

PRESS RELEASE

Complete to Compete: the Single Market Strategy needs more ambition, headline target & milestones

Brussels, 21 May 2025: As a longstanding champion the EU Single Market, the European Round Table for Industry is issuing this reaction to the European Commission's new Single Market Strategy* announced earlier today.

Anthony Gooch Gálvez, Secretary General of ERT said *"Since the passing of Jacques Delors 18 months ago, we have been reminded of his achievement of establishing the Single Market, whilst Enrico Letta's landmark report spelled out what still needs to be done, and Mario Draghi's report provided a further endorsement of deepening the Single Market. President von der Leyen has now committed to 'tearing down remaining barriers' to have a Single Market to go big because scale matters. Today's announcement of the European Commission's new Single Market Strategy is a positive yet small step forward, as rapid action is required to remove all existing barriers."*

He added *"A lot of the new strategy goes in the right direction – the 'Terrible Ten' is a good starting point, as is the idea of sherpas at national level to negotiate a package deal that overcomes vested interests in all Member States. However, too many important areas remain out of scope. To deliver a step change in the Single Market – and the prosperity it provides – we believe more ambition and audacity is needed, with the European Commission acting as a demolition squad of obstacles. We're still waiting for it to deliver on the request from the Competitiveness Council^o for "a roadmap with clear timelines and milestones for urgent and concrete actions across all policy areas" such as environment, energy, health and defence."*

The Commission's attention to issues like inconsistent packaging and labelling rules and complicated worker posting procedures is a move in the right direction. These have been highlighted in ERT's Compendium of over 100 Single Market barriers² but many other serious problems that were flagged by businesses across Europe remain outside the scope of the strategy, which is a lost opportunity.

The appointment of high-level "Sherpas" in each Member State to push Single Market reforms in each country is definitely welcome, however it doesn't replace the need for strong leadership from the European Commission itself. The Commission must take the driver's seat to ensure deeper integration and real change.

Identifying the barriers, Doubling down on enforcement

The Commission's promise to act on problems reported through the SOLVIT system is encouraging. But ERT remains concerned that there's still no clear process for collecting, following up on, and fixing reported issues. The tools currently used, like the Single Market Barriers Tracker, are underpowered and not used effectively. Businesses of all sizes need a reliable and easy-to-use way to share concerns – and to see prompt action taken in return.

While ERT is glad to see a renewed commitment to enforcing Single Market rules, the strategy still lacks details on how this will actually happen. A stronger approach is needed to ensure rules are properly applied – including more transparency and faster legal action when Member States don't comply.

ERT also supports the proposed 'Single Market Test' to prevent new barriers from being created in EU laws. But this must come with real responsibility and decision-making power – otherwise, it risks being symbolic. And while prevention is important, the EU must not lose sight of the many existing barriers that continue to hold businesses back.

Simplification Plans Lack Ambition

Steps like a standardised definition for small mid-cap companies and streamlined product paperwork are helpful, but too limited. ERT calls for a broader and more ambitious approach to finally resolve longstanding problems in how the Single Market works.

Gooch Gálvez concluded *“The subject of competitiveness has been omnipresent for over a year now. The Single Market is the biggest asset we have in play - and its completion is paramount. If the Commission and the Council are serious about seizing this moment, so that the EU can compete to win, real progress requires effort by everyone around the table. Along with pushing current plans forward, the Commission should be willing to quantify the opportunity cost of inaction on barrier removal and put a price on it.”*

With its 60-strong membership of CEOs and Chairs of some of Europe's most significant industrial and technology companies operating worldwide, ERT is well-placed to assess and review Europe's competitive place in the world, *vis-à-vis* other regions – and the potential implication of the proposed Single Market Strategy.

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A full list of the Membership of ERT is accessible [here](#).

*Find out more about the European Commission's Single Market Strategy [here](#).

¹ In the most recent survey of Membership of ERT, 80% of ERT Members said if the Draghi Report was implemented in full, their companies would reinvest in the EU within 3 years. Details [here](#).

[°] See page 34 of the conclusions of the Competitiveness Council [here](#).

² Visit ERT's Single Market section, featuring stories, technical analyses and links to the Single Market coalition-led compendium of 100+ obstacles [here](#).

CONTACT: Robert O'Meara, Communications Director, ERT
Tel + 32 2 543 10 51 - E-mail: robert.omeara@ert.eu

About the European Round Table for Industry (ERT)

The European Round Table for Industry (ERT) is a forum that brings together around 60 Chief Executives and Chairs of leading multinational companies of European parentage, covering a wide range of industrial and technological sectors. Companies of ERT Members have combined revenues exceeding €2 trillion, providing direct jobs to around 5 million people worldwide – of which half are in Europe – and sustaining millions of indirect jobs. They invest more than €60 billion annually in R&D, largely in Europe.

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