



European Council of the Liberal Professions

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Dear Friends,

The year that is almost behind us was one of intense activity for CEPLIS. I am pleased to be able to report to you today that we have made good progress on all fields that you have suggested last year as core priorities for our organisation.

As you remember, at the beginning of 2016 we had identified three main axes of work :

Strengthening the Core Values of the Liberal Professions

Focusing on Networking and Public Affairs

and Monitoring the ongoing European legislative processes - trends with an impact on the Liberal Professions.

The booklet that you have in your hands, fruit of the tireless efforts of our colleagues of the Malta Federation of Professional Associations and their active President, Mr. Benjamin Rizzo, whom I would like to thank here from the heart, is going to become an efficient and elegant facilitator of our aim to **raise awareness on our "Common Values"** I believe you are all informed on the modalities as per its distribution amongst our membership. Do share it with your own member associations and the representative bodies of stakeholders in your countries.

Our values are the most precious component of our identity as liberal professionals. They must become our flag. The Board has already decided on a plan for the distribution of this beautiful booklet amongst our interlocutors within the EU institutions and our other partners during 2017. Undoubtedly, this exercise will also help advancing our networking objectives.

Again thanks to the efforts of our Maltese colleagues, who's country will hold the rotating Presidency of the **EU Council** as of this coming January, the programme of the Council is going to put emphasis on ethics in the field of education and training, including CPD. Several events are scheduled to be held with our contribution, but for this I shall give the floor to Benny after the end this report.

The project on the **Malta Centre of Excellence on Professional Ethics** was completed and submitted to the European Commission for financing in the context of Horizon 2020 a few days ago. It took a lot of effort and I would like from here to thank the team that worked on it: Professors Rihoux, Lobe and De Luca, Benny, Helga Pizzuto and our Director General, Professor Koutroubas. We are hopeful for the results.

These activities have not of course prevented us from working in order to broaden our network and the visit I have paid to the Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Bienkowska, accompanied by our Director, is just one of the proofs.

We can of course always do better and this is why I propose to maintain **Networking** in our list of priorities. I am however very pleased to report to you today that the period of difficulty that we have experienced in our relationship with the **European Economic and Social Committee** belongs definitively to the past. In a few days, thanks to a proposal made by our friend Benny and by me, the Presidents of Confprofessioni, UP and UNAPL, along with Prof. Koutroubas, will join a small think tank group aiming at preparing a special EESC event on the Liberal Professions early next year. It goes without saying that the event will be inclusive of all our members. As you see there is a lot of progress realised on this field and I am there personally to warrantee, with Benny's help and the feedback from all of you, that the Committee will continue to be a bearer of our voice and a privileged ally in the important debates to come, notably the one relating to our regulations.

At the level of our relationship with the Commission, today's agenda of the Permanent Committee meeting that my friend Gaetano will chair, speaks by itself. Many of our members are benefiting from our contacts for their own lobbying activities. I am thinking, for example of our Chambers of Engineers, the ECEC, to whom we gave a hand in order to obtain what turned out as a very successful EU-funded project; our Tourist Guides, the voice of whom we are trying to bring in all forums where their specificity is discussed; Our Romanian colleagues, whom we are always assisting with pleasure in organizing the European part of their annual national event; Our Italian colleagues whom we support, as we should, every time they wish to introduce an EU multiplier in their project proposals; Or our colleagues interested in CTFs for whom we are working with great enthusiasm. I am happy to observe that we are able to deliver at every request.

Our Secretariat is doing its best to keep us connected with the other **stakeholders of our sector**, such as our friends from Eurocadres. Our good relation with the EP is evident by the premises we are in today, but it can become even better if you could suggest one MEP you are close to, in order for us to organise an informative visit together and broaden the net.

Being your observatory in Brussels, we are actively **monitoring all evolutions concerning our sector**. We are of course trying to constantly keeping you updated through our bimonthly Telegram and our team at the Secretariat is actively present in all seminars, conferences and other fora where such evolutions are being discussed. Our speakers of this afternoon will update you thoroughly on some of them. I strongly encourage you to ask questions and share with them your observations.

We know now that there is not going to be a revision of **the Directive on Services in the Internal Market**. The introduction of the Services Passport however and the revival of the discussion on whether our regulations are obstacles to the completion of the Single Market, must keep us up awoken and ready to act. Allow me to come back to the issue of our regulations. An internal European Commission document I have in my hands seems to announce a return of the old "full deregulation" mentality. We all remember the unacceptable reports used at the time of Commissioner Monti to justify proposals completely disregarding quality requirements and citizen-patients-clients' rights. We must be united to act efficiently and I promise you CEPLIS will be at the front of our common efforts.

Thanks to the good work of our Spanish colleagues we have been kept informed on **TTIP**. It seems that given the results of the recent elections in the USA the possibility of a Treaty is becoming rather weak. CETA on the other hand was duly signed by all partners despite some last minutes hesitations and it would be very interesting for all to proceed to an analysis of the opportunities and points to watch out that this Treaty holds for our sector. I am sure our TTIP working group can brilliantly take this charge.

Simone Zerah, our Vice-president from the European Specialists in Laboratory Medicine, has done a great job as Chair of the Working Group on the **implementation of the Mutual Recognition Directive**, especially on CTFs. We hope the Group members will fruitfully interact with our guests from DG GROW this afternoon. Our new member of the Board, Dr. Tricot, will animate and chair our Working Group on Health Professions and I look forward for positive result to report in Malta this coming June.

We are all aware dear friends of the challenge the current **refugee crisis** represent for our societies and our professions in particular. We are also all saddened by the decision of the majority of the people of the **United Kingdom to leave the European Union** in the coming years. And I would like to salute here our colleague Alistair Orr, President of UKIPG, who has made known his support for the EU and the continuation of the collaboration between our professions from both sides of the Channel. Alistair, you will be always very welcome here! The Board feels that monitoring the evolution of these two situations must become one of our priorities for 2017.

I thus propose to maintain our previous priorities, updated in the spirit of this report, adding the two issues I have just mentioned. We are of course open to all other suggestions coming from your side and I kindly ask you to share them with me now that I'll open the floor. My colleagues in the Board, our Director General and our staff are always open to your suggestions and concerns. I thank them all from the heart for their good work and I thank very much indeed all of you for your active participation in our works and your care for the future of our professions.

Rudi Kolbe
President of CEPLIS