

Statement

Independent Retail Europe stands with retailers affected by violence and looting in France, Italy and Belgium

Following this weekend's attacks, vandalism and looting of shops in France, Italy and Belgium Independent Retail Europe expresses its solidarity with all affected retailers, shopkeepers and their employees.

Seeing businesses that took years to build destroyed by masked rioters is devastating as for many independent retailers, their stores represent years of financial and personal investment, and dedication. Beyond the financial losses, these attacks threaten the livelihoods of shopkeepers, their employees and their families.

This vandalism will have a domino effect on local communities, as it will take time for the stores to return back to normal, in a context where most retailers operate on razor-thin margins and cannot easily absorb the costs of the destruction and the looting. Prolonged closures, damaged infrastructure, disruption of daily operations and employees' jobs are some of the consequences that will ultimately disrupt consumers' access to essential goods and services and negatively impact on local communities and the economy as a whole.

These events come just days after large-scale cyberattack targeting refrigeration systems in hundreds of French supermarkets, making this weekend's violent events even more impactful for the retail sector.

Independent retailers play a vital role in their local communities and Europe's economy. Deeply rooted in their communities and closely connected to local producers and suppliers, they provide access to essential goods, and are a major contributor to local employment. The preservation of the independent retail sector is thus essential for the resilience of our supply chains and societies.

This weekend's events demonstrate the vulnerability of store-based retail. In a context of high inflation and cumulative regulatory burdens, stagnating sales and low/decreasing margins, retailers need a clear commitment from public institutions and policy makers to support the rebuilding of their businesses, to guarantee their safety, and to help them strengthen their resilience against threats and violence.

Violence against retailers is an attack on the local communities that depend on them.

Independent Retail Europe will continue to follow developments closely, advocate for support for its affected members and for a safe, secure and resilient retail environment in which independent retailers can operate and serve their communities.

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Independent Retail Europe defends the interests of the independent retail sector. Our members are groups of independent retailers and associations representing these groups and representing independent retailers. Independent Retail Europe represents 24 groups and associations and their over 479.000 independent retailers, who manage more than 708.000 sales outlets, with a combined retail turnover of more than 1,446 billion euros and generating a combined wholesale turnover of 657 billion euros. This represents a total employment of more than 6.300.000 persons.

