

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS (CEPLIS) ON THE CONSULTATION ON THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP 2020 ACTION PLAN LAUNCHED BY THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL ENTREPRISE AND INDUSTRY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Council of the Liberal Professions (CEPLIS) is the inter-professional organisation bringing together the liberal professions at Community level. Its members are inter-professional federations of professional bodies in individual EU Member States and mono-professional organisations representing professional associations and regulators at EU level. CEPLIS does not represent individual practitioners. It is their professional or regulatory bodies that are members of, or are associated with, CEPLIS.

These bodies include the inter-professional federations of France (UNAPL), the UK (UKIPG), Spain (UP), Italy (Confprofessioni), Ireland (IIPA), Belgium (UNPLIB), Romania (UPLR), Malta (MFPA), etc, who have within their membership the national organisations of most of the professions; as well as the organisations representing at the European level the professions of Surveyor (CLGE), Engineer (ECEC & FEANI), Nurse (FEPI), Psychologist (EFPA), Notary (FANE), Osteopath (FEO), Experts in Laboratory Medicine (EFLM/EC4), Automobile Experts (FIEA) etc. At the same time, many national or oversight regulatory bodies of our professions, such as those of the Italian Physicians and Dentists (FNOMCeO), the French Radiologists (FNMR), or the Italian Industrial Experts (Consiglio Nazionale dei Periti), participate in the activities of CEPLIS, as correspondent organisations.

Counting some four million European citizens amongst their members, the professions represented within CEPLIS act as employers to millions of persons across the EU and contribute substantially to the realisations of the Lisbon goals aiming at making the Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

CEPLIS salutes the initiative of the European Commission to launch a public consultation ahead of an Action Plan aiming at improving Entrepreneurship at the European level. Our organisation believes that the questions asked by the consultation document are very relevant and pertinent for identifying ways to promote entrepreneurship. The sector of the Liberal Professions is very interested in this initiative. A great number of professionals are in fact exercising jointly with colleagues coming from the same or similar disciplines and with other collaborators, in forms quite resembling those of regular Small or Very Small Businesses. At the same time, many a liberal professional collaborating with European businesses are the more and more often called to accompany these businesses abroad in the context of the internationalisation of European entrepreneurship, a movement highly encouraged by the European Commission.

As legitimate stakeholders of every current and future policy of the European Union relating to entrepreneurship, our professions feel that the European Commission should take into consideration, when drafting these policies, the special risk that liberal professional entrepreneurs take - a risk not relevant to SMEs - because of the professionals' direct and total liability, as well as other issues such as the tax status of the professions. European policies promoting entrepreneurship should not ignore that liberal professions are exposed to a triple control: civil, penal, and deontological – under the codes of conduct of their regulatory bodies, and are characterized by independence of professional decision making and action. It is also interesting to note that many liberal professionals begin their professional life as “micro” entrepreneurs (less than 10 employers, very small initial budget). Special administrative provisions should be design in order to facilitate the launching and sustainability of their businesses.

In the past CEPLIS has several times called upon the European Commission to address the specific issues created by these specificities in order to further encourage the creation of liberal professional SMEs (see <http://www.ceplis.org/en/positions.php> position on COM 2008 -394). We take this opportunity to renew this call. Our professional organisations wish to put their resources and knowledge at the disposal of the European Commission, especially in the context of its efforts to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship through education, but also towards working together in favour of less burdens and better conditions of work for liberal professional entrepreneurs.