



European Council of the Liberal Professions

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President's Speech

Dear Friends,

Before beginning our statutory works, allow me to pass the floor to our kind host, the Honourable Mr. Fidanza, MEP and member of the IMCO Committee of this House, who is kindly hosting us today in these prestigious premises.

Thank you, Honorevole, for your good wishes and hospitality in this emblematic site of our European democracy. Do count on us to feed back to you and to your colleagues on all issues relevant to our professional exercise within the Single Market and of course on all issues that impact our precious relationship with our patients and clients, the citizens of the EU.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

First of all, allow me to express my emotion and joy to chair this first General Assembly meeting of the new mandate. I am very happy to see you all here today and I take this opportunity to thank you once more for the confidence you have put in me and in my organisation, “Confprofessioni” to lead our common effort for a Europe of the Liberal Professions during the coming three years.

As you all remember, our elections were held at the very end of this last Spring and our Board held its first meeting in Milano, Italy, the 2nd of July. At the occasion of this meeting I have proposed to my colleagues of the Board a number of priorities, not only for the six months to come but for the whole period of our mandate. These priorities, which were of course enriched with the feedback of our Board members, I shall present you today, asking kindly for your own sincere contribution as persons and as professional bodies, both to their finalisation and to their realisation.

Before speaking of priorities however, I would like to quickly report on our activities of the past months, which despite of the Summer break and the usual slowing down of EU activities has been for us quite fruitful.

First of all, we have used the occasion of the EP and of our own elections as a very good opportunity to launch a broad action of communication addressed to the members of this House. Our objective was of course to share with a very large number of MEPs who were returning or arriving for the first time in Brussels and Strasbourg, our Manifesto and the booklet on our common ethical principles, along with our congratulations for their election and with the news on CEPLIS' Presidency and Board. The reaction was particularly positive. Old friends, like the Honourable Otmar Karas, MEP, who is now one of the Vice-presidents of this House, have come back to us pledging their availability and wish to support our socio-economic category. New friends, like the Honourable Fidanza who have just spoken to us, manifested their interest in our positions.

The idea of having an informal group of MEPs who understand our professions' role as factors of growth and major source of employment, is growing. Obviously, such an informal group should be composed of MEPs coming from all EU Member States and belonging in all political groups within the EP, with the exception of the extremists from both sides. Your help is crucial. It is enough to just suggest one of your national MEPs and we can arrange a common visit, in order to present both your profession's or your country's issues and those of all of us. Such an informal group could be a powerful tool for our causes, especially during this period when the Parliament's position amongst the institutions of the EU is stronger than ever, as was proven by the future Commissioners' hearings. I am sure I can count on all of you for that.

Our communication action was of course extended to the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee. Those of you who were present at the "Day of the Liberal Professions" yesterday have observed with their own eyes the excellent level of our relations with the EESC. With the great support from our good colleague and President of Honour, Mr. Rudolf Kolbe, who is representing in our Assembly the Austrian federation of the liberal professions (BUKO) and with the help of our Vice-president, Mr. Benjamin Rizzo, from the Maltese MFPA, CEPLIS was able to contribute significantly to the success of the event and to the debate regarding the future of our sector. Our First Vice-president, Professor Dr. Victoria Ortega and I, who were the main speakers from CEPLIS, had the chance to interact and exchange with many colleagues in the Committee and my feeling is that the Day have not only advanced our understanding of the opportunities and dangers new technologies represent for our category but has also enhanced the visibility of CEPLIS and the understanding of the good work our federation of the professions at the EU can do for all!

We have obviously exchanged letters with our friends at the European Commission as well, who were very eager to meet us and continue our excellent collaboration. As you know, the new Commission's beginning was postponed for the first of December and the repartition of tasks between the Commissioners let us believe that there is going to be a restructuring of the DGs, as was the case five years ago. We shall of course monitor this very closely, I know we can count on our Director for this, his relationship with the Commission's officers has always served us very well.

Last but not least, at the level of the European Council, I am glad to inform you that the initiative taken by my organisation, Confprofessioni, to establish a strong contact with each rotating Presidency is going to continue. Arrangements have already been made for our visit in Finland, the country that currently holds this post and we hope that we'll be able to also meet there the representatives of many of our Finnish colleagues and establish synergies with them.

Remaining on the field of our communications and public actions, I am pleased to say that since some days now, CEPLIS has a brand new website, more user-friendly and attractive to the eye than the past one. Confprofessioni has contributed to this successful operation and you will allow me to thank our Italian colleagues for their generosity and time. We hope that the new website will further raise our visibility and serve as a useful tool to promote our messages.

At the level of our work on ethics, I was informed that our Director General, Professor Koutroubas, along with Vice-president Rizzo and Professor Dr. Benoît Rihoux from the University of Louvain are working towards setting up a course on leadership in professional and corporal ethics, with the collaboration of the University of Malta. Benny and Theo have visited the Vice-Rector in Valetta some weeks ago and if all goes well as we hope the first pilot program will begin this coming Spring. We shall of course keep you posted.

At the level of monitoring EU legislation relevant to our sector, I am happy to inform you that CEPLIS was able to help our Belgian colleagues of UNPLIB with regards to the implementation of the “Proportionality” government in their country. Our Director has met with the Belgian authorities here in Brussels along with UNPLIB’s Presidency and the outcome was a very fruitful one. Perhaps our Board member and President of UNPLIB, Mr. Bernard Jacquemin, will wish to take the floor at the end of this speech in order to give you more detailed information on this. Obviously, CEPLIS’ Secretariat and Theo is at the disposal of all our membership and we shall be glad to offer the same assistance to any of you who needs it.

Good work was done at the level of the World Union of the Professions, efficiently and productively chaired by our good colleague, Maître Eric Thiry. I have assisted personally in their works in Casablanca some weeks ago and I am more than persuaded of the Body’s pertinence for all of us. CEPLIS has every interest to keep in touch with the professional organisations overseas and this is also understood from their side. The request of the Moroccan professional association to become our observer member, which we shall examine in another point of the agenda, is a proof that our colleagues from overseas understand the importance of Europe from them too.

All these were important tasks but we have not neglected our work on EU funded projects for them. CEPLIS is now a partner of a good project proposal relating to the healthcare professions, we have submitted it last month and are waiting for results. Our project on the sustainability of the social dialogue, is now reaching its last stage. We are very satisfied with the results and we are expecting to see many of you the 4th of December here in Brussels.

Finally, with the amendments of the statutes unanimously proposed to you by the Board, on which we are going to vote today, arrives to a close the work for the revision of our “constitution”. It was a difficult work and - naturally - an introspective one. I am very glad it is finished and we can dedicate the time and energy to the reasons our organisation exists for. A final word on the subject, one of the amendments to the statutes provides that the fees of membership in CEPLIS are decided by the Board on the basis of objective criteria. We are currently working on the definition of these criteria and we shall come back to you with a proposal of revision of fees for the 2021 exercise.

As you have seen the Sumer months were far from being idle for us. The Telegram has, as usual, kept you posted on our activities and this is an opportunity to thank our Secretariat and our Director for the good work.

I understand the priorities for the following years have been already distributed to you by mail and on paper. Thank you for your attention to this first report of the Presidency. The discussion is now open.