



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions **"A single market for 21st century Europe"**

*2852nd COMPETITIVENESS
(Internal Market, Industry and Research)
Council meeting
Brussels, 25 February 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council,

RECALLING its Conclusions of 22 November 2007 on an integrated approach to competitiveness and the Conclusions of the European Council of 14 December 2007,

REFERRING to its Key Issues Paper for the Spring European Council of 2008 setting out its priorities in the context of the renewed Lisbon strategy,

1. STRESSES that the internal market has a key role in the globalised economy and the Lisbon Strategy by promoting competitiveness, growth and employment and bringing about a higher level of well-being and prosperity for Europe's citizens;
2. WELCOMES the presentation of the Commission's Single Market Review Package and of the initiatives outlined therein which aim at improving the functioning of the internal market by removing existing barriers to the four basic freedoms and avoiding the creation of new ones, and making full use of its still untapped potential, so that it can deliver further tangible benefits for businesses and consumers alike. Promoting the free movement of knowledge and innovation should be a priority in this respect as a means to create a knowledge-based European economy;

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3. SHARES THE VIEW of the Commission that the internal market is one of the greatest achievements of the European Union to date and that it is necessary, building on the success so far, to continuously adapt the internal market to new challenges and opportunities resulting from enlargement, globalisation, innovation, environmental and structural changes as well as new priorities such as climate change and the need for efficient and sustainable use of energy;
4. EMPHASIZES the importance of the external dimension of the internal market and shares the view that a fully functioning internal market is Europe's best asset to meet the challenges and exploit the benefits of globalisation by strengthening the ability of European enterprises to compete on world markets and by enhancing the attractiveness of Europe as a business location. To this end, the European Union will press for increasingly open markets, which should lead to reciprocal benefits. Efforts must continue to achieve effective enforcement of IPR rules and an increased regulatory convergence with main trading partners;
5. AGREES with the Commission on the need for a more evidence-based and impact-driven approach to internal market policy, in line with the better regulation agenda, with targeted actions to remove barriers and promote competition in areas and sectors of particular economic significance. To achieve this, a modern, flexible policy framework and a mixed set of well-tailored instruments are necessary. This includes, where appropriate, harmonisation as well as mutual recognition. The Council welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's proposals for new working methods on market monitoring and governance which should build on existing data and procedures. It invites the Commission, within the framework of established better regulation tools, to evaluate the implications of new initiatives on the four freedoms and to ensure that such initiatives are fully compatible with the internal market principles;
6. UNDERLINES the importance of a business and consumer friendly internal market, based on transparent, simple and consistent rules which offer legal certainty and clarity in order to enhance confidence in the internal market and its potential for increased cross-border trade opportunities for SMEs and its ability to offer consumers a wider choice of high-quality and safe goods and services at lower prices. Consultation of stakeholders and effective communication to show the benefits of the internal market should be pursued as means to increase confidence. The Council stresses that citizens should have effective access to goods and services offered throughout the EU. It calls upon the Commission and the Member States to remove remaining barriers in this regard so that citizens can shop and businesses can sell anywhere in the EU;

In this context the Council welcomes the Commission's intention to develop with the Member States a Consumer Market Scoreboard and new consumer price data as a complement to the Single Market Scoreboard. It looks forward to initiatives from the Commission as a result of its review of the consumer acquis, striking the right balance between a high level of consumer protection and the competitiveness of enterprises, while ensuring the principle of subsidiarity;

7. CONSIDERS that, wherever necessary, enhanced administrative cooperation in partnership between Member States administrations and the Commission with a view to effective application, enforcement and problem solving, inter alia through the SOLVIT network, is particularly important for further improving the efficiency of the internal market;
8. CALLS UPON the Member States and the Commission to ensure the effective and timely implementation of internal market legislation and stresses the particular importance of complete, coherent and timely implementation of the Services Directive supported by electronic procedures as provided for in the Directive;

9. WELCOMES the fact that the Single Market Review pays due attention to the social dimension and to services of general interest. The Council considers that public interest objectives must be safeguarded and believes that they can be met in an effective manner within the framework of an open and competitive internal market. The Council agrees that it is important to strengthen competition in network industries;
 10. STRESSES the need for an effective, continuous follow-up to the Single Market Review and to the examination of the initiatives presented therein by all actors concerned and calls upon the Commission and the Member States to take appropriate measures, in their respective areas of competence, with a view to achieving concrete results. The Competitiveness Council, in its coordinating role on internal market issues, will review progress on a yearly basis and in due time before the Spring European Council meetings as a key part of its contributions to the Lisbon Strategy, based on inputs from the Commission;
 11. The Council submits these Conclusions to the European Council for consideration at its forthcoming meeting in March 2008, inviting it to endorse the general orientation of a future internal market policy as outlined in the Single Market Review and in these Conclusions."
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