

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am once again very happy and proud to present you the outcome of the activities of our organisation during the year that passed since we have adopted our 2017 priorities in the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels.

As you remember, our decision then was to maintain the three main axes of work adopted back in 2016, adding the necessity to monitor the still ongoing negotiations for the end of UK's EU membership and the current refugee crisis

The First of these axes was **the Strengthening of the Core Values of our Professions**. Last years' November General Assembly meeting was the first time we have presented you with the booklet dedicated to our common values in several EU languages, an elegant publication realised thanks to the joint efforts of our Maltese Member, the MFPA, the government of the Republic of Malta and of course our own Secretariat in Brussels.

Today I can proudly report that we have lost no chance and no time since that day to raise awareness on our Core Common Principles amongst decision-makers, EU civil servants and representatives of other socio-economic categories. Obviously our booklet was sent to all our contact persons within the EU institutions and organs, it was widely distributed amongst our membership and it was presented as our "carte de visite" every time we were establishing a new connection in the context of our networking. The extraordinary meetings of the European Economic and Social Committee's Group III dedicated to our professional category in Brussels and in Malta, gave us another opportunity to insist on the indivisible link between the exercise of our professions and these principles. Group III's third extraordinary meeting on our sector, which will be held here in the city of Rome tomorrow, will most certainly be another such opportunity and we shall make sure that the Manifesto of the Liberal Professions that is going to be debated there, will include a strong reference to these values.

At the same time, our efforts to set up a Centre of Excellence for professional Ethics in Malta are continuing, with the latter having held its first meeting of experts in Malta a few days ago on the issue: "Professional Ethics: A Hub in Europe. The Services of the Professional in the Future".

It is worth mentioning here that our Centre has contacted the Universities who were granted the tender launched by the European Commission during Christmas holidays last year, with regards to a study on the link between regulations and the quality of services offered by our professions. We have offered to assist them in their task with information and data. Their fail to answer is yet another proof of the need of a truly academic and independent Centre of Study of Professional Ethics!

Focusing on Networking and Public Affairs was our Second axe of work.

In this field dear Friends even the most humble and modest of Presidents would have been in difficulty to conceal his satisfaction for the work accomplished: From a period of difficult relationship with the EESC we have passed to a stage where all the extraordinary meetings of Group III are strongly reminding those of our Executive

Board, or of our GAM, with CEPLIS members in all panels and CEPLIS-born ideas in all documents. From a period of unfruitful efforts to establish a link with an EP Group, we have passed to the stage where the breakfast discussion we have hosted in the Parliament in order to debate the European Commission's Package on Services and more specifically the "Proportionality" Directive Proposal", was one of the best attended among such events this year by stakeholders and MEPs. In the light of this success our friends in the EP have already come to us to discuss another CEPLIS hosted event of similar nature for 2018 and our Secretariat is of course following this closely.

Through our dear Colleague Ms Helga Pizzutto, we were finally able to establish a link between our sector and the bodies representing the consumers of our services, our clients and patients. At the same time our good relationship with our strategic partner Eurocadres was strengthened this year with the adoption of a common statement about the Commission's Package on Services and the presence of a member of our Board, our Colleague Michael Van Gompel, as speaker in their Congress.

At the level of the European Commission our relations were always optimal, mainly thanks to the good networking of our Secretariat and so they have remained. Our Director General, Professor Koutroubas, had several meetings with Commission officials through the year and was there to represent us actively in all Commission organised events. I hear that his work is not yet done for 2017, since he has yet another appointment with DG Growth's Ms Sophie Weissewange in some days, to discuss the progress of the implementation of the Mutual Recognition Directive and other issues of concern. Finally, as every year since 2015, we were invited and have participated in the EU SME Summits held under the auspices of the rotating EU Council Presidencies.

The last, but not the least in importance of our axes of work was the one concerning **Monitoring the ongoing European Legislative Processes- Trends with an impact to our Sector.**

You all know it, the European Commission's Package of Measures on Services was this year's big issue and will of course keep us busy in the year to come. As soon as the Commission made public its plans, we have adopted a first statement which was communicated to stakeholders and decision-makers alike. The Commission's answer to that Statement was quite positive. In parallel we have set up a working group, under the leadership of our First Vice-president, Mr Gaetano Stella, with the task to prepare a more elaborate position of CEPLIS. The Working Group incorporated the feedback received by many of you and presented a good draft to our General Assembly at its Summer meeting in Malta. There, our position was adopted, along with a Joint Statement with our strategic partner Eurocadres. This position was again broadly distributed and presented by Vice-president Stella at our Breakfast event in the EP. Many have sided with us at this occasion, including the Parliament's rapporteur MEP Mr Swab, who echoed most of our points and I wish to thank our friend Gaetano for his good work in holding CEPLIS banner there. Our Secretariat is obviously monitoring the evolutions regarding this and is keeping us informed through special mailings or through our "telegram".

Vice-president Simone Zerah's working group on CTFs and the monitoring of the Mutual Recognition Directive is continuing its works with success and I am glad to observe that several of our members are interested in its debates and are learning a lot from it. Our Board member, Dr. Tricot has assured me in writing some days ago that 2018 will see a lot more of activity from his part and the revival of our Working Group on the issues relating to the professions of healthcare. As every year, the "Telegram" and our tweeter and facebook accounts are keeping us constantly updated on all EU or national evolutions regarding us and I want to thank the Director and his team for that. We have as you know a small team working in our premises, apart from Professor Koutroubas the other persons are constantly changing, but I am happy to observe that there is no change in the excellent quality of the outcomes produced. Remember that your feedback is constantly necessary for their work.

Brexit was monitored through the "Telegram" and the news kindly provided from our good colleagues of the UKIPG, who is now called "Professionals Together". Our colleague John Fish, who has recently participated in Brussels in a meeting of the Lawyers on the subject, has proposed, on behalf of IIPA, to establish a CEPLIS Working Group with the task to monitor Brexit's final year of negotiations. A Statement drafted by this Group and sent in the name of CEPLIS, could remind the negotiators that issues such as the mutual recognition of qualifications are of first concern for the professionals and some kind of (probably informal) consultation with our representative organisations would be greatly appreciated. I support this idea.

As regards the **Refugee Crisis**, you all remember that I have asked every one of our members who is faced with particular issues stemming from it, to approach us and discuss the optimal ways we could be of help.

In conclusion dear Friends and Colleagues, I would like to thank all of you for the support you have given us all through this very active year and to propose to maintain the three axes of priorities of our work during 2018, enriched with the comments you would like to make following this report.

I can't conclude without reminding you, as I have already done in the past, that the enemy of good is "better"! This was a very good year! Please help us to make the coming one a better one!