

Why financial advisers needs representation

Paul Stanfield, Secretary General, FECIF

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the financial advisory sector needs strong representation, not only to help avoid unnecessary and unworkable regulations but also to ensure a level playing field. Without such representation, the working environment is likely to become biased in favour of the so called “too-big-to-fail” institutions, to the detriment of many advisers and intermediaries – and consumers.

The final text of the Insurance Distribution Directive, agreed in late 2015, is an excellent and tangible example of the importance of this advocacy. All of the major points raised by bodies such as FECIF were taken on board – and the adapted text was far more appropriate and feasible than previous drafts, which was all highly beneficial for our Members – and their clients.

Via its Brussels Head Office, I believe that FECIF provides very strong and effective representation, lobbying stringently on behalf of its members. *But what else should an effective trade association deliver for its members?*

Regulatory knowledge, expertise and assistance

At the EU level it is increasingly important to understand the specifics of regulation and the manner in which it is implemented. It is important that a trade body has the understanding and experience of the various markets within Europe, the pitfalls to avoid and the “local knowledge” that can reduce time and cost for its Members.

Regular updates should be delivered to Members, with easy access provided to working documents from various entities, such as the European Commission, European Parliament, European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) and the European Banking Authority (EBA).

Summary information should highlight the key aspects that may affect Members, saving them time and helping to focus their efforts and activities.

At FECIF, our Members also have access to our unique online database of EU directives, guidelines, regulatory technical standards and more. This is obviously a major benefit, with information thematically and chronologically classified.

Direct input to regulation

Effective representation should enable Members to input directly to EU consultations, gaining from the power of “a single voice” to help shape legislation and implementation – using their knowledge of what is viable and appropriate to ensure that good quality advice can be delivered to clients in a manner that is appropriate and understandable to them.

Image benefits

Within the wider public, Members of an independent trade body are generally seen as committed to both the sector and to high quality, appropriately regulated, compliant business, which enhances them in the eyes of consumers, in particular potential clients.

Our Members display the FECIF logo on their websites to show that they are serious and conscientious professionals.

Market and product information

Such details should be made readily available to Members at no additional cost, as and where relevant. For instance, our experience and knowledge of many European countries and markets enables our Members to more easily and effectively work within their own region and/or consider other locations. A monthly e-newsletter should provide beneficial information in an easy and simple format, with further details only one click away.

Conferences, seminars and workshops

Trade Associations should hold and support relevant events whenever appropriate – and Members should be able to attend these at no cost. For a pan-European body they should be unique and market-leading events, bringing together national adviser associations from across Europe along with consumer groups, MEPs, regulators and industry experts, wherever possible.

Networking

The pooling of knowledge, information, expertise and experience that Members should obtain is invaluable in helping to frame future business plans and strategies. Members are then better equipped to cope with - and potentially blossom - in the likely working environments of the future.

Direct involvement

Members should be able to nominate key individuals for working groups and committees in order to pro-actively shape the Association's policy and influence EU regulations and their implementation.

About FECIF

The European Federation of Financial Advisers and Financial Intermediaries (FECIF) was chartered in June 1999 to support and promote the role of financial advisers and intermediaries in Europe, whilst also representing them at the highest European levels.

FECIF is an independent and non-profit-making trade association that extensively assists its adviser members, who operate across the 28 European Union member states plus Switzerland.

Based in Brussels, FECIF is the only European body representing all types of European financial advisers and intermediaries across the Continent. Via its membership, the Federation represents in excess of 245,000 advisers and intermediaries; when administration

and back office staff are included, FECIF can be seen to support the activities of around 640,000 individuals.

We have a number of membership categories: (1) available to Trade Associations and organisations who represent and/or support financial advisors and intermediaries in Europe; (2) relevant to companies or individuals performing the role of a financial advisor or intermediary in Europe, or looking to develop on the Continent; (3) for companies or individuals providing products and/or services to financial advisors or intermediaries in Europe.

The above benefits are provided and delivered to all Members, irrespective of category.

If you are not represented at present, or not effectively so, you should definitely and strongly consider what you are missing out on.