Who can just do things

Part 2 of `You can just do things`: once EU Inc moves from petition to legal text, the real question is who still has the power to change what the idea becomes.

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Part 2 of `You can just do things`.

In April, I wrote that EU Inc had proved Andreas Klinger partly right:

you can just do things.

You can write the post. Start the group. Find the first people. Turn a private frustration into a public demand. Gather signatures. Put enough pressure on a broken system that the system has to answer.

That was the useful part of the story.

But it was never the whole story.

The harder question was not whether action is possible. It clearly is.

The harder question was who the `you` is.

That question becomes sharper once the idea stops being a petition and enters lawmaking.

From slogan to text

On 18 March 2026, the Commission published the actual EU Inc proposal: `COM(2026) 321 final`, procedure `2026/0074(COD)`, a proposed Regulation for a 28th regime corporate legal framework.

That changed the object.

Before then, EU Inc could still partly live as a promise. It was a campaign, a grievance, a founder demand, a Davos line, a policy direction. A promise can stay smooth because nobody has to vote on the article numbers yet.

A legal proposal is different.

It has form.

It has a legal basis.

It has a procedure.

It has the Commission.

It has JURI.

It has a rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs.

It has Council work.

It eventually produces a text that either survives or does not.

This is where the easy reading of `you can just do things` starts to break.

The first step may be open to many people.

The later steps are not.

The instrument is already a decision

The Commission did not only propose a new company form.

It proposed a Regulation, using Article 114 TFEU as the legal basis.

That is not a neutral technical choice. A Regulation is built for direct application and uniformity. It leaves less room for national variation than a Directive would.

That may be exactly what EU Inc needs if the goal is one European standard. The defender's case is serious: if the whole point is to avoid twenty-seven national variants, then a directly applicable Regulation may be the tool that keeps the idea usable. A weaker instrument could let every member state add its own friction back in, producing the same fragmentation under a European label.

It may also be exactly why critics worry.

The founder problem is real. Starting and scaling a company across Europe is still fragmented, slow, and too dependent on navigating twenty-seven national systems. A common European company form is not a stupid idea.

But once the Commission chooses the instrument, part of the political fight has already happened. The question is no longer only whether Europe should make company formation easier. The question becomes how much uniformity the new form should carry, and who gets to decide which national protections survive inside it.

That is not the same thing as signing a petition.

That is text power.

The first parliamentary text changed the article

The raw version of this article had a timing mistake.

It treated René Repasi's first JURI text as something still expected later in July. The European Parliament's Legislative Observatory now shows something else: the JURI committee draft report `PE790.143` is already listed, dated 29 June 2026.

That correction matters.

This article is no longer being written before the first parliamentary text exists. It is being written after the rapporteur's draft has entered the committee process.

That changes the evidence.

The draft report does not make the law. It is not the committee position. The procedure is still marked as awaiting committee decision. A committee draft report is an input into the committee process; a committee decision is the position after the committee has voted.

But it is no longer empty process.

The draft report shows what the next staircase step looks like.

It raises concerns about the Commission's legal basis. It says the proposal's exclusive use of Article 114 TFEU tests the limits of Union competences and contrasts it with Parliament's earlier preference for a fully harmonising directive based on Article 114 together with Article 50.

It keeps the ambition of a fast digital EU Inc. form: harmonised application forms, registration within two working days, and a maximum registration fee of EUR 100.

But it also tries to thicken the safeguards.

It proposes stronger preventive control before registration. It narrows the country-of-origin principle toward company-law matters. It adds worker-rights language around employment contracts, collective bargaining, strike rights, information and consultation, social security, and board-level employee participation. It proposes excluding some sectors from the scope, including construction, cleaning, hospitality, freight transport by road, residential care, meat processing, and security activities. It adds abuse and circumvention provisions. It adds employee stock ownership plans, but says those should not replace wages, pensions, or social security contributions. It even introduces a voluntary steward-owned EU Inc. variant.

That does not settle the argument.

It sharpens it.

The first parliamentary text is not proof that the worker question has been solved. It shows that the worker question has entered the text.

That is the difference between campaign pressure and legislative power.

Who is doing things now?

The public phase of EU Inc was legible.

There was a grievance.

There was a petition.

There were founder names.

There was a slogan.

There is still a slogan.

There was a visible story about people outside the machine forcing the machine to move.

That story is not false.

But it is incomplete.

Once the proposal entered procedure, the relevant actors changed. The important question became less about who could make noise and more about who could still alter the text.

The Commission wrote the proposal.

JURI holds the parliamentary file.

The rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs shape the committee position.

The Council side moves in a less visible track.

Campaign groups keep pressure on the visible layer. The EU-INC campaign's own site is now asking the startup ecosystem to be loud before 16 July, with a public call to post, tag policymakers, and protect what it calls `One Europe. One Standard.` The same site presents the fight through that phrase. That date is campaign timing, not an official Parliament deadline.

That is still doing something.

But it is not the same thing as holding the pen.

A petition can create pressure.

It cannot amend an article by itself.

The staircase, not the door

`You can just do things` is true.

But it is a staircase, not a door.

The first step is the one people like to talk about because it is open and dramatic. Write the post. Start the group. Launch the petition. Make the internet notice. Get the headline. Push the idea onto the table.

That step matters.

But the table is not where power ends.

The next steps are duller and more decisive: legal basis, instrument choice, committee draft, amendments, Council position, compromise text, trilogues, implementation, guidance, enforcement.

Each step has a different you.

The person who can start a WhatsApp group is not necessarily the person who can defend a worker-protection clause. The person who can gather signatures is not necessarily the person who can preserve or remove a legal safeguard. The person who can post a clip of Ursula von der Leyen is not necessarily the person who can decide what survives into the committee report.

The slogan hides that distinction.

Not maliciously.

But effectively.

The workers' question

The hardest criticism of EU Inc is not that the founder problem is fake.

It is not fake.

The harder criticism is that simplification can become a carrier for something else.

The European Trade Union Confederation has argued that the proposal does not contain clear enough guarantees for workers' rights. ETUC points to risks around wages and employment contracts, information and consultation rights, board-level representation, social security payments, and national tax.

Repasi's draft report does not dismiss that criticism as external noise. It tries to answer parts of it inside the legal text: by naming circumvention risk, narrowing the country-of-origin principle, adding worker-protection language, and proposing sanctions for abuse of the EU Inc. form.

That does not automatically prove the proposal is bad.

It does prove that the legal text matters.

If the public story is only that founders need less friction, then anyone who questions the instrument can be made to look like they are defending friction. But that is not the real policy question.

The real question is whether Europe can build a simpler company form without creating a tool for regulatory escape.

That question cannot be answered by the petition.

It has to be answered in the text.

The visible story is not the whole system

Part 1 already traced the earlier scaffolding.

Before the petition became the public story, the 28th regime was already moving through reports, lobby meetings, and competitiveness arguments. France Digitale had pushed a simplified European company status into the policy conversation. The Letta report carried the 28th regime idea. Draghi repeated the need for a new legal framework.

Then came the petition.

That sequence matters because it changes the romance of the story. It was not only a bottom-up idea breaking into politics. It was also an idea whose policy tracks already existed before the public was invited to sign.

LobbyControl has also reported that Allied for Startups is financed by Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and Apple, and that a leaked Google strategy document named Allied for Startups as a channel for representing Google's positions in Brussels.

That does not make every startup argument fake.

It does mean the word `startup` should not make the power structure disappear.

Founders may be the face of the demand.

Larger actors may still benefit from the shape of the rule.

Both can be true.

What can honestly be said now

The most useful lesson from EU Inc is not that people cannot act.

They can.

The lesson is that action does not stay equally distributed across the whole process.

The visible phase rewards energy, timing, networks, and narrative. The legislative phase rewards access, technical literacy, institutional memory, and the ability to keep showing up after the slogan has done its work.

That is why `who can just do things` is the better question now.

Not because the first article was wrong.

Because the first article only reached the door.

Now the idea is on the staircase.

And on a staircase, the question is not only who can take the first step.

It is who is still allowed to climb when the public landing ends.

This is not a claim that EU Inc is bad.

It is not a claim that lobbying is automatically illegitimate.

It is not a claim that the petition was irrelevant.

It is not a claim that the final law is settled.

It is a narrower claim:

getting an idea onto the agenda is not the same as deciding what the idea becomes.

The Commission proposal has turned the campaign into a legal object. The Parliament procedure has begun to produce documents. The worker-protection fight is no longer abstract. The startup campaign is still trying to shape the terms from the outside.

That is the moment worth watching.

Because now the slogan has met the machine.

And the machine has a different answer to the word `you`.

RELATION MEMORY

CONTINUES [You can just do things] · Continues the EU Inc line by asking who still holds power once the public campaign becomes legislative text.

NEARBY [Before Europe Votes, Europe Is Already Priced] · Shares the concern that European policy choices are often shaped before the public voting moment becomes visible.

NEARBY [Surface Is Not Verification] · Keeps the distinction between visible pressure and verified power visible.

NEARBY [Recognition From Above Is Not Verification] · Connects the article's concern with recognition, legitimacy, and institutional translation.

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