

2.

COMPLETING THE SINGLE MARKET, A CENTRAL PRIORITY

The Single Market is at **the heart of the EU's economic strength and resilience**: its completion is the main instrument for relaunching European competitiveness. During the next political cycle, we must take the Single Market to the next level, putting it at the forefront of European integration, the green transition, and the EU's innovation agenda. Thus, an ambitious Single Market strategy must be established with the aim of providing renewed momentum to the elimination of **persistent barriers** (but also of **dissuasive measures** which, while not constituting barriers to Community freedoms, discourage businesses and citizens from making full use of the Single Market) and make decisive progress in the freedoms that are less advanced. To this end, over the next five years we must work towards:

ENSURE FREE MOVEMENT IN ALL AREAS

- Removing persisting barriers to the **free movement of goods**, implementing measures to facilitate it further, such as a Digital Product Passport or the use of digital labelling, and taking active steps to ensure that SMEs make full use of the Single Market.
- Working to eliminate barriers to the **cross-border provision of services**, considering sector-specific justifications based on public interest or service nature.
- Guaranteeing the **free movement of workers** between Member States by enhancing the coordination of social security systems and implementing the e-Declaration.

- Consolidating the free movement of capital, an essential element for boosting investment throughout the EU, finance, and access to **capital markets**.
- Ensuring cross-border **transport** operations, the safety of drivers and vehicles, and the competitiveness of the sector, as well as strengthening and financing reliable and efficient infrastructures for land, air and sea transport, including interconnections.

STRATEGIC ROLE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

- Maximising the potential of **public procurement** to achieve European objectives and provide investment security, ensuring that European legislation and its implementation provide an adequate framework for said objectives.
- Ensuring that legislation in this field avoids a race to the bottom on prices to guarantee that public procurement maintains high standards in terms of social impact, quality, innovation or sustainability. This requires that the object of the contract specifies the award criteria, thereby avoiding unwanted or restrictive effects on competition.
- Promoting **public-private partnerships** to boost the efficiency of public spending in basic services and critical infrastructure investment.
- To achieve all these objectives, addressing the causes that have led to a decline in competition in public procurement in recent

years is essential, as pointed out by the European Court of Auditors in the “Special Report 28/2023: Public Procurement in the EU” of December 2023, and propose solutions to reverse this trend.

BUSINESS-LED STANDARDISATION

- Protecting the European **standardisation** model, based on public-private cooperation, to ensure that new European standards are still market-relevant and are aligned with international standards. This model must remain economically sustainable, led by businesses and governed by a stable legal framework.
- Placing **SMEs in the focus** of the standardisation process, aiming to simplify administrative and regulatory procedures for small and medium businesses.

COMPETITION POLICY AND STATE AID CONTROL TO STRENGTHEN THE SINGLE MARKET

- Fostering the **complementarity and consistency between industrial and competition policies**. In this regard, it is necessary to ensure that competition rules are in line with the EU’s priorities, enabling competition control

instruments to promote the integration of the Single Market and fostering the reinforcement of the EU’s supply chains. Consequently, merger control rules must be able to take into account the impact on the global market.

- Actively ensuring that the **State aid control** framework upholds the efficiency of public support and a level playing field in the EU and that it is an enabler for the twin transition. To that end, the specific measures adopted to face crises or advance in the transition must be limited in time and appropriately monitored, ensuring efficiency as an essential control criterion. Furthermore, public support instruments designed with a European perspective should be promoted, taking full advantage of IPCEIs or developing a Clean Technology Deployment Fund to support the risk borne by the private sector in the development of these technologies.
- In order to achieve more effective State aid control, streamlining the procedures to access and approve aid measures, and reinforcing the capacities of national authorities in this area.