

Smart Regulation: Commission reforms losing momentum

In reaction to the European Commission's Communication on Smart Regulation, EUROCHAMBRES today expressed its concerns that the Better Regulation Agenda is losing momentum.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"The fact that the President took direct responsibility for better or smart regulation at the start of his second term encouraged us to think that the Barroso II Commission would attach even greater political impetus to regulatory reform. Sadly, this new paper suggests the contrary."*

EUROCHAMBRES particularly regrets:

- **Lack of concrete actions to embed the "Think Small First" principle:** very few impact assessments actually quantify the regulatory effects on SMEs (11% in 2009*), despite the recommendation to carry out an SME Test in the Commission's internal Guidelines on Impact Assessment. EUROCHAMBRES requests, for example, the systematic rejection by the Impact Assessment Board of any impact assessment failing to analyse thoroughly the costs and benefits for SMEs.
- **No continuation of the Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens beyond 2012:** the logic of seeking to minimise administrative burdens is irrefutable. EUROCHAMBRES urges the Commission to maintain its drive to reduce these burdens by 25% once the 2012 deadline expires and extend the exercise to new priority areas and further legislative acts.
- **Only cosmetic improvements to the impact assessment system:** the communication fails to address important flaws highlighted by the European Court of Auditors in its report on the EU impact assessment system. EUROCHAMBRES urges the Commission to take into account the court's recommendations.

Mr Abruzzini commented: *"While stories emerge from the Commission about the rigorous approach of the Impact Assessment Board, the court's report confirms our suspicion that this screening has little or no influence on the final legislative proposal."*

One ray of light though is the extension of the consultation period to 12 weeks which EUROCHAMBRES has repeatedly called for over recent years.

Mr Abruzzini concluded: *"The Commission has been the driving force behind the better regulation agenda at EU level for several years, but cannot afford now to rest on its laurels while the other institutions continue to lag behind."*

* Is Regulation Really Good for Us?, British Chambers of Commerce, April 2010

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