



## PRESS RELEASE

---

# NEW RESEARCH: EU LEGISLATION HAMPERS GROWTH OF CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE

## Diverse Rules and Practices are Slowing Industry Success

Brussels, January 17<sup>th</sup>: One quarter (25 percent) of European retailers believe that they could increase revenues by 25 percent if they could sell more effectively online and cross-border in Europe, according to a new study conducted by Accenture (NYSE: ACN) for the European Retail Round Table (ERRT). But that growth is threatened by the struggle retailers experience in navigating diverse laws, regulations and practices.

Launching the study in Brussels today, **Dick Boer, President of the ERRT and CEO of Ahold** said “*Cross-border e-commerce makes investing in Europe more attractive for companies that screen the global market. We retailers are making adjustments so that we can seize these opportunities. But not all the adjustments can be made by us. The Accenture study shows that regulation is often a roadblock. And these regulatory obstacles are out of our control.*”

Mr. Boer cited specific policies that can be changed for the better, such as the treatment of electronic waste (e.g. WEEE), contract law, consumer rights, labeling legislation, that are implemented differently in Member States and provide uncertainty on how to develop business: “*Many of the regulatory obstacles cited in the study do not specifically relate to the digital nature of e-commerce. They are rather national regulations that affect all retailers, both traditional shops and online shops. The differences in these national regulations become a real handicap and create uncertainty when a retailer sets up a cross-border e-commerce operation*”.

According to the study, two thirds (68 percent) of the retailers consider expanded European cross-border e-commerce to be a medium or high priority for growth. And the sector attracts high spending customers - more than three quarters (76 percent) of the retailers surveyed report that “multi-channel” customers - those who shop both off line and online - spend more than single-channel customers.

The study also highlighted other non-regulatory challenges to growing cross border e-commerce such as the higher risk of fraud, infrastructure problems and IT system limitations.

**Janet Hoffman, managing director of Accenture’s Retail practice** said “The opportunity for growing cross-border online sales across Europe is irresistible but successfully seizing it will require retailers to focus on the creation of innovative, low-cost, operating models that combine the agility and flexibility of the online-only businesses with the brand power and convenience of store based businesses”.

**ERRT:** The European Retail Round Table businesses operate worldwide and represent a cross-section of the retail sector. Collectively, ERRT members have a turnover of more than €420 billion and employ 2.4 million people in over 44,000 stores. [www.errt.org](http://www.errt.org)



### **About the research**

Accenture's study into European cross-border E-commerce comprised a survey of 146 retailers with more than 100 million Euros in annual revenues across six retail sectors – grocery, home goods, consumer electronics, clothing, toiletries and leisure goods – and seven European Union countries; Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the U.K. Interviews with relevant executives from among the 14-member European Retail Round table (ERRT), which also included participants from the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium, supplemented and enhanced the survey results. The report is available at: <http://www.accenture.com/us-en/landing-pages/products/Pages/ERRT.aspx>

### **About Accenture**

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with more than 244,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US\$25.5 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2011. Its home page is [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com).