

CEPLIS TELEGRAM



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The European Day of Liberal Professions 2024: Addressing Water Sustainability Challenges

On the 7th of May, in Brussels, professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders gathered at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), for the 8th Edition of the European Day OF Liberal Professions. The event, chaired by **Mr. Rudolf Kolbe**, Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group and President of Honor of CEPLIS, provided a platform to address the pressing issue of water sustainability.

The Day's discussions, guided by moderated panel sessions, focused on the challenges posed by water scarcity, flooding, and drought. Experts highlighted the cross-sector approach advocated by the EU Blue Deal to tackle these threats effectively. **Keynote speakers Klaus Thürried** President of the European Council of Engineers Chamber, and **Pietro Francesco De Lotto (EESC)** offered insights into the contributions of liberal professions towards a water-smart society and innovative technologies to combat climate change water threats.



Fron left to right: Alexandre de Blauwe (CEPLIS), Ben Rizzo (CEPLIS Vice-President, MFPA), Anna Di Dominicantonio (Confprofessioni), Theodoros Koutroubas (CEPLIS), Klaus Thürriedl (ECEC), Bernard Jacquemin (UNPLIB), Elena Cordoba (UP), Carlos Magdalena Gonzalez (UP)

The emphasis remained on interdisciplinary collaboration and the exploration of practical solutions. Panellists, among them our colleague **Ms Elena Cordoba** from our Spanish interprofessional member, UP, highlighted the critical role of liberal professions in offering

expertise and guidance across various sectors, from public health and spatial planning to legal and financial domains. Discussions centred on ensuring high-quality and affordable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, mitigating risks associated with climate change, and safeguarding water and energy security through sustainable water management practices. As the conference came to an end, Rudolf Kolbe reiterated the importance of the liberal professions in shaping policies for a sustainable future.

Spitzenkandidaten – A Fragile Norm

On June 6-9, citizens of the European Union will be called to the ballot box to vote in the European Elections. Along with designating MEPs who will represent them for the next five years, voters are also supposed to designate indirectly the next President of the European Commission. Named ‘Spitzenkandidaten’, the procedure is designed to increase the politisation and interest around the European elections. **In practice, political groups in the Parliament designate a lead candidate who will represent the group for the campaign and become, if their group finishes first, handpicked by the European Council to become Commission President.** The issue is that while the idea has some traction in the European Parliament, political reluctance from Member States limits its application.

Back in 2014, Member States and MEPs, who wished to find ways to attract more voters to the ballot box initially followed the procedure. After negotiations, the EPP Spitzenkandidat Jean Claude Juncker became President of the European Commission. At that time, the shared view was that, by rooting the leadership of the Commission in election results, this measure increased its legitimacy and offered an answer to critics pointing out the technocratic aspect of the institution.

However, the Spitzkandidaten procedure, which was slowly becoming a norm at the EU level, was bypassed by Member States in 2019.

While then-EPP chief candidate Manfred Weber was supposed to be picked by the European Council, pressures from countries, such as France, resulted in the nomination of



President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen (EPP)

Ursula von der Leyen, EPP MEP and former German defence minister.

As the 2024 European Elections approach, the questions as to whether the Spitzkandidaten procedure will be applied remain open. Designed as a tool to reinforce the attractiveness of European democracy, its absence in the Treaties enables Member States to circumvent it if they feel uncomfortable with the result of the elections. Additionally, low turnout and the centrality of national debates in election campaigns limit the possibility for political groups to mediatise their lead candidate and impose them on the European Council.

While political groups have chosen Spitzenkandidaten for this election, the nomination of one of them as the head of the European Commission is not certain. If Ursula von der Leyen, Spitzkandidaten for the EPP, is rumoured to be the prime candidate for the moment, other names, such as Mario Draghi, have been floated around by Member States like France. Tough negotiations are ahead.

The Belgian-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce (CCBP) Celebrates World Portuguese Language Day: Addressing Challenges in Liberal Professions

On May 8th, the Belgian-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce (CCBP) celebrated World Portuguese Language Day with an event dedicated to our professions. **“Liberal Professions in Portuguese – Same Language, Different Challenges”** was held at the Embassy of Portugal in Belgium and via Zoom, bringing together members and associates of the CCBP. CEPLIS Director-General, **Professor Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas** addressed the event as a keynote speaker.



World Portuguese Language Day, recognised by UNESCO, celebrates the cultural and linguistic heritage of Portuguese, spoken by over 260 million people globally. The CCBP event explored the intricacies of liberal professions within the Portuguese-speaking community, acknowledging how a shared language can both unite professionals and present unique regional hurdles.

With support from the Directorate-General for Consular Affairs and Portuguese Communities of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, participants shared ideas on succeeding in professional environments in Portuguese-speaking countries. The event underscored the importance of the Portuguese language in facilitating professional collaboration and cultural exchange. The speakers emphasized the Portuguese language's role in fostering global professional connections while addressing distinct challenges encountered by liberal professions in diverse regions of the world.

At the end of the event, an interesting proposal came up from the very active President of CEPLIS' Portuguese interprofessional member ANPL, Mr Orlando Monteiro da Silva: Setting up a forum of Portuguese-speaking liberal professions. CEPLIS is naturally rejoicing at this perspective.



Mr Orlando Monteiro da Silva, President of ANPL

International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia – CEPLIS stand firmly for Equality

On May 17th, the World commemorates the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOTB). On this occasion, CEPLIS reaffirm its attachment to the principles of inclusivity, equality, and respect within our professions and in our societies.

At this occasion, **Mr Josep Borell**, High Representative declared

“Equality, freedom and justice must apply to everyone regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Liberal professions in the EU, encompassing various sectors of the economy, hold significant influence in shaping societal attitudes and policies. As such, they are uniquely positioned to champion the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and combat discrimination.

One of the common values of liberal professions is a commitment to ethical standards and human rights. Ensuring that LGBTQ+ clients, patients, and colleagues are treated with dignity and respect is not only a moral imperative but also a professional one. Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity contradicts the fundamental principles of justice and equality that underpin these professions.



European Elections – Use your Vote !

On 6 – 9 June, citizens across the Union will be called to the ballot box to elect their representative to the European Parliament. On this occasion, CEPLIS encourages all professionals across the European Union to exercise their rights and voice their beliefs.

The Union is at a crossroads. Facing several crises, such as economic competition from China and the US war in Ukraine, or labour shortages, the MEPs

who are going to serve during the next

five years will be called on to make crucial choices about our common future. As a unique and significant socio-economic category, liberal professions will play a key role in implementing the policies decided at the EU level. **As such, the result of the coming elections will affect your activity.**

As citizens, you hold the key to the future of the European Union. So on June 6 to 9, use your vote!

