

Services Directive: Points of Single Contact not fully functioning across the EU

A new EU-wide EUROCHAMBRES survey* shows that only 14 EU countries have set up fully functioning Points of Single Contact (PSCs) to assist businesses in making the most of the Services Directive.

The feedback from national Chambers in the remaining member states also reveals shortcomings in relation to the electronic interoperability of the PSCs, which significantly undermine their effectiveness in helping service providers trade across borders.

The survey highlights several other areas for improvement:

- **Completion of procedures.** PSCs in over half of member states do not yet offer an adequate service in relation to procedures and the completion of formalities, electronically and from distance.
- **User-friendliness.** In 12 EU countries PSCs do not allow for the monitoring of formalities. Some Chambers also report that the information provided by PSCs is not easy to find, particularly for foreign service providers. The survey additionally highlights the need for improvements to helplines and back offices behind the electronic PSCs platforms/portals.
- **Foreign languages.** In over half of member states, PSCs offer information in at least one other language beside their own, normally English or the language of a neighbouring country. However, only in seven member states do PSCs actually allow for the completion of formalities (forms, documents, procedures, etc) in a foreign language.
- **Implementation at all levels of administration.** The directive's provisions are sometimes poorly transposed at regional and local level. This situation needs monitoring given that businesses, particularly smaller ones, are often in contact with such sub-national administrations.
- **Communication.** Awareness-raising campaigns about the directive have been instigated by the government in less than half of member states.

EUROCHAMBRES' Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini said: *"In comparison with the situation in January 2010, progress has been made on a number of operational aspects. However, more needs to be done to ensure that the PSCs become fully operational in all member states. This could open up new opportunities for thousands of SMEs and also cut red tape for both businesses and the public administrations."*

* EUROCHAMBRES' survey was conducted among National Chambers of Commerce in 26 EU countries.

The complete survey on the implementation of the Services Directive can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=2994

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