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maximising small business interests at european level

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How the PCG can open EU doors, Ben Butters

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Presentation content

- Brief overview of structure and powers of the EU institutions
- The scale, nature and representation of freelancing & self-employment across the EU
- The position of freelancers & self-employment in the EU policy environment
- How and why the PCG can open doors, influence policy makers and enhance the image of freelancers at EU level



Role & structure of the 3 main EU institutions

- **In short, the Commission proposes, then the Parliament and Council (25 member states) amend & adopt:**
- **European Commission:** executive body, guardian of the treaties and proposes laws. 25 commissioners, 25,000 officials.
- **European Parliament:** elected by the citizens of the 25 member states and amends and adopts laws. 732 members (78 UK).
- **Council of the EU:** represents the governments of the 25 member states and amends and adopts laws. Interlocutors range from heads of state to junior officials.



Areas in which EU institutions have the right to initiate policy (and law)

- Competition (mergers, takeovers etc)
- Employment
- Internal market (workers, goods, money & services)
- Consumer protection
- Environment
- Research
- Transport
- Agriculture
- Equal opportunities and equal treatment
- Enterprise



Freelancing across the EU

- Huge variety between member states in:
 - Scale of freelance sector
 - Public administrations' attitudes to self-employment
 - Nature of freelance representation
- Average of 4% of workforce are freelancers, i.e. 12.3 million across the EU¹
- Some freelance bodies involved in social dialogue at national and EU level
- No freelance or self-employed specific representation body at EU level yet, i.e. no PCG-Europe, but idea of interest

¹ *Caveat: this figure is based on extrapolation from an initial survey and may not stand up to intense scrutiny!*



What EU policy makers think & know about freelancing and self-employment

Contrasting views:

- Self-employment is a means by which irresponsible employers can evade taxes and responsibilities and its proliferation is contrary to the European social model
- or*
- Self-employment is the key to flexible working, a skilled labour market and encouraging innovation and therefore vital to Europe's global competitiveness

An emerging consensus?

- In the right context and with the right provisions, self-employment can enhance individuals' lifestyles, improve businesses' performance and contribute positively to society and the economy as a whole.



- Be aware of other stakeholders (friend or foe!)
- Contribute constructively to a variety of specific policy dossiers
- Instigate debate on key issues and progressive ideas
- Develop contacts with key Commission officials, MEPs and EU-level stakeholders
- Forge alliances with counterparts in other member states
- Pursue further the creation of a *European Freelancer Alliance*

In other words:

- **Keep up your good work over the last 2 years!**

**How can the PCG
open doors and
enhance the image
of free-lancing at
EU level?**



Other EU policy issues of relevance to the PCG

- Consultation on labour law
- Public procurement
- The Services Directive
- Enterprise policy
- Intellectual property
- Lisbon Strategy
- Development of EU level social dialogue
- Regulatory reform

ENDS

