



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

High Level Group of Independent Stakeholders on Administrative Burdens

OPINION OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP

Subject: Fast Track Actions (FTAs) 2008; final opinion

Background

During its meeting of 26 February 2008 the HLG discussed in detail the draft list of Fast Track Actions prepared by the European Commission for 2008. After this discussion it adopted a detailed opinion expressing broad support to the package insofar as it leads to a reduction in the cost of administrative burden on the European economy, while requesting more information regarding individual proposals, including quantified estimation of their potential benefits.

On 10 March 2008, the Commission adopted the list of FTA (11 items) underlining the broad support of the HLG. The list was presented to the European Council on 13 March 2008.

As requested by the HLG the Commission has furnished further information concerning the expected quantified benefits of the proposals. This information was sufficient for the HLG to comprehend the saving benefits, referring especially to proposals No. 6, 7 and 8 (old No. 10) containing the main bulk of administrative reduction potential for all 11 FTAs.

The HLG can therefore finalise its opinion as follows.¹

Conclusions

The HLG welcomes the efforts of the Commission to come up with a comprehensive FTA-package. Having in mind that quantifications of administrative burdens can only give an estimate on the benefits based on exemplary calculations, the HLG believes on the basis of the information provided the annual reduction potential of 2008 FTAs to be at least one billion Euro. Especially FTAs No 6, 7 and 8 (old No. 10) contributing the most to the

¹ Reference is made to the opinion of the group adopted at its meeting on 26 February 2008 and in particular to the remarks of some members regarding individual proposals.

estimated relief show that minor changes can have immense effects on European business. Those proposals are a first step on the way to reach the 25% reduction goal in 2012.

Notwithstanding the positive tenor of this opinion, the HLG regrets that not more measures could have been included in the FTA package 2008 and that numerous questions submitted by the HLG in its preliminary opinion could, due to the short time frame, not be considered.

In order to meet the objective of reducing administrative burden by 25 % by 2012, a common effort of all Institutions and Member States is required. The HLG therefore endorses the FTA package 2008 and calls upon all parties involved to use existing procedures to speed up the implementation of the proposed measures by June 2009 and, where necessary and feasible, to foresee new such procedures. The HLG underlines the need of those fast track procedures, especially where a legislative proposal consists only in a technical amendment of an EU legislative act to reduce administrative burden.

The HLG recalls its invitation to the Commission to present, starting from 1 July 2008 and every six months thereafter, a progress report on the adoption and implementation of all necessary rapid measures on EU and national level.

The members of the group will as well endeavour to generate more reduction proposals for consideration by the Commission together with an explanation regarding the proposals origin. In this context the HLG also reminds the Commission of its recommendation for a contest involving all Member States. To generate high quality suggestions, the existing web page and on-line consultation tool should be developed outlining the minimum requirements and enabling the submission of proposals. The contest should be announced in each of the Member States by media partners and provided with clear deadlines. The High Level Group declares itself willing to help generate interest in the contest.

The next steps in the Action Programme will be to identify substantial reduction recommendations in the 13 priority areas once the measurement in these areas has been finished. Company law will be the first area where reduction recommendations will be presented as its measurement was carried out as a pilot project. Having in mind the notable reduction potential of the 11 adopted FTAs, it is nevertheless the wish of the High Level Group that the Commission tables all measures reducing unnecessary administrative burdens as soon as ready, i.e. even if the measurement work is not completed. Such measures should, among other things, come from recommendations collected through the contest and the planned workshops within all Member States. It could also draw on direct submissions from businesses and trade and industry associations made to the chairman or members of the High Level Group or recommendations of the members themselves.

Brussels, April 15, 2008