EC Green Paper – Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century

Introduction

Business In Sport and Leisure (BISL) is an umbrella organisation that represents over 110 private sector companies in the sport and leisure industry. Its members include most of the major operators of commercial sport and leisure in the UK along with hospitality and gaming and many consultants who specialise in this field. The value of members of BISL is in excess of £40 billion. BISL works through five working groups which cover sport, liquor licensing, planning and property, gambling and employment and it is the membership of the BISL Employment Working Group that has reviewed this response.

BISL welcomes the opportunity to submit its members’ views on the EC Green Paper on Labour Law. In general we welcome the recognition that the paper gives to the important contribution of a flexible labour market to competitive advantage in business. BISL however believes that the paper gives an overly negative view of atypical forms of work such as part time, fixed term contracts, temporary agency workers etc.

BISL does not believe that there is any case for a European-led extension of employee rights. It is the opinion of BISL’s members that such an extension might even lead to a reduction in the opportunities to use part-time work as a route to full-time employment. Part-time employment is especially important to UK industry as a whole with an estimated 26% of workers employed on a part-time or casual basis but rising significantly in the leisure and hospitality sector to 57%.
“Floor of rights” (question 8)

The Green Paper asks about whether there is a need to create a Europe-wide “floor of rights” to protect especially those with atypical employment contracts, such as temporary and agency staff. Whilst there may be a need elsewhere in Europe, BISL firmly believes that legislation passed over the last few years in the UK negates any need to enhance European protection of the workforce. The UK has enacted:

- National Minimum Wage – it has recently been announced that the adult National Minimum Wage will be raised in October 2007 from £5.35 to £5.52;
- Improved holiday entitlement – the Work and Families Act 2006 will introduce statutory entitlement to 24 days holiday per year from October 2007 and 28 days from October 2008;
- Health and safety legislation;
- Equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Equality Act 2006 and measures to tackle age discrimination;
- Protection of workers through a ban on smoking in public places (Health Act 2006), to come into force on 1 July 2007.

BISL has welcomed these changes to UK legislation and feels that they offer significant protection to the UK workforce.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further details.

Brigid Simmonds OBE
Chief Executive, BISL