



Open letter to competitiveness ministers (COMPET) – 28 May 2026

Europe knows what's wrong with the Single Market — now it's time to fix it!

Europe does not suffer from a lack of diagnosis when it comes to the Single Market. It suffers from a lack of political will to make it work.

Across Europe, there is broad agreement that a strong Single Market is essential if the EU is to remain competitive in a harsher geoeconomic environment. Mario Draghi and Enrico Letta have both made the point clearly again and again, echoing what European businesses have long been saying: a weak Single Market means a weak Europe — and a diminished role on the global stage.

The underlying problem is also well understood. Excessive regulation and fragmentation are not primarily created in Brussels. They are often the result of national choices, the creation of new barriers or the lack of fighting against persistent ones. Further, too often, Member States add layers of rules — so-called gold-plating — or fail to transpose in time or implement EU legislation consistently. The consequence is a Single Market that exists on paper, but not in practice.

Clarity matters

The roadmap presented under the heading “One Europe, One Market” should have marked a turning point. It sets out objectives, legislative initiatives and monitoring processes with the ambition of completing the Single Market by the end of 2027. On paper, this is a welcome step. It signals political alignment and some recognition of the urgency.

But the roadmap suffers from a fundamental flaw: it lacks teeth.

There are no credible enforcement mechanisms. No meaningful consequences if deadlines are missed. No serious incentives for EU institutions to change behavior. As a result, the roadmap risks becoming yet another well-intentioned document that signals ambition while delivering little for businesses and citizens.

This is especially frustrating because the EU already knows both where the problem lies and who is responsible. Europe does not need more analysis or new strategies. It needs ambition, implementation — and political commitment.

On the look for drivers

Responsibility is diffuse, which is precisely why political ownership matters. The Single Market should be a standing agenda item at every meeting of the EU competitiveness ministers, with ministers acting not as passive overseers but as active drivers of market integration. That responsibility also begins at home: Member States cannot keep calling for a stronger Single Market

in Brussels while undermining it at home. Progress should be measured not by the number of new initiatives introduced, but by the number of barriers removed. Industry is ready to play its part by identifying concrete barriers and working directly with governments to eliminate them.

Too often, Europe responds to Single Market failures with patchwork fixes instead of structural reform. A credible place to start is the upcoming EU Product Act. It must modernise and harmonise the existing European product rules without adding new burdens for businesses, while supporting the development of new green business models and accelerating digitalization.

In an increasingly complex world, Europe's strength will be measured by its ability to act as one. Without a fully functioning Single Market, Europe will be a weaker global player — less competitive, less resilient, and less relevant. European businesses stand ready to be part of the solution. But now, political leaders must match that ambition.

Lars Sandahl Sørensen, CEO Danish Industry (DK), Focco Vijselaar, Director General VNO (NL), José Alberto González-Ruiz, Secretary General CEOE (ES), Christine Lepage – Deputy Director General MEDEF (FR), Danny McCoy, CEO IBEC (IE), Daniel Urban – Director General SPCR (CZ)