



European Council of the Liberal Professions

Coudenberg 70

1000 Brussels

Belgium

Tél.: + 32 2 511 44 39

ceplis@scarlet.be

<http://www.ceplis.org>



Brussels, The 8th of March 2022

Declaration of CEPLIS in the context of the International Women's Day

Today, the 8th of March, International Women's Day, CEPLIS' members unite to express their support to our female colleagues who work every day with devotion, passion and enthusiasm in Europe and in the world for the betterment of the like of their fellow-citizens.

Our first thoughts go to the thousands and thousands of refugees fleeing from the war in Ukraine, mostly women and children, including many girls. We hope that they can go back to their homes soon. The International Women's Day is an important occasion to highlight our obligation to welcome them as they deserve it.

CEPLIS has a longtime commitment to pursuing the objectives of gender equality and the promotion of equal treatment between men and women, especially on issues touching our professions and our clients and patients, such as the pay gap, violence against women, vocational education and professional ethics.

As in previous year, CEPLIS and its members align themselves with the UN motto of this International Women's Day: "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". The liberal professions are key actors to guarantee the sustainability of our societies, and this must be carried out in equality. For this, it is necessary to introduce the gender perspective in a transversal way in the professional environment, which requires training and commitment to the promotion of equality from the professions.

NextGenerationEU demonstrates that gender equality is a key issue at European level and that the EU institutions must invest in empowering women participation. Europe needs a wider range of mentoring programmes - such as YesWePlan – Erasmus+. At the international level, the UN Agenda 2030 addresses the issue of women's empowerment and gender equality by including it in Goal 5.

The problem of access to professions has being raised in the field of the liberal professions. Significant differences between the various professional categories remains. Measures to enforce equal market access for women entrepreneurs (e.g. raising the awareness of equality aspects in public procurement procedures) are needed. There is still a gap on three aspects:

- **Equality of revenue, CEPLIS calls for an equal pay for an equal work. There are currently pay gaps even between professionals that are at the same level.**
- **Equality of roles, in the sense of tasks, functions, activities carried out by the professional. We call for campaigns to identify new prospects beyond traditional career choices to strengthen girls/women by the use of role models**
- **Equality in representation, within institutional bodies and/or in the respective representative associations.**

Moreover female professionals, like other women in the labour market, have more discontinuous careers and lower incomes on average, as well as reduced opportunities to reach leading positions.

The discontinuity in professional career progression, with negative consequences in terms of wage, career advancement, and social security contributions is clearly asymmetrical and unbalanced towards women, with slight sharing between other family members in the management of work and care time. Moreover, the lack of an adequate welfare system to support the family is a further cause of women's early departure from the world of work.

Unfortunately, the drop-out rate of women in the liberal professions remains quite high and the rate of interruption of the 'career' occurs at the time of the creation of a family with the birth of children, or around the age of 40/50, because of the difficulties in balancing work and private life, and often because of the need to care for the elderly. Sometimes, female practitioners choose not to have children, renouncing motherhood, in order not to create a conflict between continuity and professional growth and family life.

CEPLIS asks the EU ensure that Member States do provide family-friendly measures and working flexibility (in all sectors, be it public or private) to make possible that working mothers can continue practicing their profession.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted gender vulnerability, from health to economics, from safety to social protection; the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have also disproportionately affected women and professionals, increasing the vulnerability and precariousness of women's participation in the labour market.

Many professionals, during the pandemic, had to reinvent their way of working (loss of all boundaries between domestic and extra-domestic environment, aggravation of complexities for those who had to combine family and professional commitments, for example when schools were closed down) , today practices "invented" at that time could lead to reconsidering the way of living one's professional life and, for those who can, to reconsider their relationship with their environment.

This 8 March is therefore the best opportunity to celebrate the contribution made in Europe by the female component of the liberal professions, but above all to reflect on these objectives together, from a constructive and innovative perspective, capable of being a guide and a stimulus for change.