

# **CEPLIS**

## **TELEGRAM**



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## Reflecting on the past and preparing the future – a report of the General Assembly Meeting

On June 3-4, CEPLIS held its first General Assembly Meeting of 2024 in Vienna. Chaired by our President Mr. Gaetano Stella, this event was the opportunity for all participants to take stock of the current situation and discuss our actions for the upcoming months.

To begin on a joyful note, all representatives met on the evening of June 3rd for a lovely friendly dinner, generously organised by our Austrian hosts BÜKO. As the sun set on Vienna, participants gathered in front of the “Blaue Donau” and engaged in lively conversation in a convivial atmosphere.

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, all participants met in the House of Engineers. After an inspiring speech from **President Stella**, in which the issues at stake for our socio-economic category in a period of rapid political evolutions and changes were discussed, participants debated on the way forward, on the basis of the Manifesto sent to all political groups of the European Parliament. Several members expressed their agreement with the president's views and their satisfaction for his vision for CEPLIS. Concerns were voiced over the ways government interact with professional bodies over regulations and deontology. Additionally, members underscored the importance of a human-centred use of new technologies such as AI.



The General Assembly Meeting was also the occasion for the Working Group on Ethics to present the updated charter on the Common Principles of Liberal Professions. As our society is evolving, new deontological and ethical challenges emerge. The revised version of the Principles must serve as our introduction to stakeholders and decision-makers, bolstering the credibility of our professional family, which is firmly committed to advancing societies and serving the citizens. The Assembly expressed gratitude to **Mr. Eric Thiry** (UNPLIB) for its leadership of the Group.

After approval of the financial report and of the discharge of the Treasurer, the Director General Pr. Koutroubas was invited to present the activities of CEPLIS since the last General Assembly Meeting held in Brussels in December 2023. It was the opportunity for our organisation to highlight several actions taken to represent the interest of professionals, such as its very active participation in the European Commission's SME Envoy Network.

**Ms. Ilaria Pantaleoni** and **Ms. Miriam Benavides**, who represented the Young Professionals Committee, gave a presentation on the challenges faced by the new generations of professionals.

To conclude the event, **Dr. Daniel Alge**, President of BUKO, gave a very engaging presentation on the future of liberal professions. He underlined their historical role in shaping our current society and the potential that professionals can play in resolving important issues faced by our societies.

As our meeting came to an end, all participants had the opportunity to share a well-deserved meal offered by our

Austrian guests. Set in the House of Engineers, this was another welcomed occasion to network and discuss exhaustively matters of common concerns.



This General Assembly Meeting was a resounding success. As we look to the future, we also reflect on the past and mourn **Mr Jerry Carroll**, who sadly passed away recently. He was a deeply appreciated representative of IIPA, a former member of our executive board, and above all a deeply appreciated man. He will be deeply missed.

## Meeting of the SME Envoys Network – a timely opportunity for the future of our professions

On the occasion of the latest meeting of the EU Network of SME Envoys, stakeholders from the European Commission, national governments, and representatives of SME organisations, met in the premises of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action in Berlin on June 13<sup>th</sup>. On the eve of a new political cycle, participants reflected on the current situation for SMEs, and on the future policies needed to create a business-friendly environment. To ensure that the priorities of our specific category continue to be taken into account, CEPLIS was represented at the event by Policy Advisor Mr. Baptiste Deprez.



**A shared priority voiced by numerous participants was the need to reduce bureaucracy and multi-level regulatory redundancies. As new digital and environmental regulations come into force, the European Commission must ensure that SMEs do not bear an excessive administrative burden, which would, as a result, hinder the competitiveness of the Single Market.**

**At the heart of the debates was also the necessity to facilitate access to funding for SMEs. While acknowledging that the Capital Market Union was high on the political agenda in Brussels, stakeholders stressed that numerous competitive SMEs chose to leave the EU because of a lack of funding. Additionally, several participants suggested that Member States should act to ensure that sufficient funds are available and targeted to SMEs.**

**To guarantee a smooth green and technological transition, participants emphasized the need to standardise training requirements in the EU, and to foster cooperation between companies and training institutions to guarantee that our economy does not suffer from highly detrimental labour shortages.**

In an era of increasing competition on the global stage, all agreed to exhort the European Commission to take all necessary actions to guarantee a level playing field for European SMEs. In particular, participants underscored the dangers posed by unfair competitive practices of companies from third countries, which threaten the very existence of European SMEs and our productive capacities.



SMEs represent over 99% of all EU companies and are critical to a thriving EU economy. With this in mind, all participants called for smart, modern, and empowering policies to unleash the full potential of SMEs and allow them to play their full part in resolving the challenges ahead of us.

As the single body representing European Liberal Professions, CEPLIS remains fully committed to supporting and proposing policies aiming at enabling professionals to focus on their core business and play their role in our society.

## European Elections: What's next?

As you all know, European citizens were called to the ballot box between June 6 and 9 to designate their representatives to the European Parliament for the next legislative term. After intense campaigning in all Member States, people have finally decided on the path they feel our Union should take for the future.

The European Elections took place at a crucial moment for our Continent: As the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly tangible, as technological and societal transformations start to have a stronger impact on our way of life, and as military and economic tensions pose a genuine threat to our prosperity, these elections came at a crossroads.

Contrary to predictions, the far-right only made marginal gains, winning less than 20 additional seats out of a total of 750. In spite of the fact that the 'National Rally' dominated the Elections in France and became the largest political party in the European Parliament, the new distribution of seats tends to indicate that not much should change in the European Parliament. **Albeit a minimal shift to the right, the EPP, the S&D, and Renew still represent a majority of MEPs. As such, they are likely to become, once again, the de facto ruling coalition.**



While the future College of Commissioners has yet to be decided by Member States and approved by the European Parliament, some information is already available to us. **As things stand, Ursula van der Leyen has been approved for another term at the head of the**

**institution by the Summit of Heads of State and Government with took place on June 27<sup>th</sup> in Brussels.**

What may change, however, is the names of the Commissioners, which we cannot reasonably **predict, and the political priorities that the new Commission will push forward in the next five years.**

It is likely that the European Commission will push for some form of industrial strategy and restrictive measures against third countries which be contravene to fair competition practices. Chinese Electric Vehicles are now significantly more taxed by the EU to compensate for unfair subsidies. Additional restrictive measures are likely to be applied to other sectors of Chinese exports as well as to certain US companies. Such actions will likely bear consequences for liberal professions, whose activities will be better protected against unfair competition.

Labour shortages loom across the European Union, and the European Commission has already taken steps to mitigate this issue. In the coming political cycle, new policies will likely be enacted to increase the number of qualified individuals. **In particular, some updates could be made to the Common Training Framework, and European Degrees could be established.** These changes will likely have a significant impact on our socio-economic category and could be beneficial for training the new generation of professionals. Additionally, while climate change is likely to be relegated to a less central role, some initiatives, notably related to energy transition or building renovation, should be expected. Such policies would also benefit us, as they would create a favourable environment to innovate and move our societies into a greener future.

On the eve of a new political cycle, several questions remain yet unanswered. Nonetheless, our Union is at a crucial moment. As challenges pile up before us, liberal professionals have a unique role to play in securing a safer, greener, and more prosperous future for all. Because of our unique capacities, we can deliver innovative solutions to a wide range of problems faced by our economy and society. CEPLIS will of course continue to promote and propose policies that provide a stable future for professionals and citizens alike, and enabling them to unleash their potential.

## Who are the two most important ladies and the gentleman that are going to lead the Union till 2029?

**Ursula von der Leyen**, who was the President of the European Commission for the past five years. Her leadership, marked by crisis management and ambitious legislative activities, has gained her the role for a second term, despite initial concerns over her centralized style and controversial decisions, such as COVID-19 vaccination-related issues.



*Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, outgoing President of the European Commission*

Ursula von der Leyen was born in Brussels, Belgium, on October 8, 1958. She is the daughter of Ernst Albrecht, a German politician, and Heidi Adele Albrecht. She studied economics and medicine, earning a medical degree. Her political career began in 2001 with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). She served as Minister of Family Affairs, Labour, and Defence before becoming the first female President of the European Commission in 2019.

**António Costa, the former Prime Minister of Portugal**, is the Head of States and Governments' choice to replace Charles Michel at the Presidency of the European Council, a crucial role especially during times of crisis. **The center-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D)**, having secured **136 seats**, have pushed for this position.



*Antonio Costa, former Prime Minister of Portugal*

Costa's tenure as Prime Minister was cut short by a scandal involving corruption allegations, which were later undermined by prosecutorial errors,

suggesting his eventual exoneration. His experience and diplomatic approach have earned him considerable respect among EU leaders.

António Costa was born in Lisbon, Portugal, on July 17, 1961. He is the son of Orlando da Costa, writer, and Maria Antónia Palla, journalist. He studied law at the University of Lisbon. His political career began in 1991 with the Socialist Party (PS). He served as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Internal Administration before becoming the Prime Minister of Portugal in 2015.

**Kaja Kallas, the Prime Minister of Estonia**, is going to become the EU's next High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. She is the second woman to access this post. Her liberal **Renew Europe group**, despite a decline in seats, was able to secure her this significant role.

Kallas is a prominent advocate for tougher sanctions against Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.



*Ms. Kaja Kallas, Prime Minister of Estonia*

**Kaja Kallas** was born in Tallinn, Estonia, on June 18, 1977. She is the daughter of **Siim Kallas**, a prominent Estonian politician. She studied law at the University of Tartu. Her political career began in 2010 with the Estonian Reform Party. She served as a Member of the European Parliament before becoming the Prime Minister of Estonia in 2021.

## **EU budget: funding Europe's 2025 priorities**

The Commission has proposed an annual EU budget of almost **€200 billion** for 2025, reinforced by **€72 billion** raised under the post-COVID recovery plan, NextGenerationEU. It is meant to finance **EU priorities** and help tackle current and future challenges. The Commission's proposal will now be discussed and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.



### What the EU budget is

The EU budget enables EU Member States to achieve more together than they could on their own, for instance by financing infrastructure projects or responding to crises. By **pooling resources**, standing together and helping all EU countries, their citizens and beyond, the EU budget **strengthens Europe's economy and geopolitical standing**.



The EU's long-term budget sets out the spending priorities and limits for several years. Each year, an annual budget is negotiated and adopted within these limits.

The EU budget is mainly financed from a proportion of each EU Member States' gross national income, customs duties on imports from outside the EU, a small part of the VAT collected by each EU country, and a contribution based on the amount of non-recycled plastic packaging waste in each EU country.

### Where the money goes

Funds from the 2025 budget will be spent where they can make the greatest difference, based on the needs of EU countries and the EU's partners worldwide. The money will foster the **green and digital transitions**, create **jobs**, finance EU support to **Ukraine**, and help address **migration** challenges and the crisis in the **Middle East**. It will also boost our capacity to respond to **natural disasters** and fund support for key **critical technologies**. In addition, the budget will fund all ongoing EU projects and policies in the areas of agriculture, regional development, research and innovation, climate action, defence, health, security, satellite infrastructure and many more.