Making EU law lighter, simpler and less costly – taking stock of achievements

Today, the Commission is taking stock of its efforts to make EU law lighter, simpler and less costly. Under the title "Smart Regulation in the EU – Building on a Strong Foundation" politicians, stakeholders and experts have been examining the achievements and persisting challenges in the field of smart regulation, administrative burden reduction and better implementation of EU legislation. On this occasion, Dr Edmund Stoiber, the Chairman of the independent High Level Group on Administrative Burdens advising the Commission since 2007, will hand over the group's final report to President José Manuel Barroso.

President Barroso said: "I have made smart regulation a key priority of the Commission since the beginning of my first mandate. Focusing EU action on those issues that are best dealt with at European level, while making EU law lighter, simpler and less costly, is key for the European Union's credibility. Smart regulation is also essential to boost growth and jobs in Europe and we have spared no effort to make it happen during the last 10 years. I believe we can be proud of what we have achieved during this period which is nothing less than a true culture change in the Commission's way of working. Our success crucially depends on a similar level of ambition by the European Parliament and Member States. I would like to thank Edmund Stoiber and his high-level group for the very valuable contribution through numerous opinions, reports and recommendations. The next Commission can build on very solid ground in moving the smart regulation agenda forward."

Dr Edmund Stoiber, Chairman of the High-Level Group on Administrative Burdens, said: 'The conclusion I draw from my past seven years of work in an honorary capacity is positive: we have achieved far more than I myself expected. With a reduction of over EUR 33 billion, our target has been considerably exceeded. The most important achievement has been a new way of thinking: President Barroso has departed from the decades-old attitude that every EU regulation, however detailed, is inevitably good for European integration. This has ushered in a new era, and it will be the task of the new Commission to continue with this approach and further consolidate it. I most firmly recommend that the proposals made by my group should be taken up and implemented. This is the only way that the promises for a non-bureaucratic Europe that is close to its citizens made in the last European election campaign can be kept.'

Top 5 achievements of the European Commission's smart regulation efforts:

1. The Commission focused its actions on the right priorities. Following President Barroso's motto "being big on big things, and smaller on small things", the Commission tabled proposals to address key political challenges that required a European response: legislation to regulate and supervise financial markets, the reinforced Stability and Growth Pact, the new coordination of economic policies under the European Semester, the Europe 2020 growth strategy, the ambitious
climate and energy proposals, completion of and better interconnections in the Single Market, the Common European Asylum System, a modern and growth- and jobs-oriented EU budget 2014-2020, trade and investment agreements, support to Ukraine, etc.

2. In preparing its proposals, the Commission ensured that **smart regulation principles were followed**. It also improved its tools for this purpose: **stakeholder consultations**, **impact assessments** and **evaluations** are carried out systematically and contribute to **evidence-based policy making**. All proposals with significant impacts are accompanied by an impact assessment that identifies different policy options and assesses their potential economic, social and environmental impacts. **Over 680 impact assessments** have been produced since 2007. A two-page summary of the impact assessments is also published to make the results even more accessible. Independent quality assessment and control are guaranteed through the Commission's **Impact Assessment Board**, which has over the past two years sent back over 40% of all draft impact assessments for improvement by the departments. The Commission extended **stakeholder consultation** from 8 to 12 weeks and has consulted over the past year on guidelines for evaluation, impact assessment and stakeholder consultation. In addition, the Commission also invites **citizens and businesses to help** identify areas where regulatory burdens can be reduced and legislation simplified through a **continuous online consultation**. Since 2010 the Commission has been progressively enforcing the 'evaluate first' principle to ensure that its proposals are backed up by ex-post policy evaluations.

3. Since 2012, the Commission's **REFIT programme** for Regulatory Fitness and Performance has become the focal point of all smart regulation efforts. Based on a regular screening of the EU's legislative stock, this rolling programme has so far identified about 200 individual actions, including proposals for simplification and burden reduction, repeals of legislation that is no longer necessary, withdrawals of proposals that do not meet with the agreement of Parliament or the Council and evaluations of policy areas in order to identify further opportunities for simplification and burden reduction without undermining public interest protection. Overall, since 2005, the Commission repealed over 6100 legal acts and withdrew almost 300 proposals. Under REFIT, the Commission also committed not to table proposals unless a clear EU added value is proven. This applies to proposals such as those in the area of occupational health and safety for hairdressers or muscular-skeletal disorders which are currently undergoing a full assessment of their EU added value. An annual **REFIT scoreboard** assesses progress in all policy areas and for each of the REFIT actions.

4. The **25% reduction target for administrative burdens in thirteen priority areas identified under the EU's Administrative Burden Reduction programme** has been **exceeded**. With the support of the "Stoiber-Group", the initiatives proposed by the Commission and adopted by the co-legislator amount to an estimated reduction of around 27%, equivalent to more than **€33.4 billion of savings per year for business**. This includes €18.8 billion in savings on invoicing and €6.6 billion on annual accounting requirements.

5. The Commission applies the 'think small first' principle, considering the impact of legislation on small and medium-sized enterprises. Whenever justified, SME exemptions and lighter regimes for legislative requirements are also applied whenever this is possible. **Small and medium-sized enterprises** have been consulted about their main regulatory concerns through the **Top Ten exercise**. Extensive follow-up has been organised under the REFIT programme, for instance

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1 Data as of 1 October 2014.
a reduction of registration fees under REACH (chemicals legislation) for SMEs by 35%-95%, a simplification of VAT returns and fewer formalities for participating in public procurement exercises etc.

Background:
The conference is taking place from 10.00–13.00 in the Charlemagne building, 170 Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat, Brussels. It is open to registered participants.

A press point of President Barroso and Dr Stoiber will take place at 12.45 at the VIP corner of the Berlaymont building (200, Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat, Brussels). It will be live-streamed on Europe by satellite and the conference website.

Further information:
Conference website
Smart regulation website (including REFIT and impact assessments)
Frequently asked questions about the "Stoiber Group" and its final report

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