

## DISCUSSION NOTE

### Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Competitiveness (Internal Market and Industry), 9 - 10 July 2026 (Dublin Castle)

#### **Reinforcing the Single Market: Shared Responsibility, Stronger Delivery**

The European Union's competitiveness, resilience and global economic standing must be built upon a well-functioning, frictionless Single Market. The *One Europe One Market* Joint Roadmap makes clear that achieving a fully integrated Single Market, accessible for people and businesses, is an urgent and shared responsibility of all Member States and EU institutions.

To achieve this, **structural barriers – including the 'Terrible Ten' identified in the Single Market Strategy – must be tackled in a focused and systematic manner.** The most persistent barriers include weak ownership and internal coordination among Member States, divergent and complex national rules with 'gold plating', and uncertainties in enforcement and EU-wide accountability for adhering to Single Market norms.

To bolster national accountability and EU-wide coordination, **Member States are deploying a network of senior Single Market Sherpas**, working with the Commission to cut through long-standing obstacles. These officials are mandated to work above the level of domestic siloes, bridge the gap between political commitments and technical execution, and facilitate the creative solutions and trade-offs needed for forward momentum.

In parallel with national efforts, the European Commission plays a central role in supporting compliance and consistent application of EU rules. **The Commission's recent Communication on "A Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook", signals a shift toward more proactive and focused enforcement.** Key aspects of the new approach include: -

- A dedicated toolkit and stricter surveillance via the European Semester and the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce (SMET) to suppress domestic gold-plating
- Targeted, intensive enforcement across 11 high-impact focus areas
- Accelerated infringement procedures, shortened extension deadlines, automated AI compliance checks, and more severe financial penalties.

Crucially, the Commission proposes a systematic pivot toward **exhaustive Regulations** over Directives where EU competence allows, intentionally limiting the scope for new fragmentation or national top-up obligations.

Taken as a whole and with clear political consensus and guidance, these measures have the potential to move Europe decisively in the direction advocated in Enrico Letta's 2024 Report, *Much More than a*

*Market*, which envisaged a more integrated and competitive Single Market through coherent national implementation coupled with smarter policing of EU rules by the Commission.

Against this background, the Presidency encourages Member States to reflect on the following:

1. **Empowering National Governance:** How can Member States step up national implementation and understanding of Single Market rules, in particular to avoid, identify and dismantle gold-plating and other barriers?
2. **Priorities for EU-wide action:** Based on the suggestions put forward in the Commission communication “*A Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU rulebook*”, in which areas could stronger, or more targeted Commission action and enforcement deliver the greatest impact for Single Market compliance across Member States?