

Speech given by the President of CEPLIS, Mr. Rudolf Kolbe, during the General Assembly meeting of 16 November 2015 in Brussels.

Dear Friends,

Almost half a year after I have requested your support in order to legitimately chair our organization, I am happy to have again the chance to be in front of you in order to discuss the work my team and I have accomplished during this period and to ask for your feedback in the context of the drafting of our priorities for 2016.

As you remember, back in June, I have presented to you a list of fields suggested by our Executive Board as being of great importance for all our membership. I would like today to go through them again, point by point, reporting briefly to you what was already done and proposing further actions.

1) Monitoring the implementation of the amended Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications

CEPLIS was, I am glad to say, more than active on this point. Our Director General, following instructions of the Board, has met four times with the relevant Unit of the European Commission's DG GROW and has collaborated with its policy officers on all issues in need of clarification. Especially in what concerning Common Training Frameworks, our lobby's objective was to obtain the publication of a "vade mecum" type of document by the Commission and a public conference providing further explanations. This is now promised for the beginning of next year. Before the Director's visits to the Unit headed by Mr. Frohn, we have always asked you to submit in writing specific questions. The answers were afterwards given to you via a special mail or an issue of our Telegram. Furthermore, at the occasion of our June statutory meetings, kindly hosted by our colleagues of Confprofessionni in Venice, the Deputy Head of this, so important for us, Unit, Mr. Tomaras came in person to address our Permanent Committee, chaired by my dear friend and colleague Gaetano Stella. It goes without saying that the monitoring of the Qualifications Directive is going to remain one of our first priorities in 2016. I think I am right to consider that we can be proud of our work in that field up to now.

2) Monitoring the European Commission's Work regarding the boosting of entrepreneurship in our sector and being vigilant regarding plans to reopen the discussion on professional regulation.

CEPLIS has closely followed the changes within the relevant Unit of "GROW". I have personally written to Commissioner Bienkowska following her announcement of a Communication of the European Commission aiming at addressing, among others, entrepreneurship and regulation in our sector, First Vice-president Stella represented our organization at the SME Summit, our Director has established contact with the new officers of the Unit formerly headed by Mr Curavic and now by Mr Catina. At the same time, our Secretariat has kept you timely updated on all evolutions. I am glad that this evening we will have the chance to listen to Mr. Ioakimidis, Policy Manager of the Unit in question, who is going to address our Permanent Committee. This is a good proof of the success of our networking with them. It is also an occasion for lobbying! Gaetano will be of course chairing that meeting, please make sure you ask any question you feel important for your country or your profession, feel free to lobby with our guest before or after the meeting. Again, needless to change that this subject will remain a big priority for 2016.

3) Building closer relationships with a number of MEPs interested in our sector

As you all know, we had already established a very good relationship with EP Vice-president and former European Commissioner, Antonio Tajani. I have personally written to him this Fall, supporting his initiative to question Commissioner Bienkowska on the following up of the Working Group on boosting entrepreneurship in our field. At the same time I have personally followed a number of the meetings of the EP Group on SMEs, chaired by our friend, Mr. Otmar Karas, MEP and I have made sure that our observations are being taken into consideration by the Group members. Some of our members, like Confprofessionni, have kindly helped us in that effort, putting their contacts at our disposal and it is thanks to them we are meeting today in these prestigious premises. I would like to ask all of you to suggest meetings between CEPLIS and some of your national MEPs who could be close to our concerns. Building a network in the Parliament is not easy. I am glad to say though we are in a good way. Obviously this is yet another of our 2016 priorities

4) Improving our relationships with the European Economic and Social Committee

As you know I have the honour to be a member of the EESC since this October. Our friend and colleague Ben Rizzo of the Maltese Federation of the Professions and Ms Gondard- Argenti, First Vice-president of our Correspondent organization the French National Confederation of Unions of Dentists, who represents our member the UNAPL, are also EESC members for the new term. It goes without saying that we shall do everything possible from that post to become bring the voice of the professions in all relevant Opinions or own-initiative Opinions of the Committee. I am very glad to report that at the initiative of our French member, the UNAPL, whose President, Mr. Chassang I wish to thank very much, a very fruitful meeting was organized, bringing together Mr. Arno Metzler and our Director General, Prof. Koutroubas. The meeting was the occasion to finish once and for all with any misunderstanding of the past and to pave new ways for a fruitful collaboration. I am confident that CEPLIS will play a very positive role in ECOSOC during this coming year.

5) Raising awareness on our “Common Values”

You have all seen by the Telegram that our Director General had a number of meetings and participated in several conferences in order to promote the document. I am very happy to say that, thanks to our Maltese member, the MFPL, a sponsoring was found for a printed publication of our values in several languages. The publication in question will be supported by a written message of the Minister of Education and Employment of the Republic of Malta at the occasion of his country’s Presidency of the European Council in 2017. Ben Rizzo and Theodoros Koutroubas can give us more details on the subject. Promoting our Common Values is of course the work of all of us starting by our countries and our professions.

6) Lobbying with the Council – Continuous Professional Development

I am very happy to report that the President of our Maltese member, Ben Rizzo and our Director General, have persuaded the government of the Republic of Malta (Ministry of Education and Employment) to include Professional Ethics in a future Communication of the Council on CPD. CEPLIS was asked to present a first draft to the Minister in charge. The Board has asked our Director General to constitute a Working Group on the subject, under his chair. You are of course going to be informed on the Group’s work and asked to feed back in due time. The Communication could also be a great occasion to have our Common Values mentioned in an official EU Document, as it was the case of their previous version, included in an internal Communication of the Commission, published in 2007.

7) Monitoring the TTIP Negotiations

The issue is one of the priorities of CEPLIS and will continue to be. Following an initiative of our Spanish member, UP, our Secretariat has closely observed the negotiations, assisting in all relevant conferences and reporting on the Telegram. Some of our members have written for further details and additional research was carried out for them. I encourage all of you to be attentive. The Boars will surely discuss the possibility to address the EU negotiators in writing during 2016.

8) Developing relations with all other stakeholders working on fields close or similar to ours

At my initiative, CEPLIS has started a number of contacts with all the interest groups that are active in Brussels on subjects close to those we are working on. I have personally written to the new President of the European Trade Union Confederation, our Director met with the Secretary General of UEAPME and we have of course re-contacted our strategic partner Eurocadres. Further meetings will take place in the months to come. It is important for us to be visible not only at the level of decision makers but at that of the major players on the field as well. We hope 2016 will inaugurate meetings with the Consumer and Patient organisations too.

9) Malta Centre of Excellence on Professional Ethics

I am very happy to report that the works for the setting up of the Centre, funded generously by the Government of the Republic of Malta are advancing very positively. 2016 will be the year of the project’s submission. As you remember Professors Rihoux and Lobe have informed you in detail on the scopes and progress of our efforts to set up this Centre, at the occasion of our Permanent Committee meeting in Venice last June. A big thanks to all of you who have answered the Questionnaire prepared by Professor Lobe.

10) Monitoring the process for the Revision of the Directive on Services in the Internal Market

This is going to be one of our priorities in 2016. The procedure has not yet started. Thankfully our relationship with the DG "GROW" Unit responsible for it are excellent!

This is in brief, dear friends, a short report of our work since I have taken the responsibility to chair CEPLIS and at the same time a number of proposals for fields to work during the coming year. As every year, obviously, we are open to your suggestions, remarks and observations. The priorities of CEPLIS are the priorities of its members.

Thank you all very much for your support to our work!

Rudi Kolbe
President