

4th EUROCHAMBRES study on the Services Directive: General improvement, but concerns over impact

On the occasion of a Czech Presidency conference on the future of services in Prague today, Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini presented the findings of the 4th EUROCHAMBRES survey on the implementation of the Services Directive.

“Despite encouraging progress, Chambers voice reservations about the readiness of operational aspects of the directive, which clearly raises concerns about the positive impact on businesses,” he said.

Compared to July 2008 – when the third edition of the study was released – results show a general improvement with regard to specific aspects of the directive, from the legislative screening to the establishment of Points of Single Contact (PSCs). However, European Chambers show concern with regard to key operational aspects of the directive, especially the PSCs’ interoperability and the establishment of fully operational electronic structures by the implementation deadline (28 December 2009).

Meeting the deadline: most Chambers say ‘yes’

About three-quarters of EU Chambers believe that the Services Directive’s provisions will be fully and properly implemented in their country by 28 December deadline, while the other quarter are unsure or sceptical. Their perception is due either to difficulties in complying with specific provisions, such as e-procedures and the PSC, or to specific national political developments.

Points of Single Contact: fully business-friendly?

Today, four-fifths of EU countries, compared to three-fifths six months ago, have indicated a preferred approach for the PSC and are working on its establishment. It is however worrying that, just 12 months before the implementation deadline, some countries have not decided on their PSC model yet.

Moreover, there is a need to ensure that all PSCs (either centralised, as in about 40% of EU countries, or decentralised in the other cases) are fully interoperable, otherwise the system will be of no use to businesses.

Some Chambers are particularly worried that language barriers will hinder the proper functioning of the system. Member states must thus find a solution to this potential problem through the use of multiple languages or rapid and efficient translation mechanisms.

Coordinated and interoperable electronic systems: the biggest issue today

The survey suggests that today’s key operational priority is the set up, coordination and interoperability of electronic systems. Chambers report significant problems with regard to electronic administration in many countries. This is mainly due to the different and un-integrated electronic models, structures and forms adopted at national level.

The effectiveness of the system may be hindered unless member states accelerate their efforts and coordination.

“A political and economic priority”

Commenting on these findings, Mr Abruzzini said: *“This edition of the survey should serve as an urgent call to member states at this pivotal phase in the implementation period, if the directive is to be put in place punctually, effectively and consistently. Implementation is not just a tick-box exercise and the operational side of the implementation must not be underestimated: businesses need structures and electronic procedures which are integrated and interoperable all across the EU. The Services Directive must be a political and economic priority in 2009.”*

The 4th edition of the survey on the implementation of the Services Directive can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=1587

Further information: Mr Giovanni Campi, Tel. +32 2 282 08 83, campi@eurochambres.eu
Press contact: Ms Guendalina Cominotti, Tel. +32 2 282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu
All our press releases can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=153