
European Council of Shopping Places: new dedicated European trade association for retail property and mixed-use destinations launched

Represents sector that designs, creates, funds, develops, builds and manages places anchored by retail across Europe

Brussels, EMBARGOED 0930 hrs, 8th October 2020 [FINAL]: The European Council of Shopping Places (ECSP) has been launched today in Brussels, providing a new and dedicated voice for the European retail property sector. It has been created following the decision by the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) in the fall of 2019 to cease its European activities. The ECSP provides a European voice for an industry that designs, creates, funds, develops, builds and manages places anchored by retail across Europe. This industry employs more than 6.3 million people, generates an annual turnover of €750 billion and represents almost 160 million m² of floorspace. ECSP membership will comprise companies and national associations and it will act as a go to platform and information hub to support the interests of its members and the communities they serve.

ECSP is being incorporated as an international non-profit association or AISBL (Association internationale sans but lucratif) under Belgian Law. It will promote the wider objectives and priorities of its members and will seek to focus on a number of activities that will include advocacy, events, research, and broader reputation and promotional activities. The new association will also host a number of active committees and working groups focussed on important core areas such as sustainability, research, public policy, security and property management and future trends.

The current Covid-19 crisis has hit the sector particularly hard, with the closure of hundreds of thousands of shops, stores, bars, restaurants, and places of commerce across Europe, an issue acknowledged by Peter R. Wilhelm, Chairman of the ECSP Board and CEO of Wilhelm & Co Group. Announcing the new association, he said: *“At this crucial moment in time, Europe’s retail property sector needs a single, unifying voice that represents an industry in the midst of a fundamental transformation, that is increasingly converting pure retail spaces into ‘mixed-use centres’ matching the highest sustainability standards and adding many other activities to become genuine community hubs. These form an integral part of the urban fabric across Europe and the public, our customers, depend on us to shop, eat, socialise and to entertain themselves. As we look to the future and the road to economic recovery, we want to promote the values and aspirations of a dynamic sector that contributes so much to European society and which has often proved an important lifeline to many communities throughout this crisis.”*

Joost Koomen, Secretary General, added: *“The priority for our members so far this year has been to protect their teams and to work with their tenants during these very difficult times. However, as the pandemic has endured, the need for us to address the most pressing and imminent challenges currently being faced by our sector has become ever more acute. ECSP will work with our members, national associations, the European institutions, national governments and local authorities to promote and protect the sector.”*

Commenting on its membership, Gontran Thuring, Chief Executive of the French CNCC, Conseil National des Centres Commerciaux, said on behalf of the different National Councils joining ECSP: *“Our associations are committed to a national dialogue but also to a European one. We must have a public profile that transcends one single market, that brings collective value in terms of our concerns, expertise and future aspirations. Working alongside our colleagues in other markets we are better able to understand and share best practice, new innovations and trends, to influence emerging policy and to access the financial aid and support that is now being made available.”*

ECSP has 15 members at the moment of its launch. Its founding members currently include some of Europe’s largest retail property development companies and investors such as ECE, SES Spar European Shopping Centers, Sonae Sierra, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, Wilhelm & Co as well as the Italian Council of Shopping Centres (CNCC Italia). Furthermore, several other National Councils of Shopping Centres/Places have also already joined as members, including: the Austrian Council of Shopping Places (ACSP), the Belgian and Luxembourg Council of Retail and Shopping Centers (BLSC), the French Council of Shopping Centres (CNCC), the German Council of Shopping Places, and the Portuguese Council of Shopping Centers (APCC).

To date the ECSP has written to the European Commission asking it to consider three actions to help the retail real estate industry during the pandemic, including: consideration of the retail property industry in any financial or other supporting measures; setting up a specific EU Retail Relief Fund to financially support the entire retail industry as part of the EU recovery action plan; and consider how many member states are amending laws that allow rental payments in the retail sector to be cancelled or postponed. ECSP has also made a public commitment to stand ready to work together with the Commission and any other EU Institution or national authority to contribute in the best possible and most efficient way to the Roadmap and Action Plan for recovery.

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Notes to editors:

About European Council of Shopping Places (ECSP)

The ECSP provides a European voice for an industry that designs, creates, funds, develops, builds and manages places anchored by retail across Europe. The ECSP aims to

- Advocate at a European level for the vital economic and social importance of retail and mixed-use destinations
- Bring together the entire value chain of who invest in, create, manage and support these places and destinations
- Facilitate the outreach, exchange of information and organise the events, networking and education this community needs to succeed
- Encourage a sustainable and a level playing field for market participants and stakeholders

Its members are a catalyst for sustainable urban regeneration and represent an important civic function in virtually every European community.

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