

smallbusiness europe

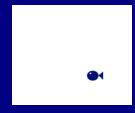
maximising small business interests at european level

Professional Contractors Group Friends Day, 4 April 2006 How the PCG can open EU doors, Ben Butters

www.smallbusinesseurope.org info@smallbusinesseurope.org

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 & selfemployment 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



- 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.

Role & structure of the 3 main EU institutions

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

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



- Huge variety between member states in:
 - Scale of freelance sector
 - Public administrations' attitudes to selfemployment
 - 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!

Freelancing across the EU

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

- 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?

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

Other EU policy issues of relevance to the PCG

