

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000370/26
to the Commission
Biljana Borzan (S&D)
(29 January 2026)**

Subject: Cost of living increases in the Eastern EU Member States

According to the latest Eurobarometer, the majority of EU citizens consider inflation and poverty to be our biggest problems. This is particularly pronounced in Eastern European countries, where food price increases are the highest. For the price of 10 eggs in Poland today, 4 years ago you could have bought 18. In Slovakia, as many as 24. The price of bread in Hungary has risen by 170%, in Bulgaria by 122% and in Croatia by 65%. In the Baltic states, meat prices have risen by as much as 50%. Meanwhile, in Western countries, price growth is generally below 20%.

1. What action is the Commission taking to identify the cause of such disproportionate price increases and to correct market inequalities?
2. How will the new legislative proposal to remove territorial restrictions, announced for late 2026, help to eliminate such price increases?

Submitted: 29.1.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera on behalf of the European Commission
(22 April 2026)**

1. Food price inflation since 2022 resulted from a confluence of factors, including supply chain disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine and energy price inflation, which also significantly increased fertiliser costs, severe weather events, and plant and animal diseases (e.g. avian influenza). These affected Member States differently, leading to transitory divergences in inflation rates.

Competition authorities have actively investigated whether anticompetitive practices fuelled inflation. Since 2022, national competition authorities carried out inquiries for instance in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia. They did not find systematic margin increases, but initiated a few follow-up investigations, e.g. in Bulgaria.

The Commission vigorously enforces competition rules against practices that keep consumer prices high. For example, it sanctioned practices in the confectionery ⁽¹⁾ and beer ⁽²⁾ markets that led to the partitioning of the internal market along national borders. It also sanctioned a food delivery services cartel ⁽³⁾. Current investigations target an energy drinks supplier ⁽⁴⁾ that may have limited consumer choice and excluded lower-priced alternatives; possible collusion by salmon producers ⁽⁵⁾ on prices, volumes and other factors; and possible market partitioning and trade restrictions by drinks and personal care producers ⁽⁶⁾.

2. The Commission's single market strategy ⁽⁷⁾ aims to develop tools to address unjustified territorial supply constraints when they fall outside competition law. A 2020 study ⁽⁸⁾ found removing such practices could lead to significant consumer savings. An impact assessment and consultations are ongoing. A call for evidence ⁽⁹⁾ to gather stakeholders' views was published on 5 March 2026.

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_2727.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_19_2488.

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1356.

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2671.

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_405.

⁽⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/mt/ip_25_737.

⁽⁷⁾ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/strategy_en.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/pl/publication-detail/-/publication/831c7de4-2a1e-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1>.

⁽⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/15252-Single-market-tackling-unjustified-territorial-supply-constraints_en.