

Internal Market: business barriers and solutions identified

A new business survey reveals that different national product and service rules, the complex procedures that accompany such rules and difficulties in accessing information about them are the main obstacles to trading within the EU. In the run-up to the Commission's new Internal Market Strategy, the results, drawn from nearly 600 entrepreneurs, also highlight the need for effective, user-friendly digital tools that allow businesses to access information and complete procedures more easily.

Main obstacles

The main obstacles identified are interlinked: 23 years after the Single European Act, innumerable **national product and service rules** within the EU persist, imposing **complex compliance obligations** and implying **huge information requirements** for businesses. The survey also underlines that cross-border payment recovery is a particularly acute concern for many businesses.

"The Commission is fond of stating that every internal market rule reduces burdens by a factor of 28, but this survey shows that the reality for business is very different. Trading within the EU remains hugely complex, while the measures designed to reduce this complexity are in many cases substandard," said Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES.

Internal market: from legal concept to market reality

Entrepreneurs were also asked about a range of potential new measures that have been under discussion at EU level in recent months. Of these, respondents recommended in particular improvements to online services for businesses, in terms of both access to information and the possibility to complete necessary procedures.

EU initiatives in this field, such as the services sector's Points of Single Contact, have fallen short. EUROCHAMBRES believes that effective Commission coordination and enforcement combined with greater national commitment are crucial to the provision of high quality digital services.

"The solutions that businesses prioritize in the survey are pragmatic. They seem to accept the single market's many imperfections, so they call for effective, user-friendly information and advisory services to help them understand and comply with differing requirements. Surely this is not too much to ask?" argued Mr Abruzzini.

- Survey report: <http://www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=7095>
- Infographic: <http://www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=7096>

Background info on the survey: at EUROCHAMBRES' October 2014 European Parliament of Enterprises, 84% of the participating entrepreneurs voted NO to the question *"Is the EU Single Market sufficiently integrated, allowing your company to operate and compete freely?"* This new survey attempts to find out why and gauge businesses' reaction to various possible solutions. The survey was carried out between 31 August and 14 September 2015. 592 entrepreneurs from the 28 EU countries responded to the poll.

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