



2026

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Simplification, Implementation & Enforcement

Teresa Ribera

*Executive Vice-President of the
European Commission for a Clean,
Just and Competitive Transition*



1. Introduction

As [Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition](#) my task is to ensure that Europe stays on track to achieve its goals set out in the European Green Deal. I am also directly responsible for enforcing and developing EU competition rules and thus for modernising, simplifying and helping to implement the EU's competition policy to support European companies so that they can innovate, compete and lead worldwide.

This report encompasses action with a [simplification, implementation, and enforcement dimension](#) from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026 in the competition area for which I am responsible.

2. Executive Summary

A key objective of the President's [2024-2029 Political guidelines](#) is to reduce administrative burdens and simplify implementation of EU regulation across-the-board, while upholding high standards and achieving economic, social, and environmental goals. We made significant contributions to that end in the competition area during the period covered by this report.

In the State aid area, our simplification action included a new [Transport Block Exemption Regulation \(TBER\)](#) allowing Member States to provide aid without notification to the Commission, thereby speeding up investments and contributing to the reduction of transport emissions.

Against the background of a housing crisis affecting millions of citizens, the Commission also adopted a new [Decision on Services of General Economic Interest \(SGEI Decision\)](#) with the objective of facilitating funding for affordable and social housing. Concretely, we removed the obligation for Member States to ask the Commission for prior approval in the case of investment in affordable housing. The SGEI Decision supports the pillars of the European [Affordable Housing Plan](#) aimed at boosting housing supply, mobilising investment, enabling immediate support while helping the most affected.

Our work aimed at streamlining the [General Block Exemption Regulation \(GBER\)](#) with significant potential administrative cost savings resulted in a public consultation on a draft legal text.

In the merger area, we prepared a public consultation on the draft of the new [EU Merger Guidelines](#) launched by the Commission. The new Guidelines will replace the current [Horizontal Merger Guidelines](#) and the [Non-Horizontal Merger Guidelines](#), marking the most significant reform in EU merger control for the past two decades.

The revisions of the GBER and Merger Guidelines have a simplification dimension and were already explicitly provided for in the [President's Political Guidelines](#) and in [my Mission letter](#).

In line with the President's Political Guidelines, I held [two Implementation dialogues](#) which fed into the abovementioned [State aid rules on affordable housing](#) and the [revision of the Merger Guidelines](#).

We also carried out the first comprehensive reviews of the [Digital Markets Act](#) and the [Foreign Subsidies Regulation](#) which identified further simplification potential.

Finally, we also adopted several guidance documents which simplify the application of and compliance with key areas of competition law and policy for stakeholders, such as the [template for the prenotification and notification of schemes falling under the Clean Industrial Deal State Aid Framework \(CISAF\)](#) or [guidance and templates applicable to Important Projects of Common European Interest \(IPCEIs\)](#). We would also refer to the first-ever [guidance on State aid for social support and social investments](#) which will facilitate swift public funding for those in need.

3. Delivering Results: Key Measures

In the area of competition, the Commission adopted the following initiatives with a simplification dimension (Adopted initiatives). Several other initiatives with a simplification dimension have been launched and are ongoing (Ongoing initiatives).

A. Simplification and costs savings

Adopted initiatives

With millions of Europeans struggling to find a home they can afford, we prepared a [revision of the Decision on Services of General Economic Interest \(SGEI Decision\)](#) approved by the European Commission on 16 December 2025.

The revised SGEI decision makes it easier for public authorities to invest in affordable housing. In particular, to reduce the administrative burden, the reporting obligations imposed by the SGEI decision were removed and replaced by the need to publish summary information on large aid amounts. It is estimated that by avoiding the notification procedure required under the previous rules, the Member States may save several months of work¹. The revision is a key component of the Commission's [European Affordable Housing Plan](#) unveiled on the same date.

In support of the [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#) aimed at a 90% reduction in transport emissions by 2050, we prepared a new [Transport Block Exemption Regulation \(TBER\)](#) allowing Member States to support sustainable transport without the need to notify the aid to the Commission. The Commission adopted the TBER together with [accompanying Guidelines](#) on aid for land and multimodal transport on 16 March 2026. Businesses thus benefit as they will receive funding faster. The [impact assessment](#) accompanying the TBER estimates the savings from the expected decrease in the number of aid schemes subject to notification as well as the savings for businesses resulting from the reduced time lag between Member States designing an aid scheme and implementing it.² The Guidelines clarify the rules for State aid that is notified to the Commission.

Building on our experience with previous crises, on 29 April 2026 the Commission adopted the [Middle East Crisis Temporary State aid Framework \(METSAF\)](#) to facilitate the granting of State aid to mitigate fuel, natural gas, electricity as well as fertiliser price hikes and volatility resulting from the Middle East crisis. Under METSAF targeted support for energy costs can be channelled swiftly and flexibly to sectors relying on imported fuels and fertilisers, in particular agriculture, fisheries, transport and energy-intensive industries until end-2026.

In the digital area, we concluded the first full review of the [Digital Markets Act \(DMA\)](#) with the publication of a [report](#) on 28 April 2026 finding that the DMA had thus far effectively contributed to the core objective of making digital markets in the EU fairer and more contestable, achieving a tangible positive impact within just over two years of the DMA becoming fully applicable to designated gatekeepers. As set out in the report, we will also continue to engage with gatekeepers and third parties with a view to streamlining and simplifying the regulatory dialogue while ensuring effective compliance. As the DMA is only applicable to gatekeepers it does not impose compliance costs on non-gatekeepers, in particular on SMEs and start-ups.

A full [review of the Foreign Subsidies Regulation \(FSR\)](#) was published on 14 July 2026, concluding that while the review demonstrated that the FSR was fit for purpose and had fulfilled its objectives, the Commission may

¹ Available evidence indicates that the pre-notification and notification processes may extend over several months, approximately 10 months on average and require the involvement of multiple national authorities and a significant number of staff on the Member State's side, with typically around 8 to 10 officials involved in the exchanges with the Commission. See the [impact assessment and its executive summary](#) accompanying the revised SGEI Decision.

² Those savings are estimated at between EUR 7.6 and 43.4 million per year for businesses in opportunity cost savings, as well as at between EUR 83 518 and 178 171 in terms of administrative costs per year for Member State administrations.

consider possible adjustments to the procedural set-up to reduce the administrative burden on businesses and facilitate compliance without prejudice to the FSR's effectiveness. In the context of the publication of the FSR review and considering its findings, [the Commission announced targeted adjustments to the FSR procedural framework on 14 July 2026](#). Under the concentration part of the FSR, [the Commission is considering increasing the turnover notification threshold through a delegated act](#). The Commission estimates that increasing the turnover notification threshold up to 20% (from EUR 500 million to EUR 600 million) would reduce the number of notifications in the concentration module by up to 15%.

On 13 January 2026 the Commission adopted the [FSR Guidelines](#) aimed at clarifying and increasing legal certainty in respect of certain key concepts, such as the meaning of the concept of distortion in the internal market as well as the balancing test (i.e. whether the positive effects of the foreign subsidy counterbalance its distortive effects). The FSR Guidelines also enhance predictability and transparency for companies.

In the antitrust area, under my guidance we prepared a [revision of the Technology Transfer Block Exemption Regulation \(TTBER\) and accompanying Guidelines](#) approved by the Commission on 16 April 2026. Technology transfer agreements are agreements by which a firm that owns technology rights (such as patents, design rights or software copyright) authorises another firm – usually by granting a license – to use the rights to produce goods or services. The revised TTBER and Guidelines provide businesses with up-to-date rules and guidance to help them assess the compliance of their technology licensing and related agreements (e.g. data licensing agreements) with EU competition rules. Input from stakeholders on data licensing, licensing negotiation groups and technology pools at a [Reality check](#) held on 12 November 2025 fed into the revision. The increase in legal certainty resulting from the revision reduces the cost for businesses when assessing the compliance of their agreements with Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).³

On 5 March 2026, the Commission removed reporting obligations on Member States in the Commission Directive on competition in the markets in telecommunications equipment, given the Directive had in great part achieved its objectives as Member States have progressively eliminated exclusive or special rights for terminal equipment. Thus, the obligation to provide the Commission with an annual report was no longer deemed necessary. Against that background, the practical result is that Member States do not need to start preparing annual reports for the end of the 2026 or the following years.

Ongoing initiatives

On 30 April 2026, the Commission launched a public consultation on the draft of the new [EU Merger Guidelines](#) as part of the most significant revision of EU merger rules for two decades⁴. The new Guidelines will replace the current [Horizontal Merger Guidelines](#) and the [Non-Horizontal Merger Guidelines](#).

Under my direction, we are also revising the antitrust procedural framework ([Council Regulation 1/2003](#) and [Commission Regulation 773/2004](#)) with the aim of improving the effectiveness of core components of that framework, simplifying procedures and accelerating investigations. On 15 December 2025, the Commission organised a [Reality check](#)⁵ to engage further with stakeholders on their perspectives regarding various issues such as investigative measures as well as decision-making procedures including interim measures and access to file.⁶ The discussion also collected views on how to simplify the rules.

³ The estimated administrative cost savings for the businesses concerned resulting from the new streamlined rules are EUR 5.1 million per year. See the [impact assessment](#) accompanying the revision of the TTBER.

⁴ The revision forms part of the [Commission Work Programme for 2026](#).

⁵ See page 8 of the Staff Working Document referred to in the hyperlink.

⁶ The Reality check was organised around four breakout sessions covering the following topics: (i) the Commission's evidence-gathering toolbox (inspections, preservation orders and interviews); (ii) convergence and cooperation in the European

We continued our work on the future [Guidelines on exclusionary abuses of dominance](#) by systematising the case-law on Article 102 of the TFEU with a view to enhancing legal certainty and predictability.

In the State aid area, on 25 February 2026, we launched a public consultation on a draft for a simpler and more streamlined [State aid General Block Exemption Regulation \(GBER\)](#) as a means of further boosting the competitiveness of EU industry, including SMEs, with potentially significant administrative cost savings. The [GBER](#) defines specific categories of State aid as compatible with EU rules if they fulfil certain conditions and exempts them from prior notification to and approval by the Commission. The intention is for the new GBER to involve fewer administrative burdens and to be easier to interpret and apply in line with stakeholder input. Member States implement an increasing share of all their State aid measures under the GBER; for example, in 2024 they reported aid 6,509 aid measures as falling under the GBER, representing 69% of all active State aid measures.

In conjunction with the GBER revision, we are also preparing a repeal of two State aid communications (for [training aid](#) and [employment aid](#)) as they are no longer fit for purpose. Instead, the GBER will create more possibilities for this type of aid, thus allowing Member States to implement measures without the Commission's authorisation.

Stress-testing

During the reference period and as stated above, my services continued their substantial and comprehensive stress-testing of all its five policy areas, notably by prioritising fundamental actions such as the DMA and FSR reviews as well as the ongoing work on the Merger Guidelines, the GBER and the core antitrust procedural framework.

Our stress-testing was also underpinned by evaluations in the State aid area ([Banking communication](#) and the [State aid guarantee notice](#)) as well as in antitrust ([Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation](#)).

The ongoing revision of the State aid Banking Communication will also support the Regulatory deep cleaning action plan set out in the [Commission's Communication on a Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook](#).

National Promotional Banks are a vital tool to address market failures by channelling public and private investments into key areas like infrastructure, innovation and SMEs. [A Reality check on National Promotional Banks](#) aimed at ensuring access to finance to the Clean Industrial Deal held on 28 April 2026 will also inform the current revisions of the GBER and the State aid guarantee notice. The Reality check gave an insight into the experience and good practices of national promotional banks. It also identified obstacles to the implementation of risk finance schemes, guarantee schemes and InvestEU projects.

In March and April 2026, we organised [three Reality checks on different themes which all provided valuable input to the ongoing reform of the GBER](#)⁷. For example, one Reality check held on 20 April 2026 focused on social enterprises, providing key input from stakeholders on how to develop an effective and supportive framework for such enterprises and disadvantaged groups while maintaining a level playing field in the internal market.

Competition Network as well as the handling of complaints and third-party participation in proceedings; (iii) confidentiality rings in the context of granting access to the file; and (iv) interim measures, commitments and remedies in the context of the Commission's decision-making procedures.

⁷ The other two Reality checks focused on aid for research and development as well as on the definition of so-called undertakings in difficulty and SMEs in the context of the GBER reform.

On 3 December 2025, we also organised a [Reality check](#) on State aid private enforcement and the use of State aid rules in national courts to gather insights from judges, lawyers, academics and other stakeholders on the practical challenges and opportunities when enforcing State aid rules at national level.

B. Implementation

On 13 November 2025, I organised an [Implementation dialogue on the role of State aid in addressing the housing crisis](#) which is a top priority for the European Commission as reflected in the [European Affordable Housing Plan](#), not least given that the housing crisis is now increasingly affecting a broader segment of society, as a growing number of middle-income households face difficulties in accessing affordable housing. An Implementation dialogue is a key tool for consulting stakeholders as part of this [Commission's implementation and simplification agenda](#), with the aim of ensuring that policy objectives are achieved, while compliance burdens are minimised.

A diverse and balanced group of stakeholders called for clear and predictable State aid rules. I reaffirmed that the new State aid rules would support both social and affordable housing and operate as a practical enabling tool for Member States and regional and local authorities, while respecting national contexts and avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens. Those conclusions fed into the [Commission's revised SGEI Decision](#) adopted on 16 December 2025.

On 27 July 2026, for the first time we published [State aid guidance on social support and social investments on DG Competition's website](#). The guidance assists Member States in designing State aid measures in those areas and gives visibility to all stakeholders on tools available for public funding of their activities. It explains the applicable State aid rules in simple terms, providing a basic practical guide to practitioners. It is thus also a one-stop-shop for companies in need of State aid in the social area, providing them with information on whether public funding constitutes State aid in the first place and if so where to find the relevant rules allowing such State aid. The guidance complements and draws on other efforts to bring State aid rules closer to those who apply them, such as the abovementioned Implementation dialogue which informed the revision of the SGEI Decision as well as the [Reality check with social economy actors](#) concerning the revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation.

On 5 March 2026, I held a further [Implementation Dialogue on the impact of mergers on productivity, sustainability and the cost of living](#). A broad range of participants agreed on the need to update the two sets of Merger Guidelines to reflect the European Courts' case law, the Commission's case practice and new market realities as well as the need for more comprehensive guidance on the dynamic effects of mergers in terms of harm and efficiencies. Participants also agreed that the impact of mergers on prices should remain a key focus of merger control as prices affect consumers and the overall competitiveness of European companies, but that other factors may also be relevant for the assessment - such as innovation, sustainability and resilience - and that considering a longer timeframe for the assessment of a merger's effects on the market may be needed.

I underlined the need for a clear, predictable and flexible framework of assessment that is fit for the future and would appropriately capture dynamic effects while being able to tackle the worrying concentration of market power in certain sectors. The conclusions of the dialogue informed the draft Merger Guidelines on which a public consultation was launched on 30 April 2026. The draft consolidates the Horizontal and Non-Horizontal Merger Guidelines into one single text.

As a follow up to the Implementation dialogue on [Important Projects of Common European Interest \(IPCEI\)](#) that I held on 30 June 2025, we have provided further advice to stakeholders to facilitate and simplify the processes of the IPCEIs, including within the framework of the Joint European Forum for IPCEIs (JEF-IPCEI) comprising the Commission and the Member States. For example, on 24 November 2025, the high-level meeting of the JEF-IPCEI adopted a [recommendation](#) on how to make it easier for SMEs to participate. As explained in the recommendation, SMEs are participating both directly and as associated or indirect partners, thus reinforcing the IPCEI ecosystem. Out of the eleven integrated IPCEIs approved so far by the Commission,

more than 20% of all direct participants are SMEs. Moreover, the participation of SMEs has been increasing over time. Since 2018, the participation ratio of SMEs has increased steadily from 7% (IPCEI Microelectronics) to around 60% in 2024 and 2025 for IPCEIs Med4Cure and Tech4Cure respectively, amounting to an average ratio of 26% for all approved IPCEIs so far.

National courts play a crucial role in enforcement of EU antitrust, DMA and State aid rules. The Commission provides [financial support to train judges](#) in these fields so that they can better understand and enforce those rules in order to ensure the effectiveness and uniform application of EU competition rules. For instance, we are cooperating with the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) to provide a specialised State aid training through the SUNAJUST programme. We are also closely cooperating with Association of European Competition Law Judges, the network for the European competition law judiciary.

As of 1 January 2026, we made the [eAidRegister](#) operational. The register is a user-friendly platform allowing Member States granting authorities to track de minimis aid awards with a few clicks⁸. It entails IT development and maintenance costs savings for Member States in connection with their State aid transparency obligations under the [General](#), [SGEI](#) and [Agriculture](#) de minimis regulations. In addition, once the national or EU registers contain complete information on aid granted, businesses will no longer be required to keep track of and report all de minimis aid they received over a three-year period.

C. Enforcement

One key pillar of the Commission's Implementation, Simplification and Enforcement agenda involves [infringement proceedings against Member States](#) within the meaning of Articles 258-260 TFEU which outline the rules for handling cases where a Member State is suspected of failing to fulfil its obligations under EU law. The abovementioned activities are traditionally limited in the area of EU competition policy. For information on infringement procedures and informal pre-infringement dialogues a public register has been made available on [a dedicated Europa webpage](#) which illustrates the Commission's enforcement activities and Member States' compliance with EU law through interactive maps and customisable graphs. It also provides up-to-date information about individual cases.

[Directive \(EU\) 2019/1 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018](#) is intended to empower the competition authorities of the Member States to become more effective enforcers and to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market ([ECN+ Directive](#)). The aim is to ensure that National Competition Authorities have effective enforcement tools and the necessary resources to detect and sanction companies infringing EU antitrust rules. In addition, it aims to ensure that the NCAs can take their decisions in full independence. In 2025, the Commission initiated pre-infringement dialogues with Finland, Romania, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Croatia, Czechia, Poland, Austria, France, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece to ensure that transposition was done in full conformity with the Directive's requirements, after [closing the infringement proceedings for late transposition initially opened against these Member States](#). As regards Estonia, it notified the Commission in early July 2025 that it had fully transposed the Directive after which the Commission [closed the infringement proceeding against Estonia](#) on 11 December 2025.

On 21 November 2025, the Commission also [closed the infringement proceedings brought against Greece](#) for its failure to recover unlawful aid granted to Hellenic Shipyards.

4. Way forward

In the State aid area, we are preparing the following actions within the next twelve months:

⁸ The tool is currently used by 12 Member States plus the United Kingdom and Iceland.

- [Revision](#) of the [GBER](#) (Q4 2026) together with the repeal of two Communications on [training aid](#) and [employment aid](#))
- Finalising the [evaluation](#) of the [Broadcasting Communication](#) (Q4 2026)
- [Revision](#) of the [Rescue and restructuring guidelines](#) (Q4 2026)
- [Revision](#) of the [Foreign Subsidies Implementing Regulation](#) (Q4 2026)
- [Revision](#) of the [Aviation guidelines](#) (Q2 2027)
- [Revision](#) of the [Guarantee notice](#) (Q3 2027)

In antitrust, the [Guidelines on exclusionary abuses](#) are envisaged to be adopted in Q3 2026, while adoption of a legislative proposal linked to the review of the [core procedural framework](#) for antitrust cases is planned for Q1-Q2 2027. In addition, we will organise a Reality check concerning the [Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation](#) in Q1 2027.

In the fourth quarter of 2026, we will also finalise the [review of the Merger guidelines](#).

In 2026 and beyond, supporting innovation in cross-border projects through IPCEIs will remain a priority. We will continue working on future IPCEIs in strategic sectors in close cooperation with Member States, in the [Joint European Forum for IPCEIs \(JEF-IPCEI\)](#) and in the IPCEI Design Hub, to improve, simplify and speed up the design and assessment process⁹.

Annex: examples

At the Implementation dialogue on [Important Projects of Common European Interest \(IPCEI\)](#) which I chaired, I concluded by committing myself to streamlining the IPCEI instrument and making it more agile and effective. During the first half of 2026, we provided technical and updated guidance in line with the outcome of the Implementation dialogue, which is facilitating the ongoing design and assessment phases of nine IPCEI candidates in different sectors.

The technical guidance covering both substantive and procedural requirements included:

- Technical guidance on [conditions and process RDI-FID](#) IPCEI
- Technical guidance on [conditions and process Infrastructure](#) IPCEI

A number of templates to be used by the stakeholders were also updated comprising:

- The IPCEI [Project Portfolio Template](#)
- The IPCEI [Project Portfolio Template for SMEs](#)
- The IPCEI [Funding Gap Template \(RDI-FID\)](#)
- The IPCEI [Funding Gap Template \(Infrastructure\)](#)

⁹ As set out in the Clean Industrial Deal Communication, in April 2025 the Commission launched a Design Support Hub for IPCEIs. The Support Hub works closely with Member States to shape and design IPCEI candidate projects from start to finish, while providing them with expert advice on how to streamline and accelerate complex cross-border IPCEIs.

Below further concrete examples are provided of how we have simplified the implementation of State aid rules for Member States and other stakeholders in the energy, climate and environmental area, thereby contributing, at a practical level, to the objectives set out in the Clean Industrial Deal.

First, in December 2025, to assist Member States we published [Guidance on the design of two-way contracts for difference](#) (i.e. contracts between a power-generating installation operator and a counterpart, usually a public entity, that provides both minimum remuneration protection and a limit to excess remuneration).

Second, in November 2025, we published a [template for the prenotification and notification of schemes falling under the Clean Industrial Deal State Aid Framework \(CISAF\)](#) and which make use of the funding gap methodology to establish the maximum aid amount. The guidance also explains to aid applicants how this funding gap template is structured and sets out the requirements concerning the underlying assumptions and justification for the financial projections relied on by the applicants. The objective is to ensure a correct and credible calculation of the project's funding gap. More precisely, the guidance provides a detailed calculation method in the format of an excel table, with predefined calculation formulas, that Member States and aid beneficiaries alike can use to calculate the need for State aid on the basis of the financial characteristics of the aided project

In the area of the Digital Markets Act (DMA), on 12 December 2025, the [High-Level Group on the Digital Markets Act](#) (High-Level Group) met for the fifth time. It discussed the role the group can play in the coordination of different regulatory frameworks applicable in digital markets and in particular the DMA with experts from civil society and consumer representatives. The High-Level Group endorsed a [joint paper](#) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) that maps out the regulatory interplay related to AI issues.

On AI-related issues, the joint paper, together with the High-Level Group's future work, will strengthen cooperation among the relevant regulatory authorities, including in relation to enforcement, as well as promote greater clarity and consistency in how the DMA interacts with other legal frameworks governing AI and the wider AI value chain.

Finally, on 11 May 2026 we published a [Factsheet](#) entitled "How the DMA is making smartphones better: interoperability and data portability case studies". The case studies on interoperability and data portability show how the DMA's provisions can be made effective through concrete technical measures, clear deadlines and measurable outcomes. By translating interoperability and data-portability requirements into Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), transfer tools¹⁰ or access processes¹¹, gatekeepers are provided with clearer compliance expectations and developers with practical ways to exercise their rights. This improves user choice, data mobility and overall market fairness and contestability.

¹⁰ A transfer tool is a software programme, protocol or cloud platform used to move digital information, files or assets from one location, device or system to another.

¹¹ An access process is a security workflow that regulates who can view, use or enter a system, network or data. It relies on core steps like identification, authentication, authorisation, and accountability to protect digital assets from unauthorised use.