

Chamber report reveals European Commission still overlooking small businesses

A EUROCHAMBRES report indicates that 50% of European Commission legislative proposals relevant to smaller businesses have not been the subject of an SME test since it became a compulsory procedure since 2009.

The analysis, presented today to mark the 10th anniversary of the EU better regulation agenda, confirms that the Commission has not yet managed to establish a system which ensures a consistent, transparent and efficient application of the SME test.

The main findings of the report:

1. The application of the SME test remains far from systematic across the European Commission's services, with half of the impact assessment reports analysed not including an SME test;
2. When carried out, the standard of SME tests varies greatly. The quality of the test can be considered as good for only one-third of the impact assessment reports analysed;
3. SME cost-benefit analysis remains largely qualitative given an ongoing lack of data, half of the impact assessment reports fail to quantifiably measure the effects on SMEs.

"The SME test remains an abstract concept in several departments of the Commission. Only a few officials genuinely consider the impact of policy options on smaller businesses, and the structures in place are failing to ensure that they do so. As a result, decisions taken by the Commission often remain based on a very limited view of the potential impact on 99% of Europe's businesses," said Arnaldo Abruzzini, EUROCHAMBRES' Secretary General.

EUROCHAMBRES is concerned that the Commission's newly announced approach of encouraging the inclusion of micro-enterprise exemptions in legislative proposals will prove misguided and risks further undermining the rationale behind the SME test and 'think small first' principle.

EUROCHAMBRES' report contains several recommendations to strengthen the SME test, including:

- Stricter procedures and standards for the application of the SME test, notably a reinforced role for the Commission's Impact Assessment Board;
- Greater transparency and accountability towards stakeholders;
- Halting all relevant legislative dossiers on which an SME test has not been properly conducted.

Note:

EUROCHAMBRES conducted its benchmark on nine recent legislative proposals relevant to the SME community to assess if and how well the SME test has been carried out by the European Commission since it was incorporated into the Impact Assessment Guidelines in 2009.

The full report "EUROCHAMBRES SME test benchmark" can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/Content/Default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=3831

Further information: Ms Typhaine Beaupérin-Holvoet, Tel. +32 2 282 08 53, beauperin@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