The Belgian federal strategy for administrative burden reduction and better regulation

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High Level Group of Independent Stakeholders on Administrative Burdens
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About ASA (1/2)

Administrative Simplification Agency (ASA)

- Created by Law 10 February 1998 for the promotion of entrepreneurship
- Competence: businesses, in 2003 extended to citizens
- Means of action:
  - Right to be informed
  - Recommend – Stimulate – Coordinate
  - Report
- Branch of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister
About ASA (2/2)

• “Light” administrative structure
  – ASA
    • Director general
    • Deputy Director general
    • 8 senior advisors
    • 4 management assistants
    • + citizen specific unit
  – Steering committee
    • Representatives of businesses and unions
    • Political level
    • Civil service level

• Network of simplification agents
Administrative simplification: a definition

• ≠ E-government
• ≠ Business Process Re-engineering (reorganisation)
• ≠ deregulation or regulatory management
• ≠ plain language drafting or communication

= The realisation of political goals and strategies while minimizing the administrative burdens for citizens and enterprises
Belgian strategy: circle of simplification

- E-Government
- Regulation
- Evaluation (measurements)
- (Re)-organisation
- Communication

- Political level
- Public services level
- Stakeholders

Clients and Partners

Instruments
1. E-government and simplification

• Principles
  – Maximize administrative simplification
  – Organize, then digitalize
  – “Only ask once”

• Elements
  – Unique numbers
  – Authentic sources
    • National Register / Crossroads bank for enterprises
  – Belgian Electronic identity card (eID)
2. Regulation: slimmer and smarter

• Principles:
  1. Abrogate if possible
  2. Look for alternatives
  3. Simplify

• Means:
  1. Ex ante: Kafka-Test
     = simplified RIA focusing on AB
  2. Ex post: simplification methodology

A long term investment
3. Evaluation

• Measurements
  – Biennial Survey (macroeconomic level)
    • 25 % reduction 2002 > 2006
    • 25 % reduction 2007 > 2012 ??
  – Kafka model
    = EU Standard Cost Model, but:
      • No extrapolation
      • Effective / potential
      • Net-measurement of all published regulation
      • No baseline measurement

Source: Federal Planning Bureau
4. (Re)-organisation

- BPR: business process reengineering
- Client-oriented approach
- Consultants as intermediates
- Principles:
  - Multi-channeling (no digital divide)
  - One stop shops (physical and electronic)
  - Pro-active intervention
5. Communication

- Inform about the objectives
- Communicate the new procedure (use a checklist, not a full text version)
- Use plain language and easy-to-understand forms
- Present global/integrated information (portal site)
- Also communication at programme level (brandname = KAFKA)
Vous ne devez plus vous bérerir de votre tête.

KAFKA.BE
On va vous simplifier l’administration.
SWOT analysis: Strengths

- An institutional body
- Political support at highest level (prime minister)
- Involvement of stakeholders
- In touch with problems in the field
- Brand name
- Tools
- Concrete projects
- Contact point – www.kafka.be
- Communication of success stories
- Pragmatism
- Multidisciplinary approach
SWOT analysis: Weaknesses

- Limited impact on ministries / agencies
- Not in charge of regulatory oversight
- Network of simplification agents
SWOT analysis: Opportunities

• Administrative simplification is hot
  – at all political levels
• Use of standardised tools such as Standard Cost Model will permit international benchmarking
• Brand name
• Reshape network of simplification agents into a broader community of believers
SWOT analysis: Threats

- Absorption into e-government programme
- Corporatism of stakeholders (defending vested interests)
- Abstract AB reduction target without concrete projects
- Academicism & bureaucracy
- Fear of change (fear of legal changes, fear to disturb balance rights/obligations, …)
- Indistinct leadership and cost centre in horizontal projects
- Privacy debate
Better regulation: some personal remarks

- Tools (RIA, SCM, …) are becoming
  - too complicated
  - more important than results
  - very expensive (government spending)
- Irritation > administrative burden (statistics)
- Smart regulation = more creativity
- Need of a cross-over approach
Cross-over approach

ENTERPRISES

ACTION PROGRAMME

DG Enterprise
DG Work
DG Internal market
DG Taxation
DG Environment
DG ......

START UP
EXPAND
IMPORT / EXPORT
Example: EU-proposal - annual accounts

• The annual accounts are used in Belgium for different European, national and private obligations:
  – Fourth Directive on Company Law
  – Different directives on statistics
  – Public procurement
  – …

• Eliminating the obligation of micro-entities (95 %) to annually file a financial statement would have the inverse effect!

• Administrative burden would increase from € 73 million to at least € 167 million!
Example: annual accounts (2)
Events during Belgian presidency

• DBER « Human rules », Ghent – 16/17 Juin 2010
• ICT 2010 « Digitally Driven », Brussels – 27/29 September 2010
• OECD « Regulatory Policy at the Crossroads », Paris – 28/29 October 2010
• Communication (ASA, Bertelsmann St., FEB, …), Brussels – 6 December 2010
« SO BE GLAD
LIFE IS NOT A BUNDLE
OF PROBLEMS

ONLY IF WE DON’T PUT
TOO MANY RULES
IN TO IT »
Thank you

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