

Commission still a long way from “Thinking Small First”

A new study presented today by EUROCHAMBRES at the SME Assembly in Vilnius reveals that the SME test is still not integral to the European Commission’s policy making process. Despite the repeated political acknowledgement of the crucial socio-economic role of SMEs, the ‘SME Test Benchmark 2013’ report indicates that little progress has been made in the last two years and that 43% of the impact assessments analysed failed to consider smaller businesses.

EUROCHAMBRES urges José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission, to use the final months of his mandate to put in place stricter mechanisms to guarantee an efficient and robust application of the SME test across the directorates-general.

The overall quality of SME tests is disappointing, mainly due to a low involvement of smaller businesses in the process and a persistent failure to properly identify and quantify the impact on them: almost three quarters of the impact assessments reviewed did not include a thorough cost-benefit analysis for SMEs.

The results of the SME Test Benchmark show a clear gap between the Commission’s ambition to anchor the “Think Small First” principle in policy-making and its delivery. The persistent low quality of the SME test leads us to conclude that it is considered an inconvenience by the Commission’s services, rather than a tool for SME-friendly, evidence-based policy making, said Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES.

EUROCHAMBRES puts forward several recommendations in its report to ensure a consistent, transparent and efficient application of the SME test, including:

- Gather quality input through early and effective consultation of SMEs and a more systematic process for gathering data from national sources.
- Invest more Commission time and resources to conducting each step of the SME test and to implementing any recommendations made by the Impact Assessment Board (IAB).
- Preclude any SME relevant proposal from proceeding to inter-service consultation unless the impact assessment is approved by the IAB and contains a robust SME test.

The SME Test Benchmark 2013 demonstrates that there is a long way to go to deliver one of the key principles of the Small Business Act – the “Think Small First” principle.

The full report “EUROCHAMBRES SME test benchmark 2013” can be downloaded from this link:

<http://www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=5794>

Note:

For the second time, EUROCHAMBRES conducted its SME Test Benchmark on fourteen legislative dossiers relevant to the SME community to see how recent Commission impact assessments have integrated the specific consideration of SMEs in legislative proposals.

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