

Competitiveness Council: A mixed reaction from Chambers

Yesterday's Competitiveness Council conclusions generated a mixed reaction from EUROCHAMBRES, with a substantive series of measures on the internal market balanced by a muddled and evasive text on smart regulation.

Tangible progress on internal market

Chambers welcomed the internal market conclusions' focus on implementation of existing legislation, applauding the strong focus on ensuring that the principle of mutual recognition is respected by Member States.

"The conclusions rightly identify that better enforcement of internal market rules is integral to the structural reform agenda. Chambers agree that this should form part of the European Semester process", said EUROCHAMBRES Secretary General, Arnaldo Abruzzini.

The European association also supported the direct tone taken on the Services Directive, with clear recommendations to improve both the application of proportionality assessments and the delivery of the Points of Single Contact, a key tool for businesses.

Smart regulation remains vague

However, EUROCHAMBRES was less convinced by the conclusions on smart regulation, failing to find signs of progress or noteworthy new actions among the many initiatives referred to in the text.

Even if *"conclusions indicate that the Council and Member States are largely happy with the proliferation of new Commission initiatives, Chambers feel it adds more confusion than momentum"*. Arnaldo Abruzzini believes *"the uncomfortable truth is that a determined, coordinated cross-institutional push is needed to deliver tangible regulatory burden reductions."*

Inclusive policy making paying dividends

As the Lithuanian Presidency semester nears its end, EUROCHAMBRES paid tribute to the pragmatic, inclusive way in which the Competitiveness Council has been run.

"The Lithuanian government has challenged conventional Presidency practices and opened doors typically closed to stakeholders, sometimes literally. We believe that this approach has reinforced the relevance of the Competitiveness Council". Despite that, and according to EUROCHAMBRES, *"much more needs to be done and we strongly encourage Greece and subsequent Presidencies to continue along the same lines."*

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