



BONUS CASE STUDY: CBI

Events

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) was founded in 1965, and in 2020 could state that it represents 190,000 businesses in the UK that employ over 7 million people, which is around one-third of all those working in the private sector giving it a powerful voice in UK democracy as it represents a key section of society. It has over 100 economic and policy specialists, making the CBI the largest policy unit outside of Whitehall. The CBI has offices in 13 different locations across the UK to ensure access to local as well as national decision makers and also five offices in five different regions of the world; this includes an office in Brussels close to the heart of EU decision making.

Significance

The CBI is an interest group and a high-profile, core insider in UK politics which has regular and meaningful consultation within the EU, government and Parliament and devolved institutions as well as widespread dealings with the UK media. The influence of the CBI can be seen in a number of different ways. Firstly, the CBI's insider status; in 2019 CBI representatives sat on 20 ministerial groups across 9 different government departments and received 167 mentions within Parliament while the leaders of the main three political parties all spoke at the CBI Business Conference. Secondly, the CBI maintains a high-profile media presence to shape public opinion; in 2019 the CBI had over 40,000 mentions in the media, conducted 5,000

media interviews and received almost 1 million Twitter impressions on the day of the CBI Business Conference. The real question is, has this insider status and media presence had a real impact on policy making? In the CBI report, A Year of Impact, it claims a number of significant wins. Firstly, the 2050 net zero emissions target which matches the ambitions of business was secured following a CBI media campaign and consultation, and the CBI are to work with government to develop policies to deliver this aim. Secondly, in terms of the national living wage in 2019, the CBI reported that by giving evidence to the Low Pay Commission (an independent body that advises the government about the national living wage and the national minimum wage) it was able to ensure the 60% median wage target was prioritised so the wage worked for both businesses and people – currently forecast to be £8.67 – rather than the original political promise that said this would be worth £9.35. Thirdly, across the devolved nations the CBI also had a considerable impact such as helping to secure an extra £3,000 for small firms in Wales to access gigabit connections. Finally, the CBI pushed the Government hard to secure clarity on the rights of EU workers in the UK prior to Brexit, ensuring that businesses can still employ EU workers on the same basis after Brexit and that the workers can remain in the UK. However, in 2019, the PM Boris Johnson announced at the CBI Conference that he was shelving the cut to corporation tax (tax paid on profits by companies) from 19% to 17%.