

E-commerce plays crucial role in European society

Mar 26, 2020



The Coronavirus outbreak currently holds the whole world in its grip and raises many questions among European (online) retailers. For this reason, Ecommerce Europe, the voice of the European Digital commerce industry, is conducting several surveys among national associations and online retailers in Europe in the coming period. Last week's first survey showed that the e-commerce sector plays a vital role across the continent.

The survey, conducted among more than 25 national e-commerce associations and their members, shows that 65% of respondents expect the pandemic to lead to an overall decline in online sales. This decline is evident in sectors such as travel, holidays, fashion and footwear. While the travel and holidays sectors experience a total drop in demand, the fashion and footwear industries experience a drop in sales of between 40% (Denmark) and 60% (France). In contrast, product categories that make living and working at home more convenient show an enormous growth ranging from 50% to 90%, differing per country and per product

category. Examples of products in this category include food and drinks, drugstore products, health and personal care products, home entertainment, sports, DIY and freezers / refrigerators, and everything related to working at home, such as office supplies, computers, tablets, cords and cables.

Online retail plays a vital role in national economies in Europe

“The importance of e-commerce as a sector to survive and work from home is absolutely crucial,” says Wijnand Jongen, President of Ecommerce Europe. Jongen: “In many countries in Europe, such as Belgium, France, Italy and Spain, strict measures have been put in place. Here, consumers are only allowed to take to the streets as a great exception, for example to do necessary shopping or to take care of someone. In these countries, the role of online retail is crucial. Fortunately, all over Europe we see that national governments enable online shops to take on this vital role, making it possible for consumers everywhere to buy products and services online and have them delivered”.

Logistical challenges

Although many European countries have closed their borders for travel, research by Ecommerce Europe shows that Europe’s internal borders are still open for cross-border sales. According to respondents (94%), products can still be sent within European borders. Within the various European countries, 88% of all deliveries are still made within the promised times, but more than half of the respondents (55%) report delays in the delivery of products. In many countries, consumers are asked to take into account an average delivery time of two or three days.

Strict safety measures for consumers and

employees

To ensure that the e-commerce industry can continue to operate, strict conditions are currently in place to protect workers and consumers. For example, employees in distribution centers must comply with very strict safety measures, such as keeping a distance from each other and frequently using disinfectants. In several countries, online shops and logistics carriers have taken measures to ensure consumer safety, such as delivery and payment of products at the door without direct contact.