

Council endorses agreement on multiannual Single Market Programme



The EU is taking steps to improve the functioning of the Single Market in view of strengthening the competitiveness of European business, especially SMEs, and of enhancing the protection of consumers. Member states' ambassadors today approved a deal concluded between the German presidency of the Council and the European Parliament on the EU's Single Market Programme for the years 2021 to 2027.

The main objectives of the programme are to:

- improve the functioning of the internal market;
- strengthen the competitiveness of EU enterprises, including SMEs;
- enable the development of high-quality European standards;
- increase consumer protection;
- enhance human, animal and plant health, as well as animal welfare;
- promote high-quality, timely and reliable statistics.

The programme brings together activities currently financed under six different programmes. Its total budget is €4.2 billion. This is a “top-up” of €119 million compared to the original Commission proposal from 2 years ago.

The main changes agreed upon as compared to the Commission's proposal include:

- a stronger focus on market surveillance;
- more details on how to support small and medium-sized enterprises (with specific references to the tourism sector and the Social Economy) and how to protect the interests of consumers.

Next steps

On the basis of the agreed text (subject to its political endorsement by the European Parliament), the Council will adopt its position at first reading in early 2021. The European Parliament will then approve the Council's position at first reading and the regulation will be deemed to have been adopted at second reading.

Background

The Commission presented its proposal for a regulation establishing the Single Market Programme on 7 June 2018.

The Council adopted a partial general approach on the Commission's proposal and gave a mandate to start negotiations with the European Parliament on 29 November 2018.

The European Parliament adopted its position at first reading on 12 February 2019.

Negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council started on 23 October 2019 but were put on hold in December 2019 pending an agreement on the multiannual financial framework (MFF). Following the agreement on the multiannual financial framework reached at the European Council in July 2020, negotiations resumed under the German Presidency and were concluded on 8 December 2020 by the provisional political agreement endorsed today by the Permanent Representatives Committee.