

CHARTER FOR THE ELECTRONIC POINTS OF SINGLE CONTACT UNDER THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE

Points of Single Contact (PSCs) bring the benefits of e-government to entrepreneurs. They provide them with comprehensive information on applicable requirements and allow them to complete administrative procedures online, be it in their own country or in any other EU Member State. They simplify the setting up and expansion of businesses in the Single Market.

PSCs are part of the efforts made by Member States to cut red tape and modernise national administrations. They are a major step towards more efficient public online services and are part of Member States' e-government agendas. Member States have invested time, effort and resources in their PSCs. PSCs are now up and running in all Member States.

PSCs, however, do not yet live up to their full potential. To meet the needs of businesses, PSCs should not only meet the obligations of the Services Directive but go beyond them, both in scope and functionality. Greater account should be taken of the actual needs of businesses. Some Member States have voluntarily chosen this more holistic and ambitious approach to make life easier for businesses.

The proposed Charter sets out the key features of a successful PSC and the criteria for assessing these. The key features cover the core aspects of PSCs, such as quality and availability of up-to-date information, the availability of online services, cross-border accessibility and, finally, the ease of use of PSCs. By gradually being transformed into truly business-friendly e-government tools¹, PSCs will deliver further results. Optimal PSCs would significantly reduce compliance costs and bring additional economic gains for both administrations and businesses.²

The Commission will assess Member States' progress towards more ambitious PSCs in the course of 2014. The assessment will distinguish between legal obligations under the Services Directive and aspects that go beyond the Directive. It will focus on electronic PSCs which have been set up in all Member States but will highlight also the good practices of Member States which have set up well-functioning physical PSCs.

2014 should not be seen as a final deadline but rather as a target date for making further progress towards more comprehensive and user-friendly PSCs. The Commission will continue to assess PSCs on a regular basis thereafter, at sufficiently long intervals to allow for the inclusion of additional enhancements.

In addition to the monitoring to be carried out by the Commission, Member States are invited to closely follow the performance of their electronic Points of Single Contact and to test them against the actual business needs as much as possible.

Member States are encouraged to endorse the approach and criteria outlined in this document to acknowledge the importance of continuing to improve and upgrade the Points of Single Contact and

¹ The Communication states that "*Member States still need to overcome major challenges in terms of further simplification and streamlining of procedures, greater back-office integration and necessary technical adaptations, in particular to ensure cross-border access. It is also important to make business aware of the existence of PSCs and their usefulness.*", COM (2012), 261, p. 12

² COM (2012) 261

ultimately, to provide better public online services to businesses. The Commission stands ready to support Member States in promoting the use of the PSCs in order to help Member States get a better return on their investments.

The Commission is committed to playing an active role in supporting Member States in this process, in line with the partnership approach set out in the Communication. The Charter is one way to drive this work.

KEY FEATURES OF THE SECOND GENERATION ELECTRONIC POINTS OF SINGLE CONTACT UNDER THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE

This section outlines in detail the key features of a successful and business-friendly PSC. These features will be the basis for a regular assessment of progress made by PSCs in the coming years.

A more detailed description of the assessment criteria with the assigned weighing can be found in the Annex to this Charter.

The quality and availability of information provided on PSCs

- Information provided through the PSC takes a holistic approach in terms of scope, taking into account the needs of businesses;
- Information is structured clearly, updated as necessary, targeted at different users and facilitating quicker retrieval of relevant information via different search functions;
- A comprehensive description of the necessary steps to complete procedures and an easy-to-understand description of applicable requirements is provided;
- Information provided takes into account different stages of a business lifecycle.

Completion of e-procedures

- Relevant administrative procedures are available online via the PSC, regardless of the competent authority involved and its location;
- The PSCs provide additional services that improve the users' online experience, such as tracking facilities;
- An entire procedure can be completed online, without any disruptions at different stages (including payments).

Accessibility of PSCs for cross-border users

- A clear distinction is made between the requirements necessary for establishment and those necessary for cross-border service provision in the procedure description;
- Service providers from other Member States can complete procedures online using their own national identification and authentication means, e-signatures or alternative solutions that allow for cross-border completion of procedures;
- Content is available at least in one of the most current foreign languages in sufficient detail, including via help tools;
- The whole administrative process is presented clearly and does not require prior knowledge of the legal or administrative system of the given Member State.

Usability of PSCs

- A number of high quality assistance (i.e. help desk, chat, FAQ etc.) services are the disposal of users, and can be accessed also by foreign users;
- The necessary administrative steps can be completed smoothly and within a reasonable amount of time.

ANNEX

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC POINTS OF SINGLE CONTACT WITH RESPECTIVE WEIGHTINGS

The PSC assessment criteria below distinguish between the obligatory and voluntary features of the PSCs in order to reflect the legal obligations under the Services Directive and highlight efforts made by MS to provide a wider range and more user-friendly services to businesses.

A specific number of points are attributed to each assessment criteria. The maximum number of points for criteria falling under the obligations of the Services Directive is 100. The maximum number of bonus points for the voluntary "2nd Generation" features (outside the scope of the Services Directive) is also 100 but indicated as bonus points and kept separate from the obligatory part.

I. QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

1. **Obligatory: Quality and availability of information on sectors falling under the scope of the Services Directive: 30 points**

- a. Degree of information available: 20 points
- b. Availability of navigation tools: 5 points
- c. Structure of information: 5 points

2. *Voluntary: 2nd Generation PSC Features: Quality and availability of information on requirements outside the scope of the Services Directive but of importance for business users and necessary for the provision of services under the Services Directive (VAT and income taxes, social security, labour law requirements): 30 points*

- a. *Degree of information available: 20 bonus points*
- b. *Availability of navigation tools: 5 bonus points*
- c. *Structure of information: 5 bonus points*

II. TRANSACTIONALITY OF E-PROCEDURES

1. **Obligatory : Transactionality of e-procedures under the scope of the Services Directive: 35 points**

- a. Availability of procedures for electronic completion and degree of transactionality thereof: 30 points
- b. Availability of tools to pay the relevant fees online: 5 points

2. *Voluntary: 2nd Generation PSC Features: Transactionality of e-procedures outside the scope of the Services Directive but necessary for the provision of services under the scope of the Services Directive : 40 bonus points*

- a. *Availability of procedures for electronic completion and degree of transactionality thereof: 30 bonus points*
- b. *Availability of tools to pay the relevant fees online: 5 bonus points*

c. *Availability of tools to track the status of the application: 5 bonus points*

III. ACCESSIBILITY FOR CROSS-BORDER USERS:

1. Obligatory: Accessibility for cross-border users: 25 points

- a. Possibility for a foreign user from any Member State to complete the procedures online: 15 points
- b. Provision for a clear distinction between the requirements applicable to business establishing and those engaged in the cross-border service provision. 10 points

2. *Voluntary 2nd Generation PSC Features: Accessibility for cross-border users : 20 bonus points*

- a. *Accessibility of the PSC in other languages: 10 bonus points*
- b. *Possibility for a foreign user from any Member State to complete procedures outside the scope of the Services Directive online: 10 bonus points*

IV. USABILITY

1. Obligatory: Usability of services under the scope of the Services Directive: 10 points

- a. Availability and quality of assistance services. 5 points
- b. Ease of Use : 3 points
- c. Speed of Use : 2 points

2. *Voluntary 2nd Generation PSC Features: Usability of services outside the scope of the Services Directive: 10 points bonus points*

- a. *Availability and quality of assistance services in other languages: 5 bonus points*
- b. *Ease of Use: 3 bonus points*
- c. *Speed of Use: 2 bonus points*