



Message from Amsterdam A call for action on the Single Market

The Single Market is one of the greatest achievements of the EU and has made great strides since its beginnings. But there is still work to do.

We need a Single Market that is stronger, fairer, and deeper. We need it to provide opportunities for businesses and consumers across the EU, allowing innovators and investors to scale up their activities in a large market without burdensome and widely diverging regulations, and thus acting as an engine for jobs and growth. The Single Market must be fit for the digital age – a framework that recognises the realities of today's economy, with rules that are properly enforced.

The Commission has published its strategies on the Digital Single Market, the Single Market for Goods and Services, and the Capital Markets Union. Legislative proposals are forthcoming, or are already on the table. Let's implement the vision with determination and pace.

We must all come together if we are to achieve our goals: businesses, citizens, the Commission, the Member States, the European Parliament. This will be a collaborative effort.

Building on the results of the Single Market Forum workshop series 2015/2016, the participants of the conference *Working together to strengthen the Single Market for EU businesses and consumers*, in Amsterdam on 13 June 2016, identify the following priorities for action:

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Pillar I: Strengthening the classical Single Market

The Single Market was launched in 1992 – and yet the Single Market remains incomplete. We need to take innovative new approaches to solve longstanding problems, and ensure that the EU economy maximises its competitiveness in the face of new challenges.

Cross-border trade in services, including the services passport

Governments should help businesses and entrepreneurs overcome regulatory and administrative barriers when wanting to deliver services in other MS, inter alia by facilitating the required flow of information.

To that end, the creation of a services passport can help to increase trust and boost trade and investment in services, provided it is an EU-wide instrument, voluntary, digital, comprehensive, applies the once only principle and this way provides real value added for businesses.

The possible services passport should address administrative and regulatory barriers, in particular insurance, licensing and certification. It should be introduced gradually and cover specifically selected sectors.

Public procurement: How to secure best value for money in public procurement?

In order to secure best value for money, ensure opportunities for businesses in the Single Market, and ensure that citizens benefit from public procurement, public authorities need to 'procure smartly', which implies that this strategic function is performed with the highest standard of professionalism.

We therefore need to raise awareness in Member States on the essential importance of professionalism in public procurement, facilitate exchange of best practice, and develop transparency and benchmarking tools. The current lack of trust between contracting authorities and companies and the excessive fragmentation of the procurement landscape too often results in a lack of competition.

Contracting authorities should therefore further invest in developing skills and incentives to better understand the market, and to encourage aggregation of demand. In addition, they should focus more on long-term economic outcomes rather than simply looking at legal compliance, and take into account access for SMEs, inter alia through targeted training, evaluation and feedback.

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Developing a well-functioning European standardisation system

Good functioning of the European standardisation system is crucial for the Single Market. The Joint Initiative on Standardisation (JIS) is a significant step towards further improving the functioning of the European standardisation system and making it fit for the future. All stakeholders signing the JIS will work together on its implementation and follow-up.

Special attention should be paid to the position of start-ups in the standardisation process. More generally, inclusiveness is important, as requested by the Standardisation Regulation, not only for SMEs (and start-ups in particular) but also for social and societal stakeholders. This remains a strategic consideration not just at the European level, but also at the national and international levels. The standardisation community should make efforts to increase awareness of the benefits of standardisation among SMEs and start-ups, particularly start-ups looking to scale up.

Special attention should be paid to cross-sectoral standardisation challenges and the benefits of European standardisation for international competitiveness, notably in innovation-based thematic areas such as intelligent transport system.

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Pillar II: Developing a true Digital Single Market

Our economies continue to evolve and adapt. We need a Single Market that allows businesses and consumers across Europe to profit from all the opportunities that modern technology offers, and create a framework that is future proof and fit for the digital age.

E-commerce: Unleashing the full potential of cross-border e-commerce

There is big potential in the European e-commerce market for businesses and consumers, who want to shop cross-border much more.

Therefore the e-commerce package, including the initiative on geo-blocking, should provide for a clear, coherent and future-proof legal framework for both sides. The package is a first step and efforts to eliminate barriers should remain a continuous priority.

More sectoral legislation should be looked at through a digital lens and harmonisation efforts should continue also in areas such as labelling and technical standards.

The upcoming VAT proposal must make a major difference facilitating cross-border e-commerce.

Business Support Tools: How to improve information flows and assistance tools for businesses in order to create the Single Digital Gateway

Existing business support tools should be made more effective. Public service is about service, business support tools should make this true. Support tools are the groundwork for successful cross-border activity in the Single Market.

Essential criteria for this improved effectiveness are:

- availability and findability of information, while making sure the information is accurate, useful and understandable (several languages, without jargon), improving through user feedback.
- availability of simple and user-friendly e-procedures, that are a help, not a hindrance for entrepreneurs (fast, easy and tailor-made).
- Easy availability of an assistance network (for example SOLVIT), solving barriers to cross-border activity quickly and effectively.

The development of the Single Digital Gateway should be used to bring about this improved effectiveness, eliminating duplication and confusion by bringing together all existing portals and networks, creating a one-stop-shop. It should ensure

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interconnectivity, quality and user-feedback, building on current best practices in Member States. Most importantly, it should result in helping more businesses going cross-border, unleashing the full potential of the Single Market

Collaborative Economy: How to encourage new business models in the Single Market

The collaborative economy is changing the market and our mindsets. New, innovative business models that are centred on convenience and user-friendliness have been emerging in Europe. The sharing economy is here to stay. We should not underestimate its long-term potential.

Although it is important to consider local specificities and requirements, it is also essential to safeguard the integrity of the Single Market. Legal certainty is also highly significant for providers and users in the collaborative economy. The Commission's recent Communication is a positive step in fostering the collaborative economy in the Single Market.

In order to follow the evolution of the collaborative economy and ensure policy remains relevant, we should make use of user-driven policy-making. Authorities should foster and seek debate and clarification on the distinction between professional and peer-to-peer users.

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Pillar III: Enabling entrepreneurs in the Single Market

New and small businesses are one of the greatest opportunities for creating jobs, new ideas and economic value in today's EU economy. We need to put in place the optimal conditions to give SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups access to resources, networks, finance and skills.

Skills

It is important to recognise the skills crisis that Europe has already – in technical and transversal skills, including entrepreneurial and communication skills. These skills must be developed to enable the future of Europe – for jobs, innovation and growth.

We need role models and champions in government, business, and academia. We need to identify and mobilise third party enablers – people who make things happen – to change things, working through sectors, and taking account of affordability (in time and money) and accessibility. Accessible learning requires using the right language and facilitating learning on the job, and learning through fun. It requires support for online learning, to ensure its relevance and therefore to become embedded. Funding needs to be redirected to make these new things happen.

Action also needs to be taken with the future workforce – teaching students how to learn because technical skills change so fast – to enable life-long learning which is now needed by the whole workforce.

Capital Markets Union

Barriers should be addressed to achieve a genuine single capital market in the EU where investors are able to invest their funds without hindrance across borders, and businesses can raise the required funds from a diverse range of sources.

Important barriers to address include information asymmetry between lenders and borrowers and lack of awareness of financing opportunities for entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Start-up and scale-up ecosystem: Developing further the Start-up Initiative as part of the Single Market Strategy

Entrepreneurs know their destination. However, to get there smoothly, a turn-by-turn GPS is needed to avoid road blocks and guide them through traffic. This speeds up growth while saving time, money and frustration.

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We need better access to markets, finance, skills, and networks and ecosystems to make more scale-ups out of start-ups in the EU.

It is important not to get stuck on problem-stating but instead move onto problem-solving, by investing in communities and networks of entrepreneurs, public authorities and knowledge institutes.