

Brussels, 27 May 2026
(OR. en)

9230/1/26
REV 1

COMPET 570
MI 472

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Competitiveness Council of 28 May 2026:
The strategic necessity of extending the Your Europe Advice (YEA)
support for the SOLVIT network
*- Information from Poland, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus,
Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland,
Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal,
Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden*

Joint non-paper of Poland and Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden on the strategic necessity of extending the Your Europe Advice (YEA) support for the SOLVIT network

Ensuring the full effectiveness (*effet utile*) of Treaty freedoms and the rights deriving from the *acquis communautaire* requires the existence of efficient support mechanisms. Two integrated, yet functionally distinct instruments play a pivotal role in this architecture: SOLVIT and Your Europe Advice (YEA). SOLVIT is an informal cooperation network of national administrations established to resolve cross-border disputes where public authorities infringe upon the rights of citizens or businesses to free movement, residence, or social security benefits (e.g. under Regulation (EC) No 883/2004), and more. Conversely, YEA is primarily an independent advisory service providing free, tailored legal advice to citizens and businesses regarding their rights in the Internal Market.

Recent data confirm the scale asymmetry and functional interdependence between the two instruments. According to the European Commission's Single Market Scoreboard, the SOLVIT network receives approximately 7,900 complaints annually, of which around 3,600 cases fall within its mandate, maintaining a resolution rate of approximately 85%¹. At the same time, several thousand additional submissions fall outside SOLVIT's competence and nevertheless must be processed and redirected, generating a significant administrative burden.

By contrast, the Your Europe Advice (YEA) service operates at a significantly larger scale at the upstream stage of the system. In 2025 alone, YEA handled 20,863 requests for legal advice and delivered 14,643 substantive legal responses to citizens and businesses across the Union². This demonstrates that YEA absorbs a volume of demand that significantly exceeds the caseload formally handled by SOLVIT and effectively stabilises the system at the pre-procedural stage.

Crucially, YEA does not merely provide information but actively supports SOLVIT's operational capacity. In 2025, national SOLVIT centres relied on YEA expertise in 275 cases, representing a substantial increase compared to previous years. This confirms its role as an embedded, highly needed legal support mechanism within the network. The removal of this upstream advisory layer would therefore not eliminate demand but mechanically transfer a substantial share of these thousands of enquiries to SOLVIT centres, overwhelming their administrative capacity and undermining their ability to resolve cases falling within their mandate.

The functioning of YEA is of fundamental importance to the efficiency of the SOLVIT network. The legal expertise provided by YEA lawyers frequently serves as the substantive basis for complex cases submitted to SOLVIT, significantly reducing the time required for legal and administrative analysis at national centres. Above all however YEA acts as a crucial "filter" providing initial case assessment. By responding to thousands of inquiries annually, YEA resolves issues at the informational stage, preventing the unjustified initiation of procedures before national SOLVIT centres.

¹ https://single-market-scoreboard.ec.europa.eu/index.php/enforcement-tools/solvit_en

² <https://ecas.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/YEA-annual-trends-2025.pdf>

Furthermore, the increasing legal complexity of the Internal Market must be considered. For example, the emergence of new, cross-border forms of employment, such as remote nomadic work, working across multiple Member States, has generated an unprecedented level of complexity in the areas of EU social security coordination and double taxation. In this reality, the YEA service constitutes the first line of defence for national administrations cooperating with SOLVIT against analytical paralysis.

We embrace the potentials of AI technology and welcome tools that facilitate our work without lowering the quality of the outcome. We are thankful that the Commission is exploring options to support SOLVIT with AI. However, in light of ongoing discussions on the future delivery of advisory services, it is important to underline that while emerging AI-based tools may offer efficiency gains in handling high volumes of standardised queries, they cannot substitute the nuanced legal analysis and contextual judgement provided by qualified experts. Any integration of AI should therefore follow a complementary approach, ensuring that human legal expertise remains central, particularly for complex cross-border cases. Safeguards must be in place to guarantee continuity, quality, and reliability of legal support, including a structured transition period and thorough testing of any alternative system before implementation.

Failure to renew the YEA service contract will lead to an immediate redirection of a massive influx of inquiries straight to the SOLVIT network. Citizens and businesses, deprived of access to specialized legal advice, will treat SOLVIT as the first point of contact. This might result in an avalanche of submissions. It should be emphasized that from the perspective of procedural economy, even a simple decision to reject a case for failing to meet SOLVIT mandate requires staff time. This entails the necessity of conducting time-consuming explanatory proceedings with applicants, including multilingual correspondence and verification of compliance with SOLVIT criteria. The accumulation of such cases will create a bottleneck effect, paralyzing SOLVIT's capacity to handle legitimate cases.

From our perspective, maintaining the YEA service is a sine qua non prerequisite for preserving SOLVIT's operational capacity, while also further enhancing its effectiveness by improving operational support and case-handling efficiency. For the average EU citizen, YEA is a guarantee of legal predictability and legal certainty. Terminating YEA's operations would constitute a breach of the principle of good administration (Art. 41 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union) and a significant regression in building trust in Internal Market institutions. In addition, recalling the Letta report of April 2024³, Single Market Strategy of May 2025 or EESC opinion of January 2026⁴, as well as their commitments to strengthen national SOLVIT centres and the network proves the necessity of support. Therefore, we call for the immediate renewal of the YEA contract.

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>, p. 127

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025IE1127>