



## **Dir. C – Legislative Work**

### **Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)**

#### **Preamble**

Europe enters the new political cycle facing profound and interlinked challenges. The combination of overlapping crises, rapidly changing geopolitical realities and a worrying rise in extremism has placed unprecedented pressure on our societies and economies. In this context, strengthening Europe's resilience and competitiveness requires renewed determination to deepen integration, reinforce democratic values and ensure that the single market functions as a true engine for prosperity and social stability.

A genuinely integrated single market is now more essential than ever. Persistent barriers continue to limit its full potential, depriving businesses and citizens of opportunities at a time when global competition intensifies. Removing these barriers, and preventing new ones from emerging, will be central to ensuring Europe's capacity to lead in strategic sectors, support industrial transformation, accelerate the green and digital transitions and protect consumers. The INT section will continue to highlight these priorities in all areas of its work, consistently advocating for coherent, forward-looking and implementation-oriented EU policies.

Delivering on this agenda requires close cooperation with the EU institutions. The section will therefore intensify its follow-up work with the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council, ensuring that the perspectives of organised civil society are fully reflected in policy design and implementation.

#### **Thematic priorities**

##### **1. A stronger single market - advancing European industrial and competition policies**

###### Single market

The single market remains one of the European Union's greatest achievements and the foundation of its global competitiveness. The INT section will therefore **keep the single market at the core of its work in the current mandate**, ensuring that its advantages are fully leveraged to enable Europe to prosper in an increasingly competitive global environment.

The section will intensify efforts to identify obstacles that fragment the single market and propose solutions to remove them. Attention will also be paid to persistent barriers in the services sector,

which continue to limit the effective cross-border provision of services despite their central role in the EU economy. This work will be supported by the new **Single Market Enforcement Observatory**, which will contribute directly to the Commission's Single Market Enforcement Taskforce and provide concrete evidence from stakeholders across Europe.

Building on the strategic importance of the INT opinion on the **Single market strategy** (INT/1094), the section will continue this work with a longer-term perspective and reinforce cooperation with institutional partners, including through joint activities with the Committee of the Regions. The section will also anticipate new initiatives through own-initiative and exploratory opinions.

One of the key focuses will be to contribute to the Commission's evaluation of the **EU Market Surveillance Regulation**, including fact-finding missions to Member States. The section will promote the EESC's contribution to the revision of **EU public procurement rules** and respond to the Commission's proposal once published. The recognition of "made in Europe" in public procurement and more broadly in the single market will also be a key element of the section's work. The section will prepare the exploratory opinion on **territorial supply constraints** requested by the Commission. It will also engage in the legislative work on the revision of the **EU Standardisation Regulation** and the **New Legislative Framework**, using insights from its evaluation of market surveillance.

The section will also contribute to **strengthening the focus on the social economy** as an industrial ecosystem and on its role as a driver of sustainable competitiveness within the single market. The section will remain active in key fora, including the GECES and the UN Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, and will organise events with strategic partners, from EU institutions to national stakeholders, to enhance the visibility of the EESC's work in this area.

### Industrial policy

A **truly European industrial strategy**, rather than a mix of national approaches, remains essential for strengthening the EU's long-term competitiveness and resilience. It is also key to supporting quality employment and skills development across European value chains, in particular in the context of industrial transformation. Building on recent EESC opinions, the section will pursue further work on industrial policy, with particular attention to the opinion "How to consider value chains in policymaking" (INT/1087). It will follow closely the implementation of the **Clean Industrial Deal** and related initiatives, emphasising the importance of targeted solutions for all value chains. It will carry out follow-up work on its opinion on the proposed **European Competitiveness Fund**, in view of its relevance for strategic investment and industrial transformation.

In light of the Draghi report, the section will take stock of the **Competitiveness Coordination Tool** to assess how it can better guide EU policies and investment. It will actively participate in the Commission's annual Industry Days, ensuring EESC visibility and contributions to key discussions. It will also engage in the work of the new Industrial Forum established by the Commission, participating with observer status and representing the perspectives of organised civil society.

### Competition policy

An effective and future-proof EU competition policy is essential. The section will continue to contribute its annual opinion to the **Competition policy report**, providing forward-looking input reflecting civil society perspectives.

Proper regulation of competition policies is essential to support European competitiveness within a framework of clear rules. Among these rules, those concerning the **updating of state aid** are decisive. The European Commission is already proceeding with some important amendments and, in the course of 2026, will prepare a new proposal for the GBER, which is one of the pillars of European state aid policy. The INT Section has expressed its views on state aid on several occasions in recent years and intends to continue to take part in the debate.

The section will also contribute to the debate on adapting the EU competition framework to new realities and engage in the upcoming **revision of the EU merger guidelines**, including through a topical debate at an INT section meeting in cooperation with DG COMP.

In addition, the section will continue to promote recent EESC opinions on competition policy, including “A competition policy at the heart of the EU’s competitiveness” (INT/1063) and “Framework for State aid measures to support the Clean Industrial Deal” (INT/1091).

## 2. **Driving Europe’s circular economy transition**

There is an urgent need to drive Europe’s transition towards a more sustainable, resilient and competitive economy and to move systematically from linear models to circularity. The INT section will position the circular economy as a core driver of European competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy, while continuing to support the work of the **European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform** (ECESP), jointly managed with the NAT section.

The section will actively steer and reinforce the platform’s work, which is structured around key circular economy objectives aligned with the European Commission’s priorities, including the **Circular Economy Act** and the **Clean Industrial Deal**.

A further priority will be to scale up implementation and uptake of circular solutions, by **strengthening stakeholder networks**, peer learning and engagement, particularly for SMEs, regions and cities. In this context, the section will contribute to **reinforcing ECESP as the joint platform between sections INT and NAT**, guided by the new Coordination Group and its leadership groups tackling urgent topics. The section will deepen cooperation on **critical raw materials, textiles and the built environment**, and contribute to mapping material and information flows to identify opportunities for industrial symbiosis.

Supporting SMEs will remain a key concern, including helping them adopt **circular business models** and fostering knowledge brokers. The section will also work on aligning circular strategies with emission reduction targets, strengthening economic enablers, improving **Extended Producer Responsibility systems**, and supporting work towards circular taxation frameworks.

To strengthen visibility and exchange, the section will intensify its outreach and policy impact, by continuing to organise **regular online webinars (#EUCircularTalks)**, participating in high-level circular economy events and playing a leading role in hosting the **ECESP Annual Conferences** with the European Commission.

### 3. Empowering SMEs, start-ups and mid-caps in Europe

SMEs are at the heart of the Single Market, yet they continue to face a difficult environment, marked by limited access to finance, heavy administrative burdens and obstacles to scaling up.

Within the INT section, SME policy will remain a key priority. The first major focus is **regulatory simplification**. In this context, the section will continue its follow-up work on key opinions, such as “Regulatory simplification – the use of digital tools in better law-making” (INT/1088), which highlights essential measures to make doing business easier and faster in Europe.

The section will monitor the implementation and enforcement of the **Omnibus measures**, including Omnibus IV, and prepare an opinion on the Digital Omnibus on AI and the simplification of digital legislation. It will also follow work on the **European Business Wallet** and the proposals for the **28th Regime** and the **SME Passport**.

The section will continue focusing on the **needs of start-ups and scale-ups** and will follow up on its opinion “European start-ups and scale-ups” (INT/1089). The section will also continue stressing the need to create incentives for **business transfer**, including awareness campaigns, advisory services, mentoring and improved access to finance.

The section will monitor reforms affecting SMEs, including the Market Surveillance Regulation and its upcoming revisions. It will organise debates and seminars on SMEs, start-ups and mid-caps, and participate in EU-level events such as the **SME Assembly**.

### 4. Driving Europe’s future: the crucial role of digital transition and Research & Innovation policies

#### Digital transition

The EU’s digital transformation is a key driver of competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy. As technology evolves rapidly, the section will continue promoting the EESC’s human-in-command principle to ensure that people and their rights remain central to technological development.

As the EESC was one of the first EU institutions to address **artificial intelligence (AI)**, the section will continue supporting Europe’s efforts to build capacity in strategic technologies, with a focus on AI, quantum computing and cybersecurity. It will prepare an opinion on the **Cloud and AI Development Act** and the **Chips Act**.

The section will prioritise **monitoring the implementation and enforcement of EU digital legislation**, including the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act, and will continue supporting SMEs in

this context. It will follow up on the opinion on the “Quantum Strategy” (INT/1098), which will feed into the preparation of the Quantum Act.

### Research & Innovation

With the recent focus on boosting the competitiveness of the Single Market, strengthening defence capabilities and reinforcing strategic autonomy, research and innovation (R&I) is once again at the **core of the European Commission’s policy agenda**.

The section will continue its work and dissemination of the opinion on **Horizon Europe** (INT/1102), adopted as part of the MFF package. The section will also pursue its work on the exploratory opinion on the EU Start-ups and Scale-ups strategy, with a focus on the **European Innovation Act** (INT/1112), which will feed into the Commission’s legislative proposal.

In the third quarter of 2026, the European Commission is expected to propose the **European Research Area (ERA) Act**. The EESC has already adopted its own-initiative opinion (INT/1082) in July 2025 to influence this process.

The section will also consider contributing to the forthcoming communication on the **Action Plan for Women in Research, Innovation and Start-ups**, as well as the planned recommendations on counteracting **gender-based violence in research and innovation**.

## 5. **Strengthening consumer protection, responsible consumption and product safety in Europe**

Consumer policy is an essential pillar of a well-functioning single market and a key component of the EU’s broader competitiveness agenda. For the 2025-2028 mandate, the priorities of the INT section will closely align with those of the European Commission, with the **2030 Consumer Agenda**. The section will contribute to this agenda through its opinion and by organising topical debates and stakeholder exchanges that bring civil society perspectives into consumer policy.

Several important legislative files will require close attention from the section. A **Digital Fairness Act**, expected in the fourth quarter of 2026, will aim to tackle unfair and deceptive practices online. The section will prepare an opinion on this proposal, including aspects related to the protection of minors, and may also organise a topical debate to contribute to the preparation of this work. The section will also prepare an opinion on the revision of the **Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation**, expected in Q4 2026, which aims to enhance coordinated enforcement among national authorities and may introduce centralised investigation and enforcement powers at EU level.

Other priority areas will include **reinforced protection against online fraud, scams and unsafe products**, as well as supporting the effective enforcement of the **General Product Safety Regulation** and the modernisation of related instruments. The section will also continue the important work initiated in 2025 on **online platforms from third countries**, a topic on which there is growing alignment among stakeholders. The section will therefore continue building alliances to advance this work and ensure that consumers benefit from safer and fairer online marketplaces.

Finally, the section will remain proactive in identifying emerging issues in consumer policy. It will consider developing own-initiative opinions on new trends, challenges and risks, and will continue to organise its **annual Consumer Day**, which serves as a key platform for dialogue, visibility and stakeholder engagement.

## 6. Shaping sustainable tourism ecosystem

Tourism is a major pillar of Europe’s economy and cultural identity. In line with the **EU Agenda for Tourism 2030**, the INT section will intensify its efforts to support a tourism sector that is better prepared for future crises, more sustainable in its practices and more competitive on the global stage.

The section will contribute to the development of the **EU Sustainable Travel Strategy** and will continue engaging in shaping the European approach to sustainable tourism. Particular attention will be paid to promoting the EESC’s work on **regenerative tourism**, an approach that goes beyond sustainability by aiming to restore and enhance local ecosystems and communities.

The section will promote and build upon its key opinions in this field, including “Tourism in the EU: sustainability as a driver for long-term competitiveness” (INT/1059) and “Over-tourism, short-term rentals and the crowding-out of local populations” (INT/1113). It will also contribute to a future **European strategy on sustainable tourism**.

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