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FEEDBACK / Draft of Guidelines on the application of EU competition law to collective agreements regarding the working conditions of solo self-employed persons

Association of Freelance Journalists in Finland (AFJ) warmly welcomes the Commission's Draft for Guidelines on the application of EU competition law to collective agreements regarding the working conditions of solo self-employed persons.

AFJ considers collective bargaining to be the most effective way of improving the situation of freelancers and solo self-employed persons. The self-employed journalists in Finland do not currently have the bargaining power to negotiate the terms and conditions. This has led to a situation where the freelancers only have half of the income of an employed journalist.

The wording of the Draft should be clarified to state that in addition to collective bargaining efforts by solo self-employed persons themselves, also trade unions shall have the right to represent solo self-employed persons in collective bargaining. Especially, the Guidelines should underline the significance of traditional collective labour agreements and establish the bargaining position of trade unions as representative organizations for the solo self-employed.

The collective bargaining rights will become even more important issue in the future, since it is predictable, that freelance working will become more common way to earn income. Freelancers often combine self-employment and entrepreneurship with working in different platforms. Freelance-journalists also work for several customers, and many of them combine different skills at their work. Therefore the bargaining rights should cover all journalism-related work regardless of the size or the field of the buyer.

The Commission's Draft for Guidelines defines solo self-employed workers to be economically depend when they earn at least 50% of their annual work-related income from a single counterparty. AFJ considers the 50% limit to be excessively high, as it would concern only a handful of solo self-employed persons.