Better law-making 2005: application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. 13th annual report

2006/2279(INI) - 24/01/2007 - Document attached to the procedure

This present communication sets out an action programme for reducing administrative burdens in the European Union.

In November 2006, the Commission proposed launching an ambitious Action Programme to reduce the administrative burden of existing regulation in the EU. As part of this, the Commission proposed that the 2007 Spring European Council fix a reduction target of 25 %, to be achieved jointly by the EU and Member States by 2012. This Action Programme is not about deregulation.

This Action Programme sets out how the Commission proposes that the information obligations (IOs) should be identified, measured and reduced. The programme will measure administrative costs, take a judgement on which of these costs constitute unnecessary burdens and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. Practically, as the measurement exercise delivers its results, the Commission will analyse these and take the required initiatives towards reduction of the burdens that are unnecessary. The strategy presented in this Communication is ambitious and its success depends to a great extent on active support and cooperation from Member States and the other EU institutions. The pilot project and the national measurements carried out to date have confirmed that the reduction of administrative burdens is a joint responsibility of the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Member States.

In essence it is proposed that the Commission, with the help of the Member States, measures administrative burdens related to Community legislation and national transposition, and draws up appropriate reduction proposals while Member States measure and reduce the administrative burdens of purely national and regional legislation. The Programme will commence in May 2007 and will aim to provide by November 2008, an assessment of administrative costs imposed by the selected Community legislation.

The Commission's measurement exercise will commence in summer 2007 to be completed by end of 2008. It will cover the following priority areas: 1. Company law; 2. Pharmaceutical legislation; 3. Working environment/ employment relations; 4. Tax law/VAT; 5. Statistics; 6. Agriculture and agricultural subsidies; 7. Food Safety; 8. Transport; 9. Fisheries; 10. Financial services; 11. Environment; 12. Cohesion policy; 13. Public procurement.

To conclude, the Action Programme set out in this Communication holds out the prospect of making a significant contribution to improving the business climate in the EU. It contains a detailed road map for measuring and reducing unnecessary administrative burdens in the EU as well as targets to guide the process.

The Action Programme will require strong commitment from Member States and the colegislator. The Spring 2007 European Council is, therefore, requested to:

- endorse the Action Programme for Reducing Administrative burdens set out in this Communication, including the priority areas chosen, the proposed methodology, principles for reducing burdens, the list of fast track actions and the organisational structure;

- invite Member States to support the Commission with the measurement of administrative burdens associated with Community legislation and transposition as set out in this Communication;
- set a joint reduction target for administrative burdens, caused by EC and national legislation of 25% overall, to be achieved by 2012. To facilitate the attainment of this objective a 25% reduction target should also be set specifically for administrative burdens related to EC legislation and its transposition. This target will subsequently be differentiated across the priority areas on the basis of the results of the Action Programme;
- invite Member States to set administrative burden reduction targets at national level by October 2008, at the latest, and to report on the measurement and reduction of administrative burdens annually in their national Growth and Jobs Strategy progress reports, starting in October 2007;
- call upon the Council and the European Parliament to give special priority to the measures set out in Annex III once the Commission has made the corresponding proposals, with a view to adoption as soon as possible, in 2007.