The Single Market

COMMISION VS BIG TECH

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The Single Market

Goods	Services
People	Capital

DIGITAL
SINGLE MARKET

Europe’s digital space was **fragmented**:

- 27 different legal, fiscal, and technical regimes.
- Small businesses faced major barriers to scaling across borders.

Even consumers faced unequal tax and market conditions, undermining the principle of equal access.

1. **Unify** the EU’s digital territory through harmonized rules and cross-border accessibility.
2. **Enable** a single, borderless digital market of 450 million consumers.
3. **Empower** startups to scale Europe-wide and compete globally, central to digital sovereignty.

Principles and Key Legislation

Digital Services Act (DSA)

- Main Target: Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs).
- Goals: Make the internet safer.
- Rules & Services Provided:
  - Faster removal of illegal content.
  - More transparency on how algorithms work.
  - Users can challenge content decisions.
- Overall Goal: Prevent the dissemination of illegal goods and harmful content while protecting fundamental rights, including freedom of expression.

Digital Markets Act (DMA)

- Target: "Gatekeepers" (biggest tech giants).
- Goal: Ensure fair play and more choice.
- Key Rules:
  - Stop companies from favoring their own services.
  - Let users uninstall pre-installed apps.
  - Allow different services to work together (interoperability).

Overall Goal: Prevent anti-competitive practices like self-preferencing, bundling, and unfair access restrictions to foster innovation and give smaller companies a chance to compete.

Commission as Antitrust or Anti-Monopoly Enforcer

The Commission's Role

As the guardian of the EU treaties, the Commission is tasked with maintaining a competitive internal market. It acts as an antitrust authority, investigating and sanctioning companies that abuse their dominant market position.

Key Digital Enforcement Targets

- **Google:** Multiple antitrust cases (e.g., Shopping, Android, AdSense)
- **Meta:** Investigations into Facebook Marketplace and data practices
- **Apple:** Scrutiny over App Store rules and fees
- **Microsoft:** Historic cases; now under the Digital Markets Act (DMA)
- **OpenAI:** Under scrutiny for data usage and competition issues

Commission as Antitrust or Anti-Monopoly Enforcer

Case Study: Google Android (2018)

The Abuse:

- Forced phone makers to pre-install Google Search & Chrome to access Android's Play Store.
- Blocked manufacturers from using alternative versions of Android.

The Outcome:

- **€4.34 billion fine** - one of largest in EU history
- Google forced to unbundle its apps in EU
- Created more choice for competitors and consumers

Why It Matters:

Classic example of using dominance in one market (mobile OS) to control another (search). Showed EU's willingness to confront Big Tech and enforce competition rules.

GDPR

GDPR → A Global Standard (2016)

- General Data Protection Regulation redefined privacy as a fundamental human **right**.
- Empowered citizens with new digital rights:
  - Right to **Erasure** ("right to be forgotten") → request deletion of personal data.
  - Right to **Data Portability** → transfer personal data between platforms freely.
- Established accountability and transparency as pillars of digital governance.

Equal Access Across Borders

- Anti-Geoblocking Regulation → **bans discrimination by nationality or location.**
- Reinforces the principle of **equal consumer access** within the Single Market.

Trust as the Engine of the Digital Economy

- When rights are protected, citizens engage confidently in cross-border commerce.
- Trust → Participation → Growth

Investment and Regulation

The Investment Side

Ursula von der Leyen made AI a **top political** priority (SOTEU 2025)

The Commision’s vision:

1. Boost AI **research** and European **Chip** production
2. Support AI **startups**
3. Ensure stategic **autonomy**

Flagship projects:

- AI Gigafactories → largescale hubs for AI **innovation**
- Cloud& AI Development Act → common infrastructure for EU **data**
- Quantum Sandbox → fostering next-gen **computing**

Investment and Regulation

The Regulation Side

- The AI Act

Risk-based classification:

- **Minimal** risk → no regulation
- **Limited** risk → transparency duties
- **High** risk → strict obligations
- **Unacceptable** risk → bans

Now what?

1. Enforcement Challenges Across the EU
2. Innovation VS Regulation
3. Transatlantic Friction
4. Balancing all of the above

"Our greatest asset is the **Single Market**, but it remains unfinished" (von der Leyen)

The IMF estimates → internal barriers = 45% tariff on goods
= 110% tarriff on services

Single Market Roadmap to 2028 → 5th freedom

*Chat Control

Final Thoughts

To conclude: Europe's digital policy, and especially its approach to AI, reflects the Union's identity itself a delicate balance between **ambition** and **caution**, **innovation** and **protection.**

The EU's vision for the Digital Single Market is clear: **an open, fair, and harmonized digital space** that strengthens Europe's competitiveness while safeguarding its citizens.

Is it possible for the EU to remain globally competitive in AI while enforcing some of the world's strictest tech regulations?

Should the EU focus more on funding research or enforcing rules?

PRO or AGAINST AI regulation?