

THE RISE OF EUROPE'S INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONALS(IPROS)

PATRICIA LEIGHTON

Three Questions

- ▣ First, what are the facts about IPROs?(Also known as freelancers/contractors etc)
- ▣ Second, what do we know about why and how they work as IPROS?
- ▣ Third, what are key issues for them working this way?
- ▣ (The research in the EU mainly relied on here is supported by the European Forum of Independent Professionals(EFIP))

BACKGROUND

- ▣ A story of a traditionally **neglected group** within the EU workforce-not employees but not SMEs either-though some affinity
- ▣ Around 20% are members of **liberal** professions, many of which have seen growth but also change and challenge; 80% are '**new**' professionals, typically less or un-regulated
- ▣ The last 15 years has seen **institutional and policy development for these IPROS**
- ▣ The presentation draws on **recent research** into their work, experiences and attitudes

SOME FACTS

- ▣ A dramatic story of development-45% EU growth since 2004, which is continuing
- ▣ Some growth rates;

88%
Poland

85%
Belgium

93%
Netherl
ands

85%
France

56%
Finland

63% UK

12%
Italy

51%
Spain

56%
Germany

BUT WHO ARE THEY?



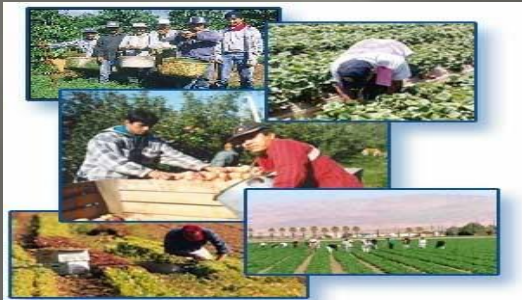
[WHO ARE THEY NOT?]

Inter-
dependent
employment;
employees

[Dependent
employment]

Independent
employment

IPROS



WHAT UNITES THEM?

- ▣ They are typically ;

Highly
skilled

Knowledge
workers

Well qualified

Who want to
work for
themselves

Are self
reliant(?)

BUT, who usually do
not want to employ
others

BUT THERE IS DIVERSITY

- ▣ Some move straight from education to IPRO working; most are previous employees
- ▣ Some have limited companies or similar; most do not
- ▣ Some use intermediation to access clients; most do not
- ▣ Most are aged 30-55 and a majority are male, but there is growth in female, and both older and younger IPROS

Question 2 WHY BE AN IPRO?

Independence

Autonomy

Flexibility

Work-life
balance

Rejection
of
employee
status

HIERARCHIES, 'OLD POWER' AND HRM

(Heimans and Timms, HBR, 2014)



As one academic commented....

‘Traditional hierarchical organisations are struggling. People are increasingly rejecting traditional employment, with its lack of personal control and repression of creativity. New ways of working are emerging, new forms of collaboration, new structures, new alliances and new opportunities. IPROS are at the heart of this’.

(Leo Witvilet, Nyenrode University,
Netherlands)

NEW POWER?

SO, we have the growth of.....



Question 3 Their work experiences and attitudes (1)

- ▣ Nearly all IPROS are happy about the way they work-high levels of job satisfaction
- ▣ Mostly, they obtain work through networks, referrals and other informal methods
- ▣ Mostly, the employment relationships are informally developed-sometimes with ambiguities and sometimes a lack of clarity regarding mutual expectations
- ▣ Most IPROS have experienced periods with no work-few give up, even fewer seek employee jobs and hardly any seek social security payments. They re-think their strategies and carry on!

Their work experiences(2)

- ▣ Beyond professional bodies and IPRO associations they feel they lack **support and are neglected by policy and law makers**
- ▣ They face some problems, especially **late payment, and some cross border issues**
- ▣ But, unlike what policy makers think, it is not the lack of finance or confidence that is the main problem
- ▣ This is that they feel they are treated with **suspicion**, accused of being in 'sham' relationships, when they feel they are exercising choice

Their work experiences (3)

They want;

Recognition

To be
on
policy
agendas

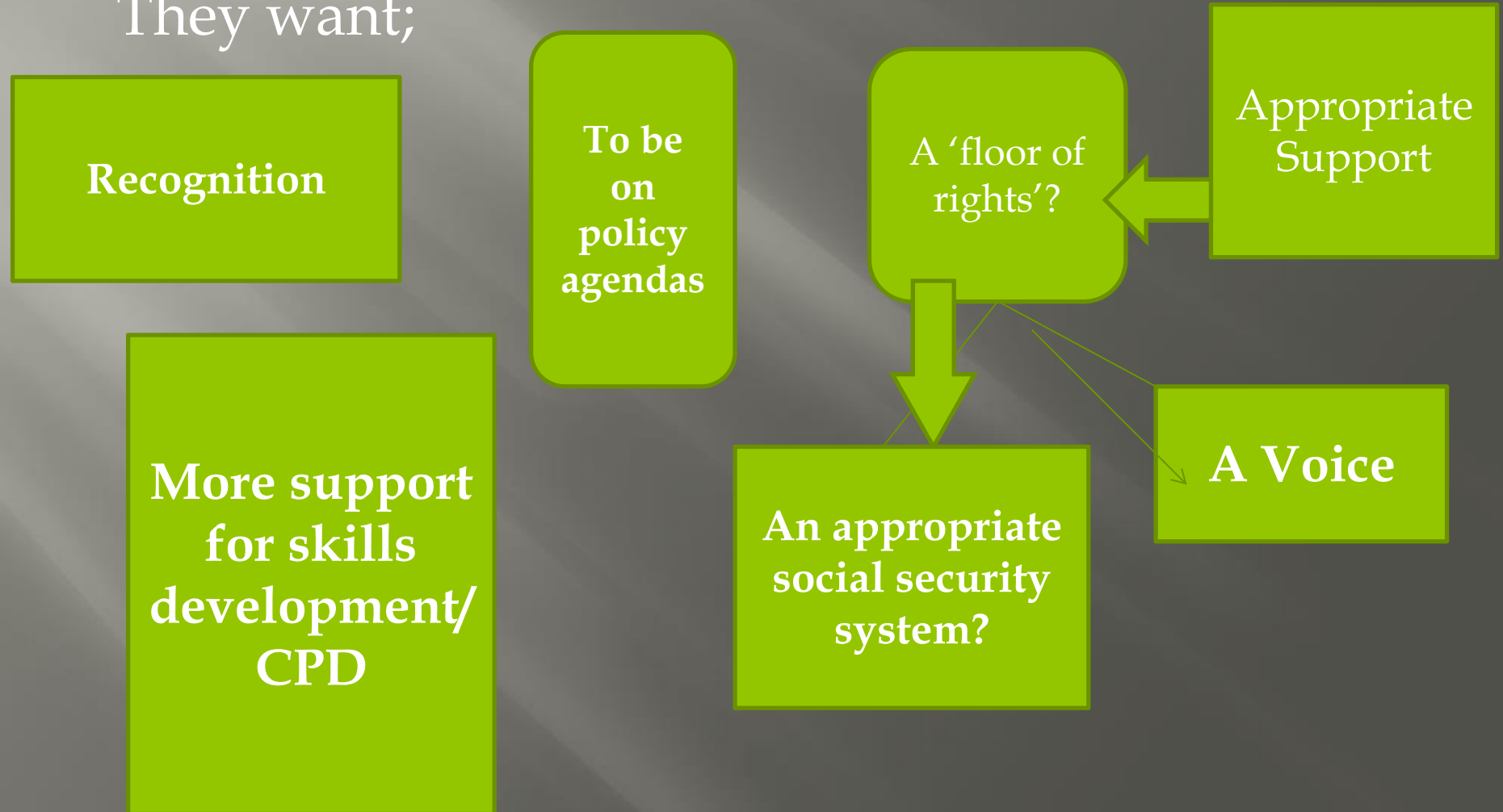
A 'floor of
rights'?

Appropriate
Support

More support
for skills
development/
CPD

An appropriate
social security
system?

A Voice



CONCLUSIONS

- ▣ IPRO working is an increasingly attractive way of working
- ▣ It is driven by choice and opportunity, along with tolerance of risk and by self-reliance
- ▣ Using IPROS is a growing feature of innovative and agile organisations and economies; IPROS themselves are developing new structures, new institutions and new ways of working
- ▣ It requires a lot more research, not least to test the effectiveness and benefits of IPRO working and to seek means of overcoming obstacles to success