

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-000368/26
to the Commission
Jeannette Baljeu (Renew)
(29 January 2026)**

Subject: Stagnation of the single market and declining intra-EU trade

Recent Commission data, reported by the Financial Times, show that trade between EU Member States as a share of GDP fell from 23.5% in 2023 to 22% in 2024, representing the first such decline outside of the pandemic in almost a decade. Meanwhile, the time needed to develop and adopt EU-wide standards has increased, and fragmented national rules continue to hinder cross-border business activity. The European Central Bank estimates that hidden barriers within the single market are equivalent to a 65% tariff on goods and up to 100% for services.

In the light of the above:

1. How does the Commission assess the main drivers behind the decline in intra-EU trade, and to what extent does regulatory fragmentation and administrative burden contribute to this downward trend?
2. What concrete, time-bound measures will the Commission take to accelerate harmonisation, mutual recognition and standard-setting, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises operating cross-border?
3. How will the forthcoming single market roadmap ensure that future EU legislation measurably reduces internal market barriers and compliance costs for businesses, including through clear targets, monitoring mechanisms and effective enforcement?

Submitted: 29.1.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(20 March 2026)**

After a substantial increase in intra-EU trade over decades, Single Market integration has reached a plateau. Following a surge after the pandemic, trade integration in goods declined in 2023 and 2024.

An important driver behind the fluctuations is energy price volatility. Yet persistent barriers at national and European level as well as administrative burdens continue to hold back the Single Market ⁽¹⁾.

The European Product Act proposal that the Commission is preparing aims to create stronger synergies between standardisation, conformity assessment and market surveillance, ensuring coherent settings, application, and enforcement of product rules.

The reform will notably accelerate the standard-setting processes and make it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises to contribute to the development of standards and to use them.

The Single Market Strategy ⁽²⁾ is the Commission's plan to tackle the most harmful Single Market barriers. Following the informal EU leaders' retreat on 12 February 2026, the President of the Commission announced a 'One Europe, One Market Roadmap and Action Plan' ⁽³⁾ to be presented for the March 2026 European Council.

It will include concrete targets and timelines to deliver on commitments, to be agreed and committed to by the Commission and the two co-legislators.

The roadmap will have five building blocks: reducing administrative burden, building one market, building one energy market, digital, and trade.

⁽¹⁾ 2026 Annual Single Market and Competitiveness Report: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52026DC0046> and its accompanying Staff Working Document: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52026SC0030>.

⁽²⁾ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/strategy_en.

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_26_405.