

Brussels, 12 October 2026

Dear Colleagues,

For an independent and prosperous Europe, we know we need to strengthen our competitiveness. This has been at the core of the work of this Commission, and central to this is the simplification drive.

*From our call for simplification in Budapest to our agreement in March, we set a clear path to cut red tape. A crucial part of this is tackling gold-plating and ensuring that national requirements do not add onerous or disproportionate requirements. As I said in my State of the Union address last month, we have long discussed the harm this does and so the Commission is now proposing a **Pact against gold-plating**. This will turn the commitments we have all made into coordinated action at European and crucially at national level. Coupled with the other measures we have undertaken and our strategy going forward, this will deliver tangible results for citizens and businesses across the Union.*

As you know, the Commission has been doing its part. We have put forward successive proposals to cut red tape, including twelve Omnibus packages and other simplification measures with potential annual savings of EUR 22.3 billion. We have proposed EU Inc. to make it easier for businesses to start, operate and grow across our Union, as well as the Public Procurement Act which will streamline procurement procedures. These measures have a positive cumulative impact, in addition to the potential savings. However, the ambition and the effort must be matched in every Member State. Simplicity by design is a fundamental consideration in every Commission proposal – easy to understand, apply and enforce. This must be mirrored at national level so burdens are not added later in the process.

The basis of the Pact is simple but effective, one central premise: a rule agreed at European level cannot become more complex when transposed or implemented nationally. The Pact would bring together the Member States and the EU institutions in declaration to the principles of better regulation at every level of government: rules that are clear and accessible, and designed to adapt both to practical realities and changing needs. EU law should be implemented in a way that achieves its objectives, without adding unnecessary

complexity and fragmentation whether through wider scope, stricter requirements or additional procedures. The result would be concrete commitments to keep new rules simple and make existing ones easier to work with, giving Europe more room to grow, thrive and compete.

First, we must stop adding unnecessary burdens.

When Member States bring Union law into their national rules, they should commit to being open about anything they add and explaining why. They should also show what these additions mean for businesses and for the Single Market. Where a Member State chooses to go further than Union law requires, that choice should be clear for everyone to see.

When Member States bring Union law into their national rules, they should commit to identifying anything they add and explaining why. They should also show what these national additions and obligations mean for businesses and the Single Market. Where a Member State chooses to go beyond what Union law requires, that choice should be clear for everyone to see.

Member States must put in place effective national policies against gold-plating, these will of course differ in design and approach depending on the context. These could include a comply-or-explain approach, public declarations, systematic assessments of gold-plating risks, or explicit political sign-off.

The European Commission will continue to do its part. We will prefer regulations and greater harmonisation, and allow fewer national options where these could create fragmentation between countries. We will help national administrations with clearer transposition guidance and roadmaps for bringing EU proposals into their national rules, along with providing practical tools to identify gold-plating risks early on. We will make it easier to apply our rules in the same way, everywhere and right from the start. In this way, we can ensure our Single Market works as it should: the same rules for citizens and businesses, wherever they are in Europe.

Second, we must remove existing obstacles and answer for the results.

Member States should also commit to review existing instances of gold-plating. In support of this, the declaration would establish a “review and remove” mechanism. This mechanism would be within the European Semester. The Commission, working with Member States, would identify a set of priority areas where national requirements impose heavy burdens or obstruct cross-border activity.

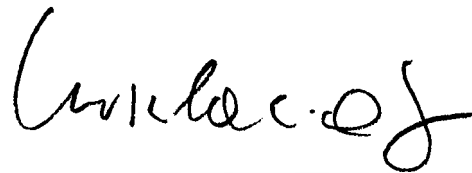
Member States would then review their requirements in those areas and agree to simplify or remove unnecessary burdens. Targeted consultations and implementation dialogues would give businesses, especially SMEs and those operating across borders, a direct voice in this process.

The findings would feed into the Semester's country reports and, where appropriate, country-specific recommendations, with progress followed up and reported through the annual cycle. This must be a way of getting things done, with each Member State making clear commitments to simplify. We will measure success by the red tape we cut, and by the time and money businesses save.

Where national requirements breach Union law, the Commission will act firmly, including through infringement procedures. The Pact's political commitments must be matched by firm enforcement of our common rules.

Our companies need the full potential of the Single Market to compete in a world that will not wait for us. Given the importance and the urgency, I propose that we launch work on the Pact at this European Council and aim to sign the declaration at a European Council meeting before the end of 2026.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'U. von der Leyen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ursula von der Leyen