

German PA News

Lobbying by associations in crisis?

Dominik Meier,

Managing Director, miller & meier consulting writes for PA Newsletter...

Associations in Germany are alarmed. The period of the 'Bonn Republic' where industry associations and trade unions enjoyed an influential position is over. Currently there exists not only a struggle between industry associations and trade unions over their lost influence, but also a rivalry between associations and their members. Whether they are large business federations or small interest groups, the development industry associations' experience in Berlin is the same: many companies and organisations do not perceive themselves to be adequately represented by their associations and develop their own lobbying structures in Berlin and Brussels. In Berlin lobbying activities by companies are booming.

The Federal Government supports this development. The Chancellor and the Minister of Economics openly invite companies to come directly to them with their concerns. The round table meetings of business leaders and bankers with the chancellor are organised by a well-known consultant and not - as would have happened in the past - by representatives of industry associations.

An important reason behind this loss of influence is certainly the difficulty to consolidate the increasingly differentiated interests of the members of an association into one common view. In the globalising economy, it is not enough to agree on the smallest common denominator. The rigid forms of communication of the corporate state have lost their appeal in the Berlin Republic.

The process of EU enlargement limits the effective-

ness of national associations. As all national associations are painfully aware, it is very time consuming to reach a common position via the European federations. This will be even more so when the membership will have grown to 25 states.

This development entails also for the companies, themselves an enormous challenge.

The increasing interconnection between the political and economic sphere in a globalising world does not automatically result in a better mutual understanding. In Germany, communication between political and economic actors is still fraught with difficulties. Political practices and language contrast often markedly with the way entrepreneurs think and act. Moreover, the representatives of companies in Brussels and Berlin are often quite limited in the scope to make their own decisions.

It is against this backdrop that professional political consultancies and public affairs organisations become increasingly important both for associations and companies. These specialised organisations can supplement the activities of associations and companies by offering customised solutions for specific problems. However, the public affairs scene in Berlin is only slowly approaching the situation in Brussels. The practices of Berlin are only partly transferable to the conditions of Brussels as the corporatist practices grown over decades can not be abandoned overnight.



Dominik Meier



Vivien Hepworth

left consultancy it struck me quite what I most missed was the intellectual consultancy business gives you. It is and the capacity to implement good clients are usually most interested in. I ed budgets in my voluntary sector role, try to make sure that, when I could dd bring in good external advice in the - and I truly valued it.

g times ahead? ed challenging times for anyone in the and communications business, and I am ion about that. Clients stopped being ple knew about politics years ago - and they want to understand exactly ed value will be. But Westminster only a respected name, but one that is brand through the Grayling Political rk and Grayling Group with a great and experience to offer to clients.

PA Newsletter Appeal tops UK £2,500

The PA Newsletter Annual Appeal this year raising badly needed funds for the Bosnian Support Fund, helping refugees returning to their homes to rebuild them and Father Bernard's Children's Fund, helping children with serious breathing problems in Poland, has now topped UK £2,500.

If you have already given - thank you once more. If you would like to make a donation please make your cheque payable to either charity and post to PA Newsletter Annual Appeal, Ground Floor, 33 Cleveland Square, London W2 6DD, United Kingdom.



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