

CEPLIS TELEGRAM



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**Pages:6.
N°6/24**

- **The European Council and Parliament Strike a Deal to Expand the Use of Digital Tools in EU Company Law**
- **The European Commission Sets Out Actions to Tackle Labor and Skills Shortages**
- **Automatic Cross-Border Recognition and Access for Five Million Health Professionals**
- **European Commission Business Bridge Project – Supporting Ukrainian SMEs**

News from our Members:

- **Meeting on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion with Apriformazione from Confprofessioni**

Council and Parliament Strike a Deal to Expand the Use of Digital Tools in EU Company Law

The Council and the European Parliament reached on March 20th a provisional deal on the amending **Directive to further expand and upgrade the use of digital tools and processes in company law**. The new rules will make companies' data more easily available, enhance trust and transparency in companies across member states, create more connected public administrations and reduce red tape for companies and other stakeholders in cross-border situations. It will thereby contribute to a more integrated and digitalised single market for companies.

Paul Van Tigchelt, Belgian deputy prime minister and minister of Justice and the North Sea declared:

“The digital transformation should reach all areas of economic activity. In company law, digital solutions will dramatically cut red tape and help companies to focus more on their core business and less on their paperwork.”



The proposal is intended to ensure that company data in business registers is accurate, reliable, and up to date by making publicly available more information about companies at the EU level through the Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS). The proposal also aims to cut red tape when companies use company information from business registers in cross-border situations. For instance, the proposal removes formalities such as the need for an apostille on company documents through a common digital template (the Digital EU Power of Attorney) and encourages the use of the “once-only principle” when companies set up subsidiaries and branches in another member state. It also introduces a multilingual EU company certificate to be used in cross-border situations.

The provisional agreement reached today between the two co-legislators shares the main objectives of the proposal but introduces some improvements to simplify certain procedures and reduce the administrative burden for companies and national authorities. It also enables the disclosure of the details of limited partners through the system of interconnection of registers (BRIS) when they are already publicly available at the national level. Co-legislators have also agreed that certain types of companies, such as partnerships or limited liability companies, can obtain their **EU Company Certificate** in electronic form free of charge unless this causes serious prejudice to the financing of the national register, in which case the price cannot exceed the administrative costs.

The agreement introduces a revision clause to consider the possibility of including cooperatives **in the Company Law Directive in the future.**

While the text is yet to be formally adopted by European institutions, it would represent an additional step toward the integration of new technologies in the daily activities of professionals and constitutes an opportunity for liberal professions and SMEs to further improve the quality of service and advice delivered by focusing on strategic tasks.

The European Commission Sets Out Actions to Tackle Labor and Skills Shortages

As previous Telegrams have mentioned, the EU is facing increasing labour and skills shortages. To remedy this situation, the European Commission unveiled an action plan to tackle this issue. Taking a multi-level approach with Member States and social partners, the Commission aims to provoke a long-term amelioration of the labour market.

Part of a broader plan to boost the competitiveness and economic growth of the EU, the plan builds on several policies and funding sources already in place, such as the pact for skills, which has already provided training to 3.5 million individuals. In line with the targets endorsed at the Porto Social Summit of May 2021, which set out long-term social targets, the proposed action plan is a direct result of the Val-Duchesse Social Partners Summit of January 2024 and its debates and proposals¹.

The current draft highlights five areas of action on which political action must be taken, at the European, national, and social partner's levels, which are the inclusion of underrepresented categories in the labour market, support for skill training, the improvement of working conditions where necessary, the improvement of intra-EU mobility of workers and learners, as well as attracting talent from outside the Union. By focusing on those areas, the Commission aims to address the quality of jobs in several sectors, attract a sufficiently large pool of workers, and enable sustainable economic growth.

To implement its goals, the European Commission will take planning actions and will fund several projects to promote employment and upskilling of workers. Moreover, it will establish partnerships within and outside the EU to enhance the mobility of workers.

In parallel, the Commission advises Member States to facilitate labour mobility, improve the training of professionals, and alter, where necessary, the tax burden on low-paying jobs.

In line with previous discussions, social partners plan to use collective bargaining to address the issues of working conditions, especially for third-country nationals; support apprenticeship and education where skills shortages are the most acute; and discuss proposals to adapt the economy to digital transformation.



¹ You may find a detailed coverage of this event in our Telegram 4/24.

The European Semester will further implement this ambitious action plan, and tripartite meetings between the Commission, the Member States, and social partners will also sketch out the details.

Due to demographic changes and increased labour demand, skill shortages have significantly risen in the last decades, with almost two-thirds of SMEs facing labour shortages. By taking a holistic and cooperating approach, the Commission wishes to avoid further strains on the labour market and enable a smooth digital and environmental transition.

Automatic Cross-Border Recognition and Access for Five Million Health Professionals

On March 4th, 2024, the College of Commissioners adopted a delegated Directive updating the minimum training requirements for nurses exercising in general care, dental practitioners, and pharmacists, harmonising at the EU level the requirement to enter. This Directive, which impacts almost 5 million professionals, also introduces automatic cross-border recognition of qualifications and access to these regulated professions.



This decision, aimed to facilitate cross-border providing of services, is also a means for the European Commission to address the growing skill shortages in the healthcare sector facing several EU countries. Indeed, by granting automatic access to every EU professional compliant with the minimum training requirements, the Commission wishes to facilitate a single market of practitioners and to promote their free movement. **Given the high number of practitioners affected, this decision is susceptible to having a significant impact on healthcare across the Union, especially given the fact that the prevalence of foreign-trained practitioners is already on the rise in several EU countries.**

While the delegated Directive offers possibilities for practitioners, it will likely not solve the issue of skill shortage, as EU-wide skill shortage looms, nor will it apply to third-country trained professionals, which can represent a significant proportion in some countries.

After a two-month scrutiny period, the Delegated Directive will enter into force on the twentieth day of its publication in the EU Official Journal.

Given the importance of this legislative evolution we would be very interested in to have feedback on the views of our healthcare-related members on this article!

Business Bridge Project – Supporting Ukrainian SMEs

On March 21st, 2024, as part of its broader intention to foster the integration of Ukraine into the Single Market, the European Commission unveiled plans for a program named *Business Bridge*, aiming at financially assisting Ukrainian SMEs wishing to expand their business in the European Union.



In partnership with *Enterprise Europe Network* partner *Bayern Innovativ*, who will help implement the project, the Commission will select 1 500 Ukrainian SMEs which will be granted 2 500€ for activities of business services, such as market research, legal, organisational, or financial advice, participation in EU trade fairs, or legal guidance on intellectual property rights.

Funded under the Single Market Program, *Business Bridge* is not the first initiative assisting Ukrainian SMEs, as the *EU4Business* program, in place since 2022 and targeting third countries in Eastern Europe has provided in 2022 almost 250 million euros to more than 25 000 Ukrainian SMEs for the implementation of 42 projects aiming at supporting the Ukrainian economy.

Such action, aiming at empowering Ukrainian SMEs and its economy in general, as well as smoothening its integration into the single market, is also good news for European liberal professions. **As Ukrainian businesses expand further in the European Union, they will require the assistance of professionals in our sectors to ensure regulatory compliance, sound financial decisions, and broadly smooth functioning of their activity.**

While the Ukrainian SMEs are yet to be selected, this decision from the Commission, if not a game changer, will benefit our field of activity.

Meeting on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion with Apriformazione from Confprofessioni

On March 21st, 2024, CEPLIS had the pleasure of receiving a delegation from our Italian member Confprofessioni for a fruitful exchange on the issues inequalities and work-life balance.

Women representatives of various professions had the opportunity to exchange with CEPLIS on the challenges faced by women and minority groups. In that context, participants highlighted that the gender pay gap is still a reality in the European Union 12.7% and pointed out issues linked to continuous professional development and education as obstacles to equality.

As many highly qualified women are still discouraged from undertaking studies in several domains, participants have highlighted the need to tackle the often disregarded but core issue of discrimination through ‘gendered’ education. De facto gender equality is on the horizon, but we must all contribute to making it a reality. As such, CEPLIS joined the participants in their call for further legislative action at the European level so that all professionals can enjoy the same rights and liberty given by our society.



Participants from CEPLIS and Confprofessioni

Diversity and inclusion in our professional sector are essential to guarantee the best quality of service and advice to our patients and clients. Along with ethical and deontological standards, liberal professionals promote in their daily activities equal treatment to all members of our society. In an economy based on skills and competencies, all must understand that it makes no sense and is unproductive to keep an important part of highly capable brains out of the workforce!