of independent retailers in enriching local communities, offering jobs and contributing to the broader economy. Moreover, he addressed the changing EU regulatory landscape and the challenges for SME retailers to adapt. He highlighted: *"We should recognise that the impact of legislation can diverge for our groups compared to integrated models. It is imperative to have a level playing field that enables groups and their member SME retailers to compete fairly, without facing unnecessary red tape and requirements."*


The [conference](#) brought together independent retailers from across Europe, together with MEPs and high-level officials from the European Commission's DG GROW, DG ENVI and DG EMPL. They discussed the particularity of the widespread but often overlooked business model of groups of independent retailers, its inclusive nature, its key role in providing local jobs and training programmes that provide employees the opportunity to become independent retailers. Moreover, they discussed how independent retail is an integral part of a sustainable economy, allowing many business initiatives, such as the promotion of local products, repair services, food waste prevention, recycling, and energy efficiency, etc. The cooperative model is therefore a dynamic force, ensuring not only economic success for SME retail but also social responsibility, resilience and sustainability.

**MEP Marion Walsmann, Vice-chair of the Legal Affairs Committee and member of the European Parliament's IMCO Committee**, said: *"Independent retailers are an integral part of to the fabric of our towns and communities! They are not only important for consumers, but they also create jobs and are committed to equal opportunities, welcome skilled and unskilled workers, and actively promote inclusivity. Europe's retail sector makes our neighbourhoods vibrant and is a real asset to the EU economy as a whole."*

**MEP Ivan Štefanec, President of SME Europe**, highlighted: *"Independent retailers play a key role for local communities in Europe and help to shape a more sustainable and inclusive European society. SMEs and SME retailers are the backbone of our economy. It should be a priority to take their concerns and the business model of groups of independent retailers into account in our policy making within the European Parliament."*

Looking ahead, Independent Retail Europe reiterated its commitment to play an active role in advocating for policies that support the cooperative retail model of groups of independent retailers and SME retail as a whole.

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