

## Businesses challenge the EU institutions to take ownership of a more systematic and unified approach to impact assessments

BUSINESSEUROPE, EUROCHAMBRES and UEAPME united yesterday to call on the European Commission, Parliament and Council for greater transparency and significant improvements in the analysis of costs, benefits and the systematic evaluation of impacts on business, especially SMEs, in EU law-making.



With the advent of the new Parliament and Commission, CEBRE and the Czech Presidency held a debate for business organisations and the Commission, Council and Parliament on 28th April in Brussels. **Gert-Jan Koopman**, Director from DG

ECFIN noted that while much had been done to improve the Impact Assessment system (IA) *"the current economic climate raises some fundamental questions about the approaches that now need to be taken to regulation at the EU and Member State level. It is timely to reflect on what more can be done to avoid new burdens on business and reduce existing ones.,"*



**Erik Berggren** of BUSINESSEUROPE stressed the need for greater transparency in the way the Commission's impact assessments are scrutinized for their quality. *"The business community does not have the opportunity to comment on the Commission's draft IAs. At the moment IAs are scrutinized by the Commission's Impact Assessment Board (IAB), and although the IAB has been a good internal critic, it does so without hearing from real businesses. This must change.,"* **Luc Hendrickx** of UEAPME agreed that the system is not transparent enough and that *"it cannot be properly impartial when the Commission assesses the impact of its own proposals in house, especially if it does so relying on data coming from interested parties. The preparation of a proper evidence base to support the EU decision making process must be managed more independently.,"* **Ben Butters** of EUROCHAMBRES also considered the current Impact Assessment process to be often opaque, both in terms of timing and the data used. However, he went further calling for a significant increase in the use of IAs by the Council and the Parliament. *"Since the signing of the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Lawmaking in 2003, there has been very little evidence of the Council or Parliament engaging in the Impact Assessment process or conducting their own cost benefit analysis on their proposals for major amendments.,"*

Speakers for the Parliament and the Presidency on behalf of the Council concurred that there were difficulties faced by both. However, **Ales Pecka** from Czech Permanent Representation to the EU said that *"making progress on better regulation agenda remained a priority for the Czech Presidency and we will reflect on the views presented by business in the Council's deliberations to the topic of impact assessment in May.,"* **Elisabeth Kristensson** from the incoming Swedish Presidency confirmed that better regulation would be a *"top priority.,"* of their agenda. **Robert Bray**, Principal administrator from the Committee on Legal Affairs/European Parliament, underlined the usefulness of impact assessments to the Parliament particularly the impacts on SMEs. Furthermore, Impact Assessments offer a real opportunity to *"measure the success of legislation through ongoing evaluation.,"*

**Fabian Zuleeg**, Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre, joined the business call for a more robust, independent and transparent Impact Assessment process. "More needs to be done to enable a proper focus on the underlying proposal and ensure there is scope to consider different policy options. In addition, all of the institutions need to do more to evaluate impacts ex post and to assess how legislation is operating on the ground."

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