

Removing barriers for a more consumer-, worker and business-friendly internal market

The single market's shortcomings deserve the same level of attention as the Green Deal and the digital agenda, says Parliament, calling for the removal of unjustified barriers across the EU.

In a report on tackling non-tariff and non-tax barriers in the Single Market, approved in plenary by 530 votes in favour, 130 against and 32 abstentions, MEPs underline that the full achievement of the objectives in the Green Deal and the European digital agendas mainly depends on the effective functioning of the single market.

The European Parliament lists some of the key unjustified barriers to cross-border activities, stressing that inadequate implementation and enforcement of EU law, restrictive national regulations, territorial supply constraints, red-tape and gold-plating may have negative consequences both at EU and national level, depriving citizens of jobs, consumers of choices, and entrepreneurs of opportunities.

Any assessment of the current barriers should be based, among others, on the experiences and perceptions of those who engage to some degree with the single market every day, MEPs say, stressing the need to “correctly balance economic freedoms, social rights, the interests of consumers, workers and businesses as well as the general interest”. A strict alignment with legitimate public policy objectives, such as the public health, the environment and public services, must also be ensured.

Ways to unleash the single market's full potential

The report, drafted by [Kosma Złotowski \(ECR, PL\)](#), proposes a number of measures to tackle the current shortcomings in the single market, including better and more unified transposition of EU law, monitoring of national rules, finding a balance between justified and unjustified barriers, ensuring the right level of harmonisation, stronger enforcement and further digitalisation of public services.

Parliament points out that initiatives to improve the single market for services are lacking, and asks the Commission to bring forward an action plan by mid-2022 on improving the current notification procedure under the Services Directive. Also in 2022, as part of the evaluation report of the geo-blocking regulation, it should propose ways to remove unjustified and ineffective geo-

blocking that still persists. The report also addresses, amongst others issues, undue restrictions on professional qualifications and the workings of the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce (SMET).

MEPs recall that the current Commission has not yet come forward with a comprehensive legislative package addressing failures in the exercise of the core freedoms of the single market, having prioritised the need for a better enforcement of existing rules next to a number of digital and green initiatives paving the way for the twin-transition.

Digitalisation and AI

Parliament considers that digitalisation and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), if used correctly, can be positive and help eliminating obstacles in the single market.

MEPs welcome the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) proposals, underlining that it is of outmost importance for companies and specially SMEs and consumers to have a clear, harmonized and robust set of rules.

Rule of law must be upheld

Member States should refrain as much as possible from introducing deviating national rules and to seek for solutions at European level, states the report. Rules must be applied in a justified, proportionate and non-discriminatory manner, MEPs say, highlighting that upholding the rule of law also strengthens the integrity of the single market.

Any form of state-sponsored discrimination, such as against people with disabilities or discrimination based on economic position, nationality, age, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, profession, sex or sexual orientation (including LGBTIQ-phobia), “may restrict the internal market freedoms and thus establish a non-tariff barrier”, states the report.

Impact of COVID-19

Parliament also addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the single market, pointing out that some of the effects may be temporary, but others will have lasting consequences.

The initial response by Member States and the Commission did not take into account the needs of the single market, MEPs say, recalling the “serious impact” this has had on the free cross-border movement of goods, persons and services.

Parliament calls on Member States to fully implement Commission guidelines and to follow a coordinated approach in order to allow workers, in particular transport, frontier, posted and seasonal workers, and service providers to cross borders and have unhindered access to their place of work.

MEPs welcome the Commission’s proposal to present a Single Market Emergency Instrument, which should be “a legally binding structural tool” to ensure the free movement of persons,

goods and services in case of future crises.

Parliament has previously addressed the issue of non-tariff barriers and made recommendations to tackle them in a [resolution approved in 2016](#).

Further information

[Report on tackling non-tariff and non-tax barriers in the single market](#)

[Video of the debate in plenary \(15.02.2022\)](#)


[Procedure file](#)

[Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection](#)

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