

Brussels, 26 June 2026
(OR. en)

11036/26

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Simplification: state of play and future orientation - Exchange of views

Delegations will find in the annex a steering note by the Presidency for the exchange of views to be held on the abovementioned topic at the meeting of the General Affairs Council on 14 July 2026.

Simplification: state of play and future orientation**Presidency Steering note****OVERVIEW**

Against the backdrop of the Letta and Draghi reports¹, the European Council has called for a “simplification revolution”² and since October 2024 has reiterated its call on all EU institutions, Member States and stakeholders to simplify rules and reduce administrative burdens at EU, national and regional level to boost the EU’s long-term competitiveness.

In this context, the Commission has set a target to reduce administrative burdens by at least 25%, and at least 35% for SMEs, by the end of its current mandate, with a view to achieving annual cost savings of €37.5 billion for businesses and public administrations through simplification initiatives.

In March 2026, the European Council called on the co-legislators to keep up the momentum to simplify and reduce burdens arising from existing legislation, notably by agreeing, before the end of 2026, all pending omnibus packages, including the digital omnibus on AI by July 2026. EU leaders also called on the Commission to put forward further omnibus and other simplification initiatives, including to further speed up and streamline planning and permitting procedures, and stressed the importance of a ‘simplicity-by-design’ principle in the EU’s legislative approach. This call was reinforced by leaders at the European Council in June 2026 where they underlined the urgency of decisive progress on this agenda.

The One Europe, One Market Roadmap agreed on 24 April 2026 between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission, and endorsed by EU leaders, further lays out five strategic building blocks to boost EU competitiveness, of which the first concerns simplifying rules. The Roadmap sets out priority target dates for finalising all pending omnibus packages by the end of 2026, and the omnibus proposals on taxation and energy products in Q4 2027 at the latest.

¹ Respectively ‘Much more than a market’ and ‘The future of European competitiveness’.

² Budapest Declaration on the New European Competitiveness Deal

STATE OF PLAY

The Cyprus Presidency presented a comprehensive progress report on the omnibus simplification legislative packages to the General Affairs Council on 16 June 2026.³ Of the ten packages presented by the Commission in 2025⁴, six packages have now been fully finalised or provisionally agreed by the co-legislators (Omnibus packages I-VI), and part of one package has also been provisionally agreed (Omnibus VII – the AI omnibus). COREPER agreed a negotiating mandate on part of the environment package (Omnibus VIII) on 24 June 2026. Discussions will continue in Council under the Irish Presidency on outstanding elements of the packages presented in 2025 (Omnibus packages VII-X). The Commission tabled two further packages on 24 June 2026 on taxation (Omnibus XI) and energy products (Omnibus XII). The Commission Work Programme for 2026 also foresees a Citizens' package (Omnibus XIII) in Q4 2026.

In its *Communication for a Simpler, Clearer, Better Enforced EU rulebook*, published on 28 April 2026, the Commission sets out a number of key principles for simplification and better regulation and has committed to carrying out a regulatory deep clean of the EU acquis, with a focus on 12 priority areas: free movement of goods and services; financial services and banking; customs union; taxation; health and food safety; agriculture; transport; energy; climate; environment; digital; housing and permitting. It has also recently launched a Simplification Platform to receive stakeholder views on areas for further simplification.⁵

Simplification is fundamentally about better regulation: it is essential that we reduce the regulatory burden while maintaining high ambition in terms of environmental protection, fundamental rights and other standards. In this context, at its meeting in December 2025, the General Affairs Council adopted Council Conclusions on Simplification and Better Regulation⁶, with the aim to foster a simplified regulatory framework at the EU level in line with core better regulation principles.

³ 9834/1/26 REV 1

⁴ Omnibus I (sustainability and due diligence reporting), Omnibus II (InvestEU), Omnibus III (Common Agricultural Policy), Omnibus IV (Small mid-caps, digitalisation and common specifications), Omnibus V (Defence Readiness), Omnibus VI (Chemicals), Omnibus VII (Digital), Omnibus VIII (Environment), Omnibus IX (Automotives), Omnibus X (Food and Feed Safety)

⁵ OJ C, C/2026/3005, 3.6.2026

⁶ 16201/25

FUTURE ORIENTATION

In line with the guidance from the European Council, it is therefore essential that the EU institutions collectively keep up the momentum with the simplification agenda, to deliver clear and meaningful results for citizens. We need to retain a strategic and targeted approach to ensure simplification can deliver on its core objective to reduce the administrative burden for businesses, in particular SMEs, and support the EU's long-term competitiveness while maintaining established policy goals.

It is imperative that we work with the urgency required to address the EU's competitiveness challenges. The benefits of simplification will only truly materialise through the cumulative effect of sustained and concerted efforts to simplify the EU's rulebook and reduce the administrative burden.

The General Affairs Council plays a central role in overseeing progress on the simplification agenda in Council. It is therefore appropriate that the Council takes stock of the state of play of progress to date, and looks at the future orientation of the simplification agenda to ensure we stay on track towards achieving our strategic objectives.

To guide the discussion, Ministers are invited to consider and respond to the following questions in their interventions.

Questions:

- 1) How can we collectively sustain the momentum with the simplification agenda to meaningfully reduce the administrative burden and support EU competitiveness, without undermining EU policy goals?***
 - 2) What policy areas should we prioritise for further simplification at the EU level in pursuit of these objectives, and how can we best keep the focus on simplification that can deliver quick results?***
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