

Annex C. Semi-structured interviews with private sector representatives

Introduction

In the 2016-19 cycle of the Small Business Act (SBA) Assessment for the Western Balkans and Turkey, the OECD endeavoured to better gauge policy implementation and outcomes by involving the private sector more intensively in the assessment process.

To do so, the OECD prepared a standardised questionnaire to collect private sector insights into the effectiveness of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) policies and existing support measures. In addition to shedding light on the actual state of policy implementation, the questionnaire also aimed to reveal any unintended impacts of policies on SMEs, as well as to gather private sector recommendations across a variety of policy areas.

Methodology and implementation

The questionnaire was designed to standardise the process and ensure consistency across interviews. Local consultants in each of the seven assessed economies were hired to conduct semi-structured interviews with private sector representatives. In addition to owners and managing directors of SMEs, a number of interviews were also held with representatives of Chambers of Commerce.

The size and geographical distribution of SMEs were taken into consideration when selecting interviewees. This was crucial in order to ensure that the sample was as representative of the SMEs sector in the region as possible. In total, 40 interviews were conducted across the region. However, the small sample size meant that the results have been interpreted with caution in the analysis, and were not included directly in the scoring.

The interviews involved two parts:

1. Interviewees were asked screening questions to collect information about the following characteristics of their firm:

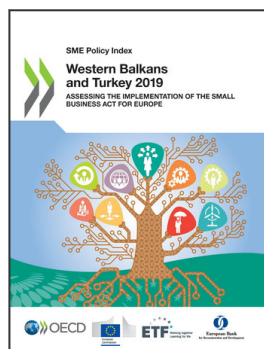
- year of establishment
- number of employees
- annual turnover
- sector of operation (based on the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE Rev.2)).

2. The consultants asked opinion-based questions prepared by the OECD and grouped by the SME Policy Index dimensions (excluding Dimensions 1 and 8a, whose assessment was led by the European Training Foundation). Table A C.1. illustrates the nature of questions, with a few selected examples below.

Table A C.1. Standardised interview question examples

Policy dimension	Question
7. Standards and technical regulations	Have you had any difficulties in complying with EU standards and technical regulations? If yes, please elaborate on these difficulties you have experienced, and whether you have received any public support to overcome them.
8b. Innovation policy for SMEs	Do the services and financial instruments offered by public institutions incentivise you to engage in innovation related activities? If not, in which areas would you like to see enhanced public support to address your major obstacles? If you have ever co-operated with the public research institutions/academia on an innovative project, how would you assess your experience? If you have not co-operated so far, what are the main reasons for that, and are there any obstacles in doing so?

Following a review of the information collected in the interviews by the OECD, the local consultants were asked to re-approach the interviewees for additional information or clarification on certain elements where necessary.



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