

Remarks by Commissioner Bieńkowska at the press conference on the Juncker Plan at work and the Single Market in a changing world

In March the European Council asked us to present the state of play of the Single Market along with an assessment of remaining barriers and opportunities for the future. When leaders discuss the future of the single market at the European Council in mid-December, I hope that they will renew their commitments to the single market – not only in words, but also in deeds.

We need to look into the future. With this communication we are offering some avenues for the future.

It is important to underline that in our studies we have documented that – at the moment – economic growth in the world, unfortunately, takes mainly place outside the EU. Our competitors are continent-sized economies.

The Single Market needs everybody in the EU to play by the commonly agreed rules. And just as we are resisting protectionism outside the EU, we should also resist the fragmentation inside the EU. Member States need to be vigilant in implementing and applying EU rules and refrain from creating new barriers in areas such as cross-border service provision, especially in such areas as cross border service provision.

In particular, I am convinced that we should shift the narrative from traditional “completing the Single Market” to a new narrative of the Single Market as a delivery tool for welfare to the citizens, industrial competitiveness, our standing and influence in the world. The traditional narrative of “completing the Single Market” means only ticking the boxes. And this is not the right approach now.

Lack of progress on notification procedure, car emissions, food labelling, and many others have been conducted and driven by such an approach – by ticking the boxes, by only “completing the single market”. Member States do like very much to concentrate on what they feel is good for them and to avoid what is more problematic. This is my experience of dealing with more than 1000 infringements today.

The message that the Single Market is good for the economy, for business, for workers, for consumer has to come out more clearly. We have to be more precise on the issue of servitisation and the role of services for the competitiveness of our industries is fully developed in the draft.

Similarly, how the Single Market supports our trade agenda and how we need to be much more consistent and ambitious on enforcement – are issues which

together with our competition rules will be key for our future policies in that area.

Therefore, we also call on Member States, with the European Parliament, to urgently adopt the key proposals on the table before the end of this legislature. Since the beginning of the mandate we have presented 67 proposals directly relevant for the proper functioning of the Single Market. 44 of them remain to be agreed. This needs to change.

You see, on the level of declarations: everybody loves the Single Market. But when it comes down to actual proposals, such as the ones this Commission has put forward in the area of services, it's a different story.

Let me add a quick word about the action plan on standardisation that we have also adopted today. Standards like the A4 paper size or airbags, or in the future 5G technology, are sometimes seen as a technical issue. But they have an important economic impact and benefit companies and consumers in the Single Market every day. That is why today we commit to doing our part for the standardisation system to be more efficient and transparent.

So in nutshell, our message today is that the EU needs to show leadership and political courage to take the Single Market to a new level. A fully functioning Single Market, together with a properly functioning standardisation system, will make the Union even more attractive to international trading partners and provide it with additional leverage on the international stage.