

POLICY REVIEW

Private sector gets greater market say

Opinions, measures and strategies should be sought from business leaders, according to new published guideline

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The central government's decision to enable greater participation from entrepreneurs on policymaking will help stabilize market expectations and bolster the private sector, analysts said.

The National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner, said on Sept 17 that it has published a new guideline on the establishment of a government mechanism to solicit opinions from entrepreneurs before major decisions are made on economic policies.

Authorities must take into account the voice of business leaders during the making of policies that directly affect the interests, or the production and operations, of businesses, said the guideline. It also called for authorities to seek opinions from entrepreneurs for major strategies, plans and policies in social and economic development.

Bai Zhili, an analyst with the Institute of State Governance Studies at Peking University, said the new guideline is part of efforts by authorities to improve administrative services and enable better policymaking.

"Faced with the mounting downward pressure of the economy, it is important for the government to shore up the confidence of entrepreneurs. To enable their further participation in policy making will help ease their worries," he said.

Meng Wei, spokeswoman for the NDRC, cited problems such as lack of research, inadequacies in pooling opinions and lack of coordination in the making of some policies related to businesses.

The problems have affected the production, operation and expectations of some businesses, rendering the policies less effective than expected, she told a news conference on Wednesday.

"Enabling participation from entrepreneurs can further refine the transmission mechanism of policies at both macro- and micro-levels, and thus make the policies more down to earth and carried out more precisely," she said.

She noted that the NDRC has also called for authorities to take further initiatives to improve services to businesses and the market, and form a new type of cordial and clean relationship between government and business.

The NDRC said in a statement after the release of the guideline that it has pooled the opinions of over 1,600 business leaders and 45 central government departments dur-

ing the guideline's drafting process, and it has prioritized efforts to seek advice from private business leaders.

The guideline called for authorities to invite experts and representatives from business leaders to take part in the drafting process of policies that are relatively professional and directly affect the interests of businesses.

The selection of business representatives must cover businesses of various ownership types, different scales and from different sectors.

In seeking opinions from entrepreneurs, authorities must employ multiple platforms, such as website portals, online administrative platforms and service windows, to solicit opinion within a reasonable time period, the guideline said.

It also required better use of the national administrative service platform to enable interaction and feedback.

For policy adjustments that could increase corporate costs and affect production and operations, authorities must set up a buffer period after adequately taking into account voices from businesses. For policy adjustments that cause damage to the legitimate interest of businesses, authorities

must come up with compensation in keeping with laws and regulations, the guideline added.

Bai said authorities should expand the mechanism of opinion seeking to cover other reforms, such as administrative reform, to make their voices better heard.

It is also important for governments at various levels to establish a fixed mechanism to ensure participation especially from private business leaders, he said.

Jia Xijin, an associate professor on civil society and public policy at Tsinghua University, said whether the new guideline can see better results will depend on a number of factors. "On a cognitive level, it is important for authorities to realize that the participation from entrepreneurs is part of their inherent rights, rather than seeking it as a measure to enable

better results of policies."

It is also important to ensure adequate protection and open channels for entrepreneurs and industry associations to voice their proposals and publish their

research over certain policies, she said.

She also highlighted the importance of an open mechanism that can provide feedback and emergency relief measures to businesses.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

POLICY RESPONSE

Investments, leasing and land use among key topics raised

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Several ministry-level departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Foreign and domestic investment blocks eased

China further eased restrictions for both domestic and foreign investors in the latest revised negative list for market access, the NDRC said on Sept 18.

Meng Wei, a spokeswoman with the NDRC, said at a news conference that the revised list, which has yet to be approved, has cut the number of sectors and businesses that are off-limits, reduced administrative measures on investment and optimized its structure.

Industries, fields and businesses not on the list are open for investment to all market players. Chinese authorities revise the list on an annual basis, with the 2018 version released last December. Unlike the negative lists for foreign investment market access released in June, the

unified list applies to all market players including both domestic and foreign investors.

Meng said, the negative list approach has achieved good results in making market access management more open, inclusive and predictable, creating more space for entrepreneurship and innovation of market entities, as well as stimulating their market vitality.

The country will also pilot projects in some provinces to further widen market access, especially in the service sector, she added.

Leasing of property to be easier, protecting tenant



The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said on Sept 19 that it will carry out a special program on addressing the disorder of housing lease intermediary organizations and protect the legal interests of parties concerned.

The decision was made at a meeting participated in by authorities from the local housing and rural-urban development departments in key cities.

It required efforts to be made in putting the people first by targeting and solving the problems that annoy the public regarding housing lease.

Behaviors of agents that violate the lawful rights and interests of parties to the housing lease contracts will be cracked down on, it said.

According to the meeting, the special program aims to correct and investigate intermediary organizations' illegal acts and ban any unqualified agents.

While containing the current situation, efforts will also be made to establish a long-term mechanism that helps to create a better house-lease market environment and reassure people who rent houses, it said.

Time to approve land use to be cut dramatically

The time required to approve the planning of land use will be shortened to about six months from at least three years as China will further streamline its administrative approval system for land-use planning, the Ministry of Natural

Resources said on Sept 20.

According to Zhao Long, deputy head of the ministry, reforms on planning permission and land use approval will be carried out nationwide to improve the business environment and promote governance efficiency.

The reforms, which unified the review and licensing procedures in different government departments, are expected to markedly streamline items, significantly trim the application process and greatly reduce approval time, Zhao told a news conference.

In the past, applicants needed to go through an overlapping review by different government departments to get approval for planning and land use.

Under the reforms, China will also delegate more power from the State Council to provincial-level governments, allowing them to have greater say in authorizing land and space planning, Zhao said.

Vocational schools to help children in poorer areas

China requires vocational schools in cities and provinces such as Beijing and Zhejiang to help support the development of vocational education in the country's impoverished areas through one-to-one assistance, according

to a notice published on Sept 16.

The notice, issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, said every one of the 44 vocational schools in 15 cities and provinces including Beijing and Zhejiang should have at least one counterpart in the 35 vocational schools in poor areas of provinces including Sichuan and Gansu.

According to the notice, poor areas with abundant sources of students that are qualified to develop vocational education will be supported to establish new vocational schools and a series of measures involving the teacher training and skill practice training will be adopted to conduct one-to-one assistance.

Enterprises of various kinds are also encouraged to help improve the vocational education in poor areas by carrying out cooperation or providing financial support, it said.



Policy digest

Business environment to be enhanced

The State Council has called for efforts to promote Beijing and Shanghai's experience of optimizing the business environment across the country.

In a notice published on Sept 19, the Cabinet said good results have been achieved as the country continues to deepen reforms and optimize the business environment. And Beijing and Shanghai have gained some valuable experience and practices that have helped to address prominent problems facing market entities.

The experience covers starting a business, acquiring electricity, property registration, paying taxes and fees, cross-border trade as well as contract enforcement, according to the notice.

Among them, 13 items — including allowing enterprises to start businesses online, promoting electronic business licenses, handling the registration, trading and tax paying of property through one window, and promoting the single window for international trade — will be replicated nationwide, it said.

According to the notice, 23 measures will be shared across the country, including providing electronic files to enterprises, promoting electronic project bidding, promoting information sharing regarding real estate registration and cadastral (land boundaries) management, implementing online tax declaration and carrying out electronic customs clearance.

Governments and departments at all levels are required to simplify approvals to facilitate investment and business, conduct supervision to promote fair competition and deepen reforms to reduce the fees that enterprises pay.

Program to boost fitness to pay healthy dividends

China will take measures to promote nationwide fitness programs and stimulate sports consumption in order to push forward the high-quality development of the sports industry, according to a guideline published on Sept 17.

The guideline, issued by the General Office of the State Council, said the sports industry plays an irreplaceable role in meeting the people's growing needs for a better life.

The State Council required efforts to be made in several aspects including deepening reforms, improving industry policies, stimulating sports consumption, building more venues and facilities to make the sports sector a pillar of the national economy and boosting participation in physical exercise as a lifestyle of the public.

According to the guideline, national sports associations are encouraged to allow market entities to bid for the right to host sports events and operate venues through public property rights trading platforms.

To create a better environment for the development of the sports industry, measures will be taken to improve tax and fee policies, strengthen the intellectual property rights protection and step up financial support for sports enterprises, it said.

The State Council encourages local governments to adopt various flexible means to promote sports consumption, including extending the opening hours of public sports venues, developing fitness products and providing training services.

Various market entities are also encouraged to make use of the space in industrial, commercial and storage buildings and build sports facilities, the guideline said.

Efforts will be made to speed up the development of the ice-snow industry and realize the goal of having 300 million Chinese involved in ice and snow exercise activities leading up to the 2022 Winter Olympics, it said.

In order to help the Belt and Road Initiative construction, according to the guideline, sports events including marathons, bicycle races, yachting competitions and car rallying are encouraged to be held along countries involved in the BRI.