Single digital gateway to provide information, procedures, assistance and problem solving services

2017/0086(COD) - 02/05/2017 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish a single digital gateway to ensure that citizens and businesses have easy online access to the information, procedures and assistance and problem solving services they need for the exercise of their rights in the internal market.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the Single Market is one of Europe's key achievements making it possible for people, goods, services and capital to move more freely. However, significant obstacles exist for both citizens and businesses interested in moving to, selling products or providing services in another EU country. Finding relevant, accurate and understandable information online is crucial for those willing to use the advantages of the Single Market, but often remains complicated.

The European Parliament and the Council have repeatedly called for a more comprehensive, more user friendly package of information and assistance to help businesses navigate the single market and to strengthen and streamline single market tools in order to better meet the needs of citizens and businesses in their cross-border activities.

Against the background of the Services Directive, the Digital Single Market and the e-Government action plan, the proposal builds on these existing services with a view to further improving the functioning of the Single Market for all EU citizens and businesses.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: the chosen option is the EU-coordinated approach which leaves Member States free as to where they provide the required information online. They would only need to provide the links of the relevant websites to a central Commission repository, from which a common search facility would pick them up and present them to the user in reply to a search. This option is considered to be most likely to achieve the objectives efficiently and in a proportionate way, while maximising the benefits for stakeholders.

CONTENT: the proposed Regulation responds to calls by offering citizens and businesses easy access to information, procedures and assistance and problem solving services they need for the exercise of their rights in the internal market. It seeks to establish a single digital gateway in the context of which the Commission and competent authorities would play an important role in achieving those objectives.

The proposal, *inter alia*:

- establishes the single digital gateway and defines its scope;
- establishes obligations on Member States and the Commission in relation to the provision of information;
- reaffirms the principle on non-discrimination in relation to online procedures by requiring Member States to make existing online procedures accessible to users from other Member States;
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allows Member States to extend the offer of assistance and problem solving services by including in the gateway services offered by private or semi-private entities;

- clarifies the conditions which the online procedures should meet in order to be accessible by non-national users (such as the availability of instructions in another language, recognition of e-ID, esignatures and e-seals);
- establishes the mechanism for the monitoring of the quality of the information, procedures and assistance services to which the gateway links;
- requires Member States to appoint national coordinators and entrusts them with specific responsibilities related to the gateway;
- establishes the gateway coordination group.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: the costs of implementing this Regulation would be EUR 109 million of initial investment costs and around EUR 8 million of annual running costs for all Member States and the Commission together. The initial investment costs would be partially offset in one year by savings of cross-border businesses in additional translation and certification fees and consultancy costs of an estimated EUR 86 million. For the countries that have the fewest procedures online, digitalising the remaining procedures would cost EUR 6.6 million. To put this expense in context, this is about 2 to 4% of the 2014-2020 ESIF funding they have allocated to e-government.