

Muted celebrations on Small Business Act's 1st birthday

One year on from its adoption by Member States, the Small Business Act (SBA) has had a limited impact on Europe's small and medium enterprises.

A survey carried out by EUROCHAMBRES across the EU Chamber network shows that many member states have implemented actions with regard to access to finance and SMEs' access to public procurement, yet to limited effect.

Meanwhile, the lack of measures related to regulatory reform, cutting red tape and late payments is even more disappointing.

Regulatory environment. While impact assessments are conducted in a majority of countries, an 'SME test' is integrated in only 50% of impact assessment systems, and in over 90% of countries stakeholders are not regularly involved in the impact assessment process. Moreover, the implementation of the 'only once' principle is unsatisfactory, with about 40% of Chambers rating their government's efforts to implement such measures to minimise information requests as 'negligible'.

Late payments. While negotiations on the recast Late Payment Directive slowly continue in Brussels, 40% of member states are doing little or nothing to address this key problem at national level. In the other 60% of countries where measures have been implemented, no effect is perceived by businesses.

Speaking at a conference to mark the first anniversary of the Small Business Act, EUROCHAMBRES' President Pierre Simon said: *"Clearly, member states have not fully embraced the SBA as a joint initiative to the benefit of European SMEs and thus to their own economies. 12 months ago, governments firmly endorsed the SBA as a key tool in mitigating the impact of the crisis on the real economy. Regrettably, this strong message has not been backed up with even the simplest of actions in some member states. This pattern must be reversed if the SBA is to have the desired effect and not just sink into obscurity."*

EUROCHAMBRES urges the Competitiveness Council meeting on 3-4 December to kick start the SBA implementation process by reaching agreement on the European Private Company Statute and Community Patent, and calls on the Commission to press Member States more forcefully to meet their commitments of 12 months ago.

EUROCHAMBRES' survey on the implementation of the Small Business Act can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=2169

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