

SINGLE MARKET EVENT: 30 YEARS ON, IT'S TIME FOR AN EU SINGLE MARKET THAT REALLY WORKS

A little less conversation, much more action?

28 November 2023 from 16h30-18h30 | followed by a reception

Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU |

Avenue de Cortenbergh 4-10, Brussels

PANEL 1 – WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE SINGLE MARKET?

Businesses Companies no longer experience the Single Market as a true free trade area, making the EU becoming less attractive for businesses.

The past 30 years have proven that the Single Market is the EU's most crucial driver for economic growth, jobs, innovation and competitiveness. However, in recent years, the wave of new EU legislation has been largely ineffective in removing existing obstacles that companies face when operating cross-border in the Single Market. The integration of the Single Market has stagnated, with intra-EU trade in goods having increased by just 3.5% in relation to the EU economy since 2006, and intra-EU services accounting for only 6% of European GDP. As underlined by the European business community in its [joint statement](#), businesses no longer experience the Single Market as a true free trade area. A clear discrepancy between the lofty ambitions expressed by the EU institutions to deepen the Single Market and the lack of determination for effective implementation and enforcement has become very evident. The lack of capacity to implement Single Market legislation has often led to a transfer of the public function of market supervision to private operators in EU law, further scattering the enforcement effort. As a contribution to the High-Level Report on the future of the Single Market to be drafted by Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute, the panel will discuss today's challenges that businesses, SMEs and large companies alike, face when doing cross-border business in the Single Market.

- What are the major EU Single Market legislation design flaws that lead to uneven implementation or unenforceable rules at national level?
- What leads to new tendencies of Single Market fragmentation, and how does this impact European business?
- How can the Single Market remain a motor for EU integration in light of new challenges and recent shocks (e.g., Brexit, COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine)?

Outcome of panel 1: Takeaways on the most pressing challenges facing the Single Market today, both long-standing and new challenges.

PANEL 2 – HOW CAN WE MAKE THE SINGLE MARKET PRIORITY NUMBER 1 AGAIN?

Need for an all-encompassing programme to deepen the Single Market and stimulate genuine progress in the free movement of goods, services, capital, people and data.

According to the European Commission's estimate, the benefits of removing barriers to the Single Market for goods and services could amount to €713 billion by the end of 2029. Further research has shown that the EU's achievements in the Digital Single Market are estimated to have contributed €177 billion to the EU's economic growth each year, but Europe is becoming less attractive for such investment. To realise the full potential and reverse the trend of stagnating integration and persisting fragmentation of the Single Market observed in recent years, the four freedoms – the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people – must be brought back to the top of the political agenda. A fully-fledged Single Market programme is required to develop a true Union for Energy, Environment, Digital, Retail, Banking & Capital, Health as well as Defence, amongst others. The panel will address these issues and discuss how to shape Single Market rules to ensure that market integration brings benefits to all, companies and citizens alike, and guarantee an economic union for free trade without internal obstacles, capable to compete globally.

- What does business need to become more competitive, and what are the tools and instruments that could help European business' competitiveness?
- What should be the priorities for the EU Single Market for the next political cycle to close the gap between the rhetoric of politicians and delivery on the Single Market when negotiating new rules?
- How can EU policymakers design and promote a Digital Single Market, allowing the EU's Digital Economy to advance fast enough in order to remain competitive with other regions?
- 60% of current barriers to the cross-border provision of services are the same as 20 years ago. How could the EU advance the liberalisation of cross-border services in Europe to improve the competitiveness of the services and manufacturing sector and boost job creation in the EU?

Outcome of panel 2: Takeaways on how to regulate the Single Market to avoid market fragmentation and ensure that EU rules continue delivering for citizens and business.