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From:	European Commission
To:	Council
Subject:	Single Market Enforcement Taskforce Report - Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce Report 2021-2022



Report 2021 - 2022

Single
Market
Enforcement
Taskforce

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For 30 years the single market, one of the greatest achievements of the EU, has been the backbone of the European economy and provided many benefits for businesses, citizens and consumers. To maintain these benefits and provide a catalysing businesses environment in the current economic context, it is important to deepen and strengthen the single market. The removal of barriers reduces transaction costs for businesses and workers, lowering consumer prices and increasing access to innovative goods and services. This enhances the EU's global competitiveness and safeguards the continuous free flow of goods and services to keep our economies resilient.

The Single Market Enforcement Taskforce (SMET) was set up in 2020. It aims to strengthen implementation and enforcement of single market rules on the ground¹. SMET is an innovative forum, where the Commission and the Member States work together to ensure better implementation of single market rules and to tackle the most pressing single market barriers.

Dealing with broad, cross-sectoral issues, SMET relies on strong political guidance and support from the Competitiveness Council (COMPET) and within the national administrations, and support from the European Parliament. This political guidance and support are essential for the success of SMET's innovative working methods. Changing the strongly rooted national practices that underlie single market barriers is a difficult task; political support for action to address them can be critical. When the 2021-2022 SMET report is discussed in the COMPET Council in December 2022, Ministers will have the opportunity to assess the work done by SMET and provide further political guidance.

The aim of this second report² is to give a clear and concise account of SMET's achievements in removing barriers in the single market and in improving its functioning from October 2021 to October 2022. The report also briefly reviews SMET's objectives and working methods.

¹ SMET was created as part of the "Long term action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules".

² The first SMET report can be found here: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/47154>

1. SMET objective and projects

SMET was set up to strengthen cooperation among the Commission and the Member States to ensure the efficient implementation and enforcement of the single market freedoms. We strongly believe that this cooperation is essential for the growth and resilience of the EU economy.

SMET is a platform for Member States and the Commission to work together to ensure better and smarter implementation of the single market rules. As stated in the Communication on a 'Long term action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules'³, a partnership at EU and Member State levels is essential, with shared responsibility for overcoming the barriers that prevent the single market's full potential from being realised.

To achieve this, SMET assesses national practices in implementing single market rules, prioritises work on the most pressing barriers, addresses unnecessary 'gold plating'⁴ and discusses how the functioning of the various single market instruments can be improved.

Enforcement is about cooperating and working hand in hand with Member States in the first instance, as well as with specialised authorities like consumer or data protection authorities, competition and regulatory authorities, NGOs, businesses and the public⁵.

1.1 Our objective and how we work together

SMET's main and ultimate objective is the removal of concrete barriers that hamper the freedom of our businesses and citizens to operate across borders and to travel and live across the EU.

The barriers can arise in many different ways, for example, as a result of legal or administrative burdens, caused by inefficient practices or implementation by national authorities. Drawing on the Commission's report on barriers⁶ and stakeholder feedback, SMET selects the barriers to be dealt with in this taskforce in a joint and collaborative manner.

SMET's work is intended to supplement existing enforcement instruments: infringement procedures; EU Pilots; package meetings; SOLVIT; dialogues for better transposition of directives; and preventive mechanisms, such as the notifications procedure for technical regulations under the Single Market Transparency Directive (EU) 2015/1535, notification procedures under the Service Directive (EU) 2006/123, or the ex ante proportionality assessments under the Proportionality Test Directive (EU) 2018/958. SMET's work neither replaces nor prejudices these instruments, or the regular work on the creation, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation. **SMET aims to complement those instruments by delivering additional solutions to overcome barriers to the smooth functioning of the single market.**

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-enforcement-implementation-single-market-rules_en_0.pdf

⁴ As clarified in the Better Regulation Guidelines (SWD(2021) 305 final) "gold-plating" is considered the adoption of transposition measures that go beyond the requirements imposed by EU law ("excessive burdens may be placed on businesses as a result of Member States imposing obligations that go beyond what is envisaged in the legislation ('gold-plating')"p.11).

⁵ Communication from the Commission "Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers" (COM(2022) 518 final) , 14 October 2022)

⁶ SWD(2020) 54 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0054>

SMET operates as a partnership between Member States and the Commission. Taskforce members work together to identify priority areas, engage in constructive dialogue to make progress on selected barriers, and take action aimed at delivering concrete and tangible results.

From the Member States, representatives of ministries responsible for single market issues participate in SMET's work. Within the Commission, the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) leads SMET's work, working closely with other Commission services.

SMET operates at two levels: 1) a high-level decision-making SMET forum sets priorities, monitors progress and, when needed, discusses specific actions and takes decisions; and 2) at 'Sherpa level', complementing the high-level forum, Member States and Commission experts meet to discuss the barriers in greater detail and develop solutions and actions⁷.

SMET adopts by consensus any conclusions or reports, when appropriate.



The single market covers many different policy areas and requires the involvement of several ministries and other national authorities. In this respect, SMET high-level forum members and Sherpas play an extremely important role in ensuring that national policies and regulations take the single market perspective into account.

Sectoral experts from national authorities and from Commission departments are closely involved in Sherpa meetings. These meetings discuss the technical nature of the barriers identified and possible ways to reduce or eliminate them.

Although stakeholders do not take part directly in SMET, SMET's members are eager to receive feedback and contributions. Recently SMET's work was discussed at several events (for more details, see Part 2 below) where various stakeholders provided very valuable contributions. SMET will build on this positive experience in its work, to develop flexible and practical arrangements, conducive to efficient interaction with stakeholders.

SMET approaches the issues identified from a practical perspective, often developing creative working methods. SMET cooperates intensively, focuses on the substance and uses online tools.

⁷ Please see the Annex for more information about the different meetings.
* Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Working and communication tools:

-  An online WIKI facilitates the collaboration and sharing of information among SMET members;
-  A public website⁸ provides information to stakeholders on the different meetings held by SMET and the topics addressed.

1.2 SMET projects

Every SMET project focuses on one or more concrete barrier(s) or single market issue, and every meeting is held to make progress on one of these projects.

SMET projects are chosen by consensus after a discussion on priorities. The topics put forward for discussion are all identified using reports, workshops and other exchanges of experiences on single market barriers provided by stakeholders. SMET selects projects in areas where it can work, within its mandate, on concrete solutions.

To achieve SMET objectives, two categories of projects developed in parallel:

- 1) thematic projects that focus on specific barriers in the Single Market;
- 2) horizontal enforcement projects that focus on improving the functioning of certain Single Market instruments.

Thematic projects

SMET thematic projects focus on concrete barriers that businesses or citizens encounter when operating in the single market. Examples of such barriers are excessive administrative requirements for cross-border service providers (see section 2.2), or unnecessary use of prior checks for professionals providing a temporary and occasional service (see section 2.3). During thematic Sherpa meetings, solutions for the barriers in question, mostly based on best practices in Member States, are presented and discussed in detail. Based on these discussions, and further bilateral dialogue with the Commission if required, each Member State commits to implementing the necessary improvements.

Horizontal enforcement projects

The focus here is to remove barriers by unlocking the untapped potential of relevant single market instruments. Horizontal enforcement projects typically feature longer-term involvement by SMET and a collective effort to improve the functioning of the single market instrument in question. SOLVIT (see 2.7) is an example of an instrument developed to help businesses and citizens to deal with the misapplication of EU rules by public authorities (local, regional or national). SMET looked at how SOLVIT could be made more effective and efficient in helping people deal with barriers to the single market.

⁸ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/single-market-enforcement-taskforce_en

2. What has been achieved so far

Since the adoption of the first SMET report on 29 September 2021⁹, SMET has continued to work very intensively, meeting six times in the high-level format and 11 times in Sherpa format. The results of this work are presented in this section (see Annex for a chronological overview of SMET meetings).

The experience of stakeholders active in the single market forms the basis of the work done by the SMET. Contact with stakeholders is thus of great importance, as was emphasised by all SMET members. To further facilitate interaction with stakeholders, SMET members representing Poland and the Netherlands organised a dedicated workshop on single market barriers on 13 September 2022. At the workshop, further information was gathered on barriers relevant for different industry stakeholders. Issues related to SMET work were also extensively discussed in connection with the Industrial Forum and its Task Force 1¹⁰ meeting on 28 September 2022.

SMET continued to work on themes already presented in the first SMET report:

- cross-border restrictions for professionals for temporary and occasional service provision: prior checks on qualifications (Section 2.3); and
- cross-border restrictions for professionals in relation to the recognition of professional qualifications: excessive document requirements (Section 2.4).

Based on the 2022 workplan¹¹, SMET took initiatives in the following areas:

- streamlining permitting procedures for wind and solar energy projects (Section 2.1);
- streamlining administrative requirements for cross-border service providers (Section 2.2);
- liability insurance problems when providing cross-border services (Section 2.5);
- barriers in the ecosystem of electric vehicle charging stations (Section 2.6); and
- improving cooperation between SMET and SOLVIT, with the aim of strengthening SOLVIT (Section 2.7).

During 2022, SMET finalised its work on two projects and achieved concrete results:

- Measures with potential protectionist effects in the agri-food sector. During 2021, SMET worked on removing measures which Member States put in place to facilitate and/or stimulate the use of local food products but which disrupted the single market. After most measures were discontinued, removed or clarified, this project was closed in 2022.
- Restrictive measures concerning non-harmonised construction products. In 2021, SMET worked on improving the procedure for these products. It ensured authorities responsible for mutual recognition were registered in, and familiar with, the Information and Communication System on Market Surveillance. Officials working in this area attended training on mutual recognition. SMET also worked to identify decisions on mutual recognition that were not registered in the system. This project was closed in 2022.

⁹ "Single Market Enforcement Taskforce – report" 2021 - <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/47154>

¹⁰ The Industrial Forum supports the Commission in its analysis of industrial ecosystems and in assessing the different risks and needs of industry as it embarks on the twin digital and green transitions. Task Force 1 (single market, KPIs and industrial ecosystems) focuses on economic intelligence on industrial ecosystems. (See [Industrial policy dialogue and expert advice](#)).

¹¹ The 2022 SMET workplan was adopted at SMET meeting on the 17th of December 2021.

2.1 Streamlining permitting procedures for wind and solar energy projects



Context/current situation

Lengthy and complex administrative permitting procedures hamper and delay the deployment of renewable energy sources. This can derail efforts to achieve Green Deal objectives. It can also create an uncertain investment climate in the EU single market. This carries potentially serious risks for the competitiveness of the EU's renewable energy ecosystem. As stated in the 2021 Annual Single Market Report¹², the investment gap in this ecosystem currently stands at EUR 30 billion a year and could rise to about EUR 50 billion a year with more ambitious targets.

The Single Market Barriers Report (2020)¹³ and the RES Simplify Report¹⁴ identified several problems caused by complex permitting procedures for wind and solar energy. Permitting delays also have a serious impact on project developers and investors, who are deterred by increased costs and risks. Lengthy procedures led to project cancellations, suboptimal outcomes such as the installation of outdated technologies and, in the EU wind industry, to overcapacity and factory closures. Burdensome procedures have a negative impact on the competitiveness of EU companies, in particular on the over 50 000 small and medium-sized enterprises active in the production of renewable energy, as well as on the attractiveness of the EU as investment location.



Objectives

Removal of the concrete process-related barriers in each Member State that make it difficult to obtain permits for new wind or solar farm installations.



Actions taken so far

- SMET screened the list of 168 process-related barriers for new wind and solar energy projects gathered by industry and other stakeholders¹⁵.
- Based on in-depth national discussions and with the support of the Commission experts, Member States identified 83 barriers for urgent removal (see Figure 1 below for more details).
- The main types of process-related barriers are:
 - length of administrative procedures;
 - internal coordination issues, such as lack of guidance for local authorities, lack of digitalisation;
 - predictability and transparency of permitting procedures;
 - spatial planning processes;
 - staffing and skilling of permit-granting authorities;
 - barriers for small-scale installations.

¹² COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT "Annual Single Market Report 2021" (SWD(2021) 351 final) - https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/swd-annual-single-market-report-2021_en.pdf

¹³ SWD(2020) 54 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0054>

¹⁴ The RES Simplify Report that has been published as part of the RePowerEU package – <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0e9db9fa-d653-11ec-a95f-01aa75ed71a1>

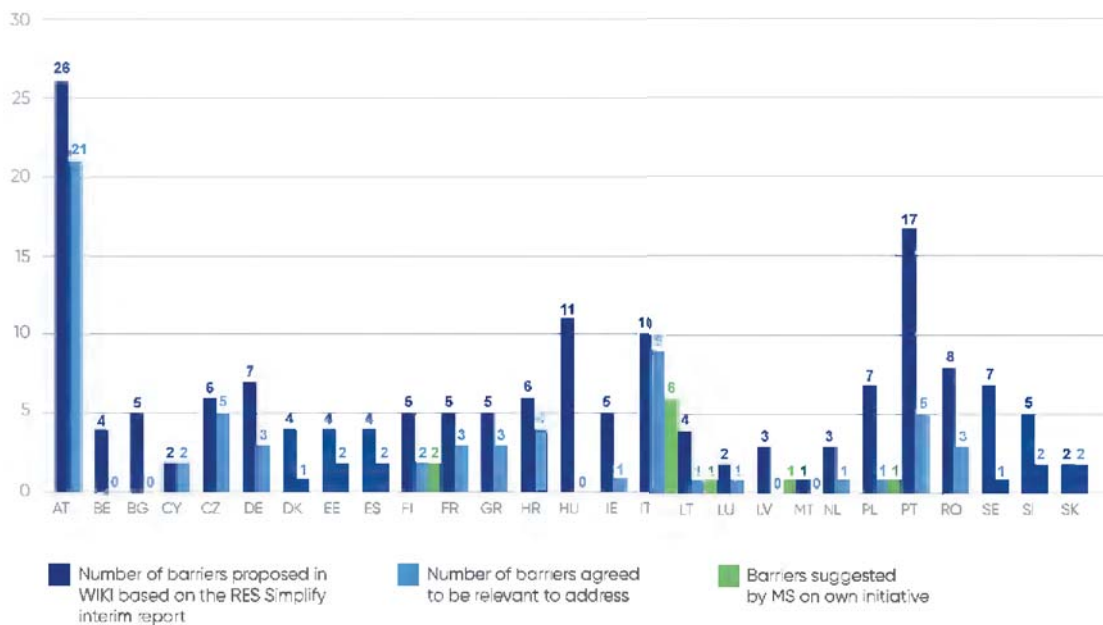
¹⁵ Idem.

- A number of Member States have already communicated clear measures to address barriers identified, with deadlines for implementation¹⁶.
- The barriers identified require national action. The Commission works with Member States by organising bilateral expert discussions and thematic workshops to facilitate learning from each other and exchange of best practices. The Commission also provides financial support through the Technical Support Instrument¹⁷. The barriers are now being eliminated and most measures are scheduled for 2022-2023. However, some barriers are very complex and addressing these measures may require a longer implementation period.

Technical Support Instrument

The Commission has issued calls under the Technical Support Instrument to support the efforts of Member States in accelerating the uptake of renewable energy. Under the 2022 spring call for RePowerEU, six Member States are being provided with technical assistance for streamlining permitting of renewable energy sources projects. A dedicated flagship project was developed for the 2023 Technical Support Instrument call. The 2023 call for projects was promoted through the SMET.

Figure 1 – Overview of number of barriers per Member State



¹⁶ More specifically, ten Member States have communicated implementation of specific measures to address all identified barriers or have communicated specific deadlines for future implementation of the measures addressing all confirmed barriers (AT, CZ, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, SI); furthermore, nine Member States have communicated specific measures and deadlines for some of the identified barriers or have communicated measures with no clear deadline (DE, DK, CY, EL, LU, PT, SK, EE, HR) [state of play: 25 October].

¹⁷ Technical support instrument: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/fnd-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument_en.

2.2 Streamlining administrative requirements for cross-border service providers



Context/current situation

Reports by the Commission, Member States and business stakeholders on single market barriers¹⁸ have consistently highlighted complex, time-consuming and costly administrative formalities for cross-border service providers when posting workers. These can be considered one of the main obstacles to the development of an efficient EU-wide market in services, essential for economic resilience. At the same time, it is important to ensure the protection of posted workers in Member States.

At the workshop organised by the Dutch and Polish SMET members, stakeholders most often mentioned the problems encountered with administrative requirements for cross-border service providers. For many stakeholders this issue was top of their list of barriers.



Objectives

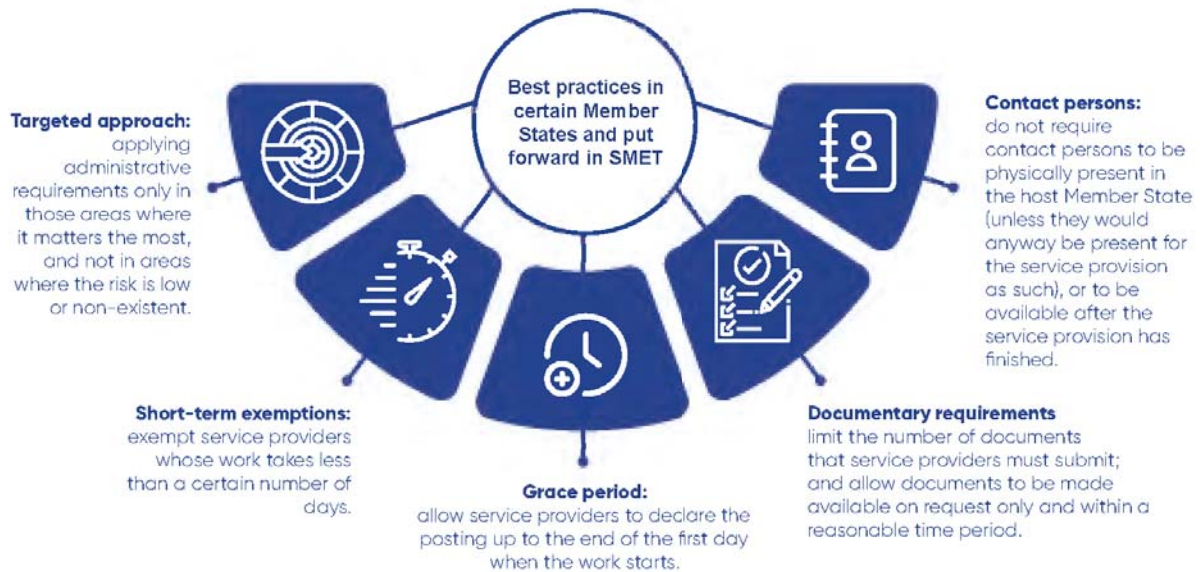
To identify and apply practical solutions that will reduce administrative burdens to providing cross-border services, while at the same time protecting workers.



Actions taken so far

- Mindful of the cross-sectoral nature of the issue, SMET established good cooperation with officials in the relevant ministries of the Member States.
- SMET screened the requirements in Member States to identify best practices.
- Using the information provided by stakeholders and Member States, SMET focused on three areas: declaration obligations; documentary and translation requirements; and requirements for contact persons.
- Based on Member States' best practices, five possible concrete and practical solutions were identified
- Together with experts from the relevant national authorities, SMET members and Sherpas are now analysing to what extent these practical solutions can be applied in their countries, while taking account of the national particularities.
- Member States are invited to commit to applying the practices identified, to register their commitment in the wiki, and to provide feedback on implementation of the various best practices.

¹⁸ SWD(2020) 54 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0054>



2.3 Cross-border restrictions for professionals for temporary and occasional service provision: prior checks on qualifications



Context/current situation

As flagged in the SMET 2021 Report, workers in professions can provide their services temporarily and occasionally in other Member States without a prior check on their professional qualifications. National authorities can however impose a prior check on the exercising of certain professions by service providers from other Member States when providing temporary and occasional services. In these cases, service providers have to prove their qualifications and must wait for them to be approved by national authorities. This means the services providers incur additional costs and are prevented from directly providing their services across borders. Not only must they submit an extensive number of documents, including information on insurance, professional experience and qualifications, good standing and/or clean criminal record certificates, but they also have to wait until the host Member State has performed the prior checks.

However, such prior checks can only be applied to professions with public health and safety implications, and only where necessary to prevent serious damage to the service recipient's health or safety through the service provider's lack of professional qualifications, and where the risk would be so high as to require prior checks (proportionality principle). Despite these conditions, at the start of this SMET project, the EU database on regulated professions contained close to 1 300 professions where prior checks were imposed (healthcare and non-healthcare-related professions). This is far more than would be expected given the conditions that must be met for prior checks.

Excessive prior checks hamper the freedom of EU citizens to move and exercise their profession across the EU¹⁹. Such situations are especially damaging for highly innovative sectors where flexibility and mobility are needed to bridge skills gaps. Removing these excessive prior checks would reduce the administrative burden for professionals and enhance the flexibility of the market in services.

¹⁹ SWD(2020) 54 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0054>



Objectives

To facilitate the free movement of services provided by regulated professions by reducing the number of prior checks imposed by Member States where these are excessive. The justification for prior checks that are maintained should be updated, if necessary.



Actions taken so far in 2021

- Member States checked the requirements for prior checks for 658 different professions.
- For 410 professions, the Member States concerned considered that the justification seemed to meet the conditions for a prior check and the required justification for these prior checks were (if necessary) updated.
- In 2021, Member States committed to removing the prior checks on qualifications for around 160 professions.



Actions taken so far in 2022

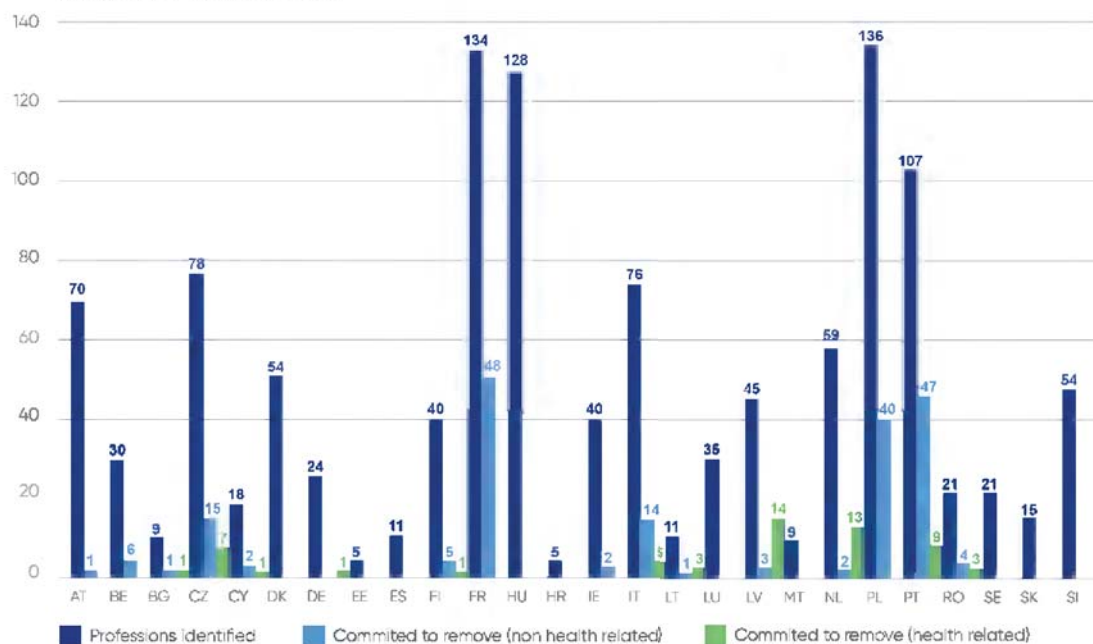
- In 2022, Member States further committed to removing around 89 prior checks, resulting in a total of 249 prior checks to be removed (see Figure 2 for more details).
- Notable results were achieved by Portugal and France, which both committed to removing a large number of prior checks (56 and 46 respectively).
- Some other Member States managed to remove a sizeable percentage of their prior checks.
- Examples are Croatia, Czechia, Italy, Latvia and Romania.
- Several Member States suggested there was still room for further improvement²⁰, so SMET agreed to continue reviewing the need for a prior check for specific professions.

Professions where prior checks were removed most often



²⁰ Currently, 9 Member States have 20 or fewer prior checks, while 2 others have more than 100 prior checks.

Figure 2 – Commitments to remove prior checks on qualifications by Member State
(State of play 10 October 2022)



2.4 Cross-border restrictions for professionals in relation to the recognition of professional qualifications: excessive documentary requirements



Context/current situation

As flagged in the 2021 SMET Report, excessive and outdated documentary requirements make it difficult for regulated professionals to become established abroad, or to provide cross-border services. This limits the scope for meeting demand in other Member States. For companies, it makes it more expensive to swiftly hire the professionals needed.

Requiring certified copies or certified translations of the different documents needed for recognition of professional qualifications is burdensome and stands in the way of using agile digital procedures. This slows down recognition procedures and adds unnecessary costs for both the professional and the national administration. Modern digital tools (such as automatic translations or the Internal Market Information system (IMI) ²¹) should be widely used to reduce this barrier to the minimum, for citizens and businesses.



Objectives

To reduce the number of excessive documents required by national authorities for the recognition of professional qualifications, and to reduce the use of the most burdensome documentary requirements, namely certified translations and certified copies.

²¹ The Internal Market Information System (IMI) is the digital platform helping Member States' administrations to cooperate via the exchange of relevant information



Actions taken so far in 2021

- 20 Member States screened the recognition procedures for multiple professions. Based on that screening, 10 Member States removed several requirements that were deemed excessive.



Actions taken so far in 2022

- After the initial screenings of many professions and evaluation of the results, it was decided to focus on specific aspects of the recognition procedure.
- Given the large administrative burden that requirements like certified translations and certified copies place upon applicants, SMET agreed to focus its work on removing these two practices.

2.5 Liability insurance related problems when providing cross-border services



Context/current situation

To provide their services, many providers need professional liability insurance. However, this sort of insurance often covers only activities in the Member State where it is issued. The Single Market Barriers Report (2020)²² identified a number of potential obstacles relating to professional liability insurance for cross-border activities that prevent businesses from exploiting the full potential of the single market.

Furthermore, service providers wishing to get insurance coverage for their cross-border activities might find it very difficult to obtain relevant information on how to get insurance and what this insurance should cover in other Member States.



Objectives

To identify barriers related to service providers' insurance and to enhance clarity on obtaining insurance by service providers in relation to cross-border activities.



Actions taken so far

- 19 Member States²³ reported that they were not aware of problems relating to professional liability insurance for cross-border activities.
- Based on these findings, SMET agreed to end the project.
- The Commission will continue discussing some of the issues identified bilaterally with the Member States concerned.
- SMET will, nevertheless, continue monitoring potential barriers relating to insurance for service providers.

²² SWD(2020) 54 final, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0054>

²³ 19 Member States are: AT, BE, BG, CZ, CY, DK, ES, EE, FI, HR, IE, LT, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SK, SE.

Issues identified by Member States regarding liability insurance

- Portugal consulted stakeholders on possible problems with obtaining insurance. Stakeholders reported general problems obtaining insurance that covered work in other Member States. In particular, they said that insurance needed in the construction industry was difficult to obtain in other Member States.
- The Netherlands noted that architects had reported problems obtaining insurance abroad.
- Italy reported that engineers operating in France had experienced difficulties.

2.6 Barriers in the ecosystem of electric vehicle charging stations



Context/current situation

To demonstrate how the single market can be improved using an ecosystem approach, France and the Netherlands initiated a project in early 2021 to identify the different barriers encountered by cross-border providers of electric vehicle charging stations (part of the larger mobility ecosystem). This ecosystem was chosen because it is dynamic, critical for the green transition and cross-border in nature. It also shows how intertwined industry and services are. Another reason for choosing this ecosystem was that every single market barrier in the mobility sector can lead to additional problems – cars do not stop at the border. Because of its cross-border nature, it is important that this ecosystem is developed with the single market in mind.

The French and Dutch approach consisted of three steps: identification of services that are particularly strategic for the electric vehicle ecosystem; identification of barriers that hinder the delivery of these services; and development of concrete and pragmatic action to address these barriers. The initiative identified 15 distinct concrete barriers, in six categories, relevant to the electric vehicle charging stations ecosystem.



Objectives

To demonstrate how different barriers in a specific ecosystem can be identified and what solutions would be appropriate.



Actions taken so far

- French and Dutch SMET members worked together with experts in the ministries responsible for mobility to identify the relevant barriers. For this, a survey was conducted and multiple consultations with stakeholders were held.
- The Commission mapped all the actions being taken by different Commission departments to address the barriers identified by the French and Dutch initiative.
- SMET members agreed to investigate whether there are additional barriers relevant to electric charging infrastructure.
- SMET members agreed to brief experts working on mobility (most importantly those working on the Sustainable Transport Forum²⁴) about the different single market barriers relating to electric vehicle charging stations, with reference to the French and Dutch non-paper and the mapping provided by the Commission.

²⁴ The Sustainable Transport Forum has a subgroup working on best practices by public authorities in supporting deployment of recharging infrastructure.

2.7 SOLVIT (Horizontal enforcement)



Context/current situation

SOLVIT is a network of 30 national centres based in government departments and agencies in all Member States and in the EEA EFTA countries of Iceland, Norway and Lichtenstein. It provides free-of-charge assistance to help resolve cross-border problems and barriers that individuals and businesses face when exercising their rights in the single market. SOLVIT and SMET share the common objective of facilitating the smooth functioning of the single market by removing unwarranted barriers.



Objectives

To further improve the functioning of SOLVIT and improve its effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with barriers on the single market.



Actions taken so far

- SMET and SOLVIT network members discussed how their cooperation could be improved. Three main areas of further cooperation were identified:
 - identifying how SMET can help deal with cases involving misapplication of EU law which SOLVIT has not been able to address;
 - regular reporting on structural SOLVIT cases that could become SMET projects; and
 - strengthening the position of SOLVIT centres by advocating that SOLVIT data should be used for both EU and national policy objectives and by improving the staffing of the SOLVIT centres.
- SMET members agreed to jointly identify structural SOLVIT cases that could be taken up by SMET. SMET and SOLVIT committed to cooperating at national level, and to reporting on this cooperation.

²⁴ The Sustainable Transport Forum has a subgroup working on best practices of public authorities to support the deployment of recharging infrastructure.

3. Future directions

SMET will continue to address barriers in the single market. To do so effectively, it needs to develop further cooperation between the different parts of national administrations working on single market policies. It is important to work both within national governments and within the Commission, and to strengthen political backing for our work.

In 2023, SMET will build on the foundations laid in previous years. Together, SMET members will strive to improve the functioning of the single market by maintaining the effective methods SMET has put in place and by developing new practices where needed.

New projects will be chosen by consensus. Single market barriers will be approached from the user perspective and discussed in an open and solution-focused atmosphere.

In 2023, SMET will continue to work on ongoing projects. In particular, in view of the critical importance of accelerating investment in renewable energy sources, SMET members will continue to focus on reducing administrative permitting barriers for wind and solar projects. At the same time, the taskforce will continue its work to deliver concrete progress on reducing administrative requirements for cross-border service providers, focusing on the five identified best practices.

Furthermore, SMET will aim to bring the following two workstreams to a close in 2023: prior checks (Section 2.3) and documentary requirements (Section 2.4).

The following two horizontal workstreams have only started recently and will be continued: analysis of the ecosystem of electric vehicle charging stations (2.6) and SOLVIT (2.7).

Several of the projects that were part of the 2022 workplan have not yet been started, following an agreement not to have too many active projects at the same time.

As regards to new workstreams, two projects are currently being considered.

- **Packaging.** Divergent national packaging and packaging labelling requirements constitute a common barrier for goods in the single market. Differing requirements can create serious obstacles to intra-EU trade. SMET will explore if there are packaging-related barriers to which it could help develop concrete solutions.
- **Cross-border provision of services and digitalisation.** Cross-border service providers need to comply with many different requirements that differ from the requirements in their home Member State. Examples are prior declarations, licences and general registrations. Digitalisation of procedures connected to such requirements can make all the difference.

Two projects are currently under consideration aimed at improving the functioning of various single market instruments.

- **Single Digital Gateway.** The implementation of the Single Digital Gateway is important for the single market. The objective of this project would be to ensure the digitalisation of major government services, both national and local, for the single market.
- **Internal Market Information system.** This system enables national authorities to exchange information quickly and safely, and reduces the administrative burden for users of government services. The objective of this project would be to increase the use of system and make it more efficient.

At the beginning of 2023, SMET will hold a strategic discussion to evaluate the work in progress on the current projects and discuss possible new priorities, based on the political steer from the ministers.

Annex: Summary of SMET and Sherpa group meetings

