

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002476/26
to the Commission**

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(16 June 2026)

Subject: Promoting ‘freedom to stay’ for the completion of the single market for a more resilient Europe and a locally anchored industrial policy

The Letta Report underscores the need to further deepen the single market by strengthening its resilience and ensuring that economic activity remains rooted across all regions. It stresses that the single market should enable citizens to prosper wherever they live, rather than pushing them to relocate in search of opportunities. In this context, forging stronger connections between the single market, industrial policy and territorial cohesion is essential. Services of General Interest (SGI) play a crucial role in sustaining local economic ecosystems and supporting industrial development.

In light of the above:

1. How does the Commission plan to integrate the ‘freedom to stay’ as a guiding objective in the next MFF, ensuring that territorial cohesion, social resilience and competitiveness are strengthened?
2. Does the Commission intend to create a ‘freedom to stay’ indicator, designed to complement the European Semester, translating cohesion and SGI objectives into measurable outcomes?
3. What follow-up actions does the Commission plan to take to implement Letta’s proposal for developing an action plan on high-quality SGIs in Europe?

Submitted: 16.6.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(4 September 2026)

1. The Commission proposal for the European Fund ⁽¹⁾ for the period 2028-2034 mentions ‘fostering the attractiveness of territories to support the right to stay’ under specific objective ‘support the Union’s prosperity among regions’ (Article 3(1)(a) (1)). Strengthening territorial cohesion, social resilience and competitiveness require integrated and place-based approaches across many areas to support the conditions communities need to prosper. The future National and Regional Partnership Plans will provide a coherent and simplified framework to support business opportunities, employment and skills, connectivity, innovation, access to services and infrastructure, thus ensuring that territories experiencing depopulation and economic challenges remain attractive places to live and work.
2. The Commission is preparing a dedicated strategy on the ‘Right to Stay’ to support the attractiveness of territories and reflect how EU-level initiatives can help delivering place-based solutions across regions and territories. The Commission is consulting broadly to support this process. Between 6 May and 12 June 2026, a Call for Evidence collected views and ideas from stakeholders and civil society across Europe. The Commission is now analysing the 704 contributions, including best practices and possible ways to support the ‘Right to Stay’.
3. Action is needed across many areas: fostering economic development, boosting competitiveness, and ensuring access to services. The availability and quality of services such as healthcare, education, childcare, public transport, digital infrastructure, directly influence individuals and families’ residential decisions. This will be recognised in the strategy.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/european-fund-economic-social-and-territorial-cohesion-agriculture-and-rural-fisheries-and-maritime_en.