

Services Directive: Half way through implementation phase, survey highlights need to increase pace

On the occasion of the mid-term assessment of the 'Services Directive', EUROCHAMBRES today released its third survey on the implementation of the directive in the 27 EU Member States.

Compared to January 2008 – when the second edition of the six-monthly study was released – a number of countries have improved their performance. Yet, some fundamental problems still need to be solved to achieve the full implementation of the directive by the set deadline of 28 December 2009.

Implementation: not homogenous and sometimes running very late

A great majority of Member States (85%) have put in place mechanisms to project-manage the implementation of the directive. While some countries have already completed the legislative screening (e.g. Finland and Luxembourg) and decided where and how to set up their Point(s) of Single Contact, implementation has only just started in other Member States. Some of them did not show significant progress in the last 6 months (e.g. Greece and Italy) and are now substantially behind the implementation schedule.

Points of Single Contact (PSCs): still the trickiest issue

As was the case six months ago, the establishment of PSCs appears to remain the main issue for the implementation of the directive, as it is being carried out in a non-homogeneous way. Although, since January, +20% of Member States have indicated a preferred approach for the PSCs, 40% of them still have not taken any decision yet (e.g. Germany, Italy, Latvia and Malta). The form and tasks of the PSCs are also a matter of discussion: there is a risk that, in some countries, PSCs will not be genuine points of completion of formalities and the choice is split between centralised or decentralised structures for the PSCs.

Interoperability: at risk

The survey also highlights problems with regard to the planning and setting up of electronic systems which should ensure the interoperability of the PSCs and of the whole structure by the end of 2009. This appears to be a major challenge: the set up of the PSCs and the legal implementation of the directive will prove useless to European businesses if the 27 national structures are not electronically integrated.

Commenting on the findings of this third survey, Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"We are glad to see that the implementation of the directive is now progressing in a majority of Member States. However, we are worried by the varying pace of this process and by the fact that some countries, already lagging behind 6 or 12 months ago,*

are now even further behind schedule. We ask all Member States to complete the screening process as soon as possible, to opt for fully operational PSC models in line with the directive's requirements and to devote adequate time and resources to ensuring the complete electronic interoperability of the system. Meanwhile, Chambers will continue monitoring the situation regularly until 28 December 2009, maintaining the pressure on Member States to implement this fundamental piece of legislation correctly and promptly."

The full survey on the implementation of the Services Directive can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=1146

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
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