



22 October 2013

**BUSINESSEUROPE - LPK joint event, 15 October 2013, Vilnius, Lithuania**

***“Mutual recognition: Boosting the Single Market! – Exploring the opportunities and challenges for Europe”***

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The [event](#) brought together officials from the European Institutions, national and local authorities, sector representatives, companies and students, creating a fruitful platform for discussion and exchange of ideas. The event took place in the context of the [Single Market Month](#).

On the basis of the interventions from the keynote speakers, the two panel debates and comments and questions from the audience, the following conclusions can be drawn from the event's discussions:

- The **single market is the cornerstone of European integration** and one of Europe's greatest achievements. It is also one of the key drivers for a stable recovery from the current crisis:
  - The single market adds €600 billion a year to our economy and since 1992 has helped to create almost 3 million new jobs in Europe.
  - EU countries currently trade twice as much with each other as they would do in the absence of a single market.
  - The opportunities to travel, work abroad and enjoy a wide variety of products from all over Europe and beyond are extraordinary.
- Yet, the single market is far from perfect and **many barriers to free movement remain**: companies still experience various difficulties when wanting to sell their goods and services across borders. Also, the mobility for people as citizens and workers must be improved. Professionals, for instance, still often have trouble to get their diploma or qualifications recognised in another Member State.
- **Mutual recognition is key for a well-functioning single market**. In practice, it allows products that respect national rules and are sold legally in one European country, to also be allowed on other national markets, without additional requirements, testing, authorisations, etc.
- Complementing legislation and standards - and in areas where full harmonisation is not desirable or feasible - mutual recognition can offer **flexibility and cross-border acceptance** which can facilitate free movement and overcome some remaining barriers.
- At present, the principle of mutual recognition is more widely applied to goods, and less common in services, transport and mobility of persons.

- To ensure that the best possible application of mutual recognition takes place in all areas of single market policy, the following actions should be undertaken:
  - **Raise awareness** of its benefits and get a clearer picture of where it already applies and how it works in different sectors. There is also a need for more transparency on the national technical rules that hinder free movement.
  - **Improve the provision of information to companies** on existing single market rules, their rights and obligations, but also on where to turn when difficulties arise, e.g. problem solving tools.
  - **Ensure full implementation, correct application and strong enforcement of EU legislation** and engage all relevant parties in making the single market work better.
  - **Provide training to Member States' authorities:** training programmes for Europe's civil servants (at local, regional and national level) to enhance their capabilities and knowledge of single market rules is key.
- Voluntary **European standards** can also benefit the single market by reducing the number of (conflicting) national standards and thus removing potential trade barriers. However, they must always be market-driven and based on a thorough impact assessment.
- The correct application of single market rules is fundamental for its well-functioning. Where this is not the case, informal problem solving tools, such as **SOLVIT**, can provide companies with assistance in these situations. However, to really help SMEs, more efficient and fast-track complaint structures should be put in place.
- The **Internal Market Information (IMI) system** facilitates cross-border cooperation of public authorities, in particular in the area of recognition of professional qualifications and certain authorisations. IMI should be further developed also in new legislative areas.
- **Concrete examples and testimonials** from companies are crucial to illustrate remaining obstacles in the single market. Conferences, such as this one, are a great way to raise awareness of remaining barriers and of the benefits that mutual recognition can offer.
- The more we focus on the opportunities, the more we can obtain. It is up to European companies to know their rights and to react when the single market is not functioning properly. At the same time, Member States need to address these remaining difficulties decisively, ensure proper **single market governance** and coordinate better across borders.
- Overall, **a wider application of the principle of mutual recognition** - not only in goods, but also in less common areas such as services, mobility of people and transport - can truly boost the single market, which will enhance European competitiveness and generate growth and jobs.