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Five key differences between chambers of commerce in United Kingdom, Belgium and Poland

Summary

Chambers of commerce play an important role for entrepreneurs and the economy. However, their position, organization, effectiveness and tasks vary from country to country. The challenges of the 21st-century economy require the strengthening of chambers so that they can effectively support business. We should look for possible improvements.

Chambers are usually categorized into three main models: Anglo-Saxon, continental and mixed. An additional public (or administrative) model is sometimes added¹. The analysis of the literature shows, however, that the assignment of chambers to models is sometimes arbitrary or customary. This results in different classification of some countries into specific models - e.g. Poland is assigned to the Anglo-Saxon or mixed model, while Spain is placed in the continental model, although some features of their chambers indicate the properties of the mixed model. The systematic confusion stems from the fact that the current taxonomy is too general to address effectively some of the most important differences between chambers operating in more than 200 countries. But more important is that its design does not provide tools and information that (in the increasing complexity of today's economy) could support the development of chambers based on the results of comparative research.

This article outlines a set of the key differences between British, Polish and Belgian chambers of commerce with several references to Canadian and US chambers. They are all private law and generally listed as Anglo-Saxon model members. But there are major differences between them. It's important to examine foreign systems when changes to the domestic chambers are considered. It should be clear that there is no single and common framework that can be just replicated. Each country's history, economy and social norms must be considered before changes are made. This is why comparative studies are the key to finding the best improvements for local needs.

Keywords: Chambers of commerce – business organizations – taxonomy of chambers.
