



Statement

Helping Europe to reopen after the COVID-19 pandemic: Business Services are essential to the economic recovery in Europe

14th July 2020

The European Business Services Alliance (EBSA) would welcome an open dialogue between the European Commission, services sectors associations and others to pave the way for an economic and social recovery in Europe, building on the role of business services in helping Europe to reopen.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Business Services Alliance has issued two statements, focusing on good contracting practices and on the need for a sectoral approach in the lifting of the containment measures.¹ With the shifting of the focus from containment to the recovery, the EBSA wants to highlight the following points:

1. Business services, often less visible players in the economy, are key drivers of economic growth and job creation in Europe. Business services represent around 12% of the European economy and are fundamental for increasing European productivity and transforming the European economy, which will be essential during the lifting of the containment measures and the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Business services are helping Europe decisively to reopen, even though they were themselves hit hard.
2. With lower infection rates, the removal of border controls and travel restrictions, there is an urgent need to revitalise and strengthen the European Single Market for Business Services. The EBSA therefore supports the European Commission Single Market barriers report,² which sets a good roadmap for areas of actions by the von der Leyen Commission.
3. The COVID-19 crisis and the economic lockdown also had significant impacts on public procurement and contracting practices. The EBSA calls for a quick return to efficient public procurement, fair contracting practices and better consideration of quality criteria in procurement in order to ensure a safe and secure economic recovery and fair competition.

¹ The statements are available on www.servicealliance.eu

² The Report is available on the European Commission website:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-eu-single-market-barriers-march-2020_en.pdf



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4. The EBSA welcomes the European Recovery Initiative. Providing viable businesses with rapid access to liquidity and funding is essential for the economic recovery and for retaining workers. Therefore, application procedures for access to EU funding have to be streamlined and eased.
5. In the transition to the “new normal” and the return to work, skills and professional qualifications are key. The EBSA is welcoming the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience presented by the European Commission on 1st July 2020.³ The EU Skills Agenda sets ambitious, quantitative objectives for upskilling (improving existing skills) and reskilling (training in new skills) to be achieved within the next 5 years. Upskilling and reskilling is of key importance also in the business services sectors. In the private employment services industry, for example, there are various channels for supporting workers in adapting to change, including skills intelligence and profiling, upskilling via training programmes at company level or through bipartite funds. A strong focus on skills and training policies is characteristic for other business services, such as the industrial cleaning industry or the security services.
6. In the area of employment and social affairs, it is important for business services to have access to temporary unemployment schemes and relief measures and that a sectorial, ecosystem-based and gradual approach is taken in the lifting of the temporary measures. Several national governments have recently eased national regulation in this field, but still in some countries conditions are applied such as thresholds, which are difficult to meet for some business services sectors.

The European Business Service Alliance (EBSA) brings together the European associations within the business services sector. Business services are important for the European economy; however, they are often invisible in our everyday lives. EBSA’s vision is to achieve an internal market for business services in the EU, and to gain recognition for the important role business services play in the European economy. EBSA therefore works on increasing knowledge, visibility and recognition of the business services industry at the European level and promotes the convergence of views and positions expressed by European Business Services associations in order to enhance our ability to make strong representations to the EU Institutions and other relevant European and international stakeholders.

³ For more information on the European Skills Agenda:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1196