

Comments by the Institution of Environmental Sciences on 'Liberalising Trade in Services'.

The Institution is primarily representative of consultants and practitioners in the environmental sector though a number of our members' work for commercial organisations in the environmental services industry. As a professional body, our comments are directed more towards the professional services classification in the consultation document than the environmental services though many of our comments below could apply to both.

It is our perception that the overseas market for environmental services (both consultative, contracting and trade) is more open than many other sectors. There is a substantial demand world wide for all these types of services and the UK would appear to be in the forefront of the development of expertise and technologies that are required. This is evidenced in the strong demand for training support by many Far Eastern and emergent countries.

As this is still a relatively young market sector, there has been little time for the development of competing industries with related growth in regulation and consumer control or 'protection'. However, it is not unlikely that this could develop in the future and trade discussions at international level should remain aware of the possibility and seek avoidance if possible.

Also due to the newness of the market sector, there are few, if any, recognised qualifications or standards of performance for professional practitioners in many of the environmental subject areas. This holds true both in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. Mutual recognition of qualifications would be desirable and we would suggest that this could usefully be explored at international level in parallel with development at home.

Whilst we are not aware of any particular restrictive measures affecting the overseas work of our members at present, on a more general level they will all be affected by local restrictions on work permits, local partnerships, staff employment, exchange control, etc. These are restrictions that will be applicable to ALL trading operations by foreign nationals.

As noted above, competitive situations do not seem to give rise to problems; the most significant difficulties stemming from financial areas such as payment guarantees and wide fluctuations in exchange rates between bid time and payment time.