Executive Summary

Reform of the Points of Single Contact (PSCs) – Inspirations from European good-practice

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Since the end of 2009, EU Member States are obliged to establish Points of Single Contact (PSCs). These shall – on the one hand – inform (foreign) business starters and enterprises about the administrative procedures needed to set up or exercise service activities. On the other hand, enterprises owners shall be able to complete all information requests, formalities and procedures electronically via the PSC. So far, however, the PSC requirements have not been fully implemented in any of the EU Member States.

German PSC system with considerable need for improvement

The European Commission's current evaluation of the PSC implementation status ranks Germany as the poorest performer in the EU. In particular, the weak performance in the category "transactionality of e-procedures" illustrates the substantial German backlog in the field of e-government. There is need for improvement also with regard to the understandability and user-friendliness of the PSC portals as well as the accessibility for (cross-border) users. Based on half-standardised expert interviews, the study aims to present the more advanced PSC-systems in Austria and Denmark and to derive policy recommendations for Germany.

Different stand-alone solutions in the Federal States

The lack of common framework conditions for largely harmonised structures and the small degree of co-operation among Federal States have led to a large variety of different solutions in the Federal States. This becomes obvious, e.g., in the different organisation modes of the PSC and the design of the PSC portals. Additional challenges exist regarding the division of tasks and consolidation with (semi-) public parallel structures with similar objectives.

Austria excels with a consensus-based, harmonised approach

A Good Practice element in federally organised Austria is the endeavour of the PSC-actors to develop uniform, largely harmonised (organisational) structures and IT-solutions. For this reason, a co-ordination group with representatives from the nine Federal States regularly meets. On special occasions, it also consults with additional external stakeholders. With the help of a special services council, the national government and the Federal States co-ordinate their offerings with complementary support measures from the business chambers.

Denmark stands out with a special user-friendliness

The Danish PSC-portal is characterised by a clear structure and high understandability of the provided information: thereby users obtain an easy overview of the relevant procedures and their content. In addition, foreign users who do not possess a (compatible) digital signature can use a special upload module that allows the uploading of forms (with scanned signature) and possible accompanying documents.

Harmonisation and digitisation are top priorities for Germany

Considering the EU's new requirement to create "Single Digital Gateways", the German PSC-actors should avoid the mistakes made in the first PSC implementation phase. Above all, they should strive for more strongly harmonised structures and efficient IT-solutions, among others with the help of a special co-ordination group and the co-operation of relevant external stakeholders. This does not only promise time and cost advantages but also a higher user-friendliness. A modular approach of the PSC portals could enable Federal States to build in specific additional components. In order to reach full functionality of the PSC, progress in the field of e-government is indispensable.

Stronger automation of the PSC's helpdesk function

Even though a continuous digitisation is vital for the acceleration of procedures and formalities, personal advice still remains important for enterprises having individual requests for information. In order to limit the required workforce capacities and to enable a wide outreach, a stronger automation of the individual advice function is recommended – for instance with bot-systems.