

Joint business statement on the European Commission ‘Strategy for making the Single Market simple, seamless and strong’



23 September 2025

The future of European integration: Need for a long-term vision for the Single Market

For the first time in a long while, integration within the Single Market has taken a step backwards: recent data shows a decline in integration in both the free movement of goods (decline from 26.0% in 2022 to 23.8% in 2023) and the free movement of services (from 7.8% in 2022 to 7.6% in 2023).¹ This trend underscores the urgent need for the breakthrough political action to preserve the integrity and future resilience of the Single Market, called for in the reports of Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi.²

In a joint business statement published in February 2025, European business organisations called on the European Commission to develop a comprehensive Single Market strategy that focuses on removing concrete barriers for businesses with clear roadmaps and timeframes.³ The business community’s demands for further deepening the Single Market across all critical areas remain valid today, including energy, environment, digital, retail, banking and capital, health and defence. All of them are critical to improving the competitiveness of European companies and, therefore, require specific treatment, taking into account the characteristics of each sector.

As things stand today, we welcome the European Commission’s Single Market strategy published on 21 May 2025 as considerable effort to reinvigorate the Single Market and address challenges of fragmentation and governance in the short run. In particular:

1. **We support the prioritisation as outlined in the Single Market Strategy** by the Commission and measures which, if effectively implemented, will significantly improve cross-border business operations.
2. While we understand the need for prioritisation, we stress that **this must not come at the expense of a broader long-term agenda aimed at removing barriers**, including those that disproportionately affect SMEs and hinder the scaling of innovative companies across borders. A deeper systemic approach is required to ensure sustained impact, involving a thorough analysis of root causes of barriers and identification of entities responsible for their removal.

¹ European Commission (2025), The 2025 Annual Single Market and Competitiveness [Report](#)

² Enrico Letta (2024), [Report](#) on the Future of the Single Market - Much more than a Market; Mario Draghi (2024), [Report](#) on the future of European competitiveness

³ BusinessEurope, DIGITALEUROPE, Eurochambres, EuroCommerce, ERT and SMEUnited (2025), [Joint business statement](#) on the upcoming horizontal Single Market Strategy

3. **We welcome the reiterated commitment to simplification of EU regulations,** with the objective of cutting overall regulatory burdens and unnecessary bureaucracy. We urge the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States to act swiftly to deliver substantial burden reductions and ensure long-term commitment to address excessive burdens. In particular, this should be done by removing overlaps and inconsistencies in the EU acquis causing Single Market fragmentation (including gold-plating), reducing compliance costs, accelerating the shift to a data-based Single Market, and ensuring that future legislation is proportionate, innovation-friendly and consistently applied across Member States. The objective of simplification must become a guiding principle for all future regulations.
4. While short-term operational tasks as proposed are important for achieving tangible and immediate results, **we regret the lack of a long-term vision for the Single Market and measurable objectives.** Without clear long-term goals on EU competitiveness, Single Market integration and burden reduction, the strategy's overall impact risks being limited. The EU needs clear milestones and metrics and a 2035 headline target to track progress and ensure accountability on Single Market integration. The Single Market Roadmap to 2028, announced by President von der Leyen at her State of the European Union speech on 10 September, should be ambitious and precise to guide future reforms.
5. **We welcome the renewed focus on improving the Single Market governance and more effective implementation and enforcement.** The Commission rightly calls for greater Single Market ownership by Member States. We regret that the Commission postpones its own commitment to reinforce enforcement action, only announcing an enforcement agenda to be published in 2026. We urge the Commission to take swift action against non-compliant Member States and ensure de-politicisation of enforcement without any delay. Moreover, stronger enforcement and improved coordination – both within and between national and EU level – are needed to ensure a level-playing field in the Single Market.
6. **We strongly welcome the Commission's proposed idea to link EU spending to national regulatory reforms that eliminate Single Market barriers,** which could be incorporated into the design of the post-2027 multiannual financial framework. We call on the Commission to promptly develop a detailed plan for implementing this idea.
7. **We encourage the Commission to ensure that the Single Market is prioritised across all its services and that all future legislation consistently guarantees the freedom to trade and invest across borders.** It cannot be carried out by one single Directorate-General but requires the commitment of all Commission services with strict checks and balances from the political leadership as well as its legal service.