

CEPLIS TELEGRAM

European Council of the Liberal Professions



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Press Release:

World Liberal Professions' Day 2026



At the occasion of the World Liberal Professions' Day (23rd of September), CEPLIS has communicated the following press release to EU-related media and the Institutions and Organs of the Union:

Trained to pursue excellence in disciplines they serve with enthusiasm, loyalty, and dedication, the professionals of healthcare, law, compass, and number, spend little time in the celebration of their everyday achievements.

It is often only a smile that gives away the satisfaction for a patient who's health has improved, for a decision that serves justice, for a work well done that will make life easier for many, for a solid building that will stand the trial of time, for a thoroughly researched report that advances transparency and good governance.

In many places in the world, sadly ever more each year, this smile of satisfaction comes in a context of war or conflict, of chronic injustice, of hardship and challenge. In these places, our colleagues are sometimes the only beacon of hope for those who suffer, the only living reminders of the need to base societies on Democracy, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law.

The International Day of the Liberal Professions often passes unnoticed. Our colleagues do not complain, they know that each of their everyday achievements, as small as it might be, is a positive step forward for the lives of their fellow citizens, who will celebrate that in their hearts and with those they hold dear. And this is enough.

At the occasion of this year's International Day of the Liberal Professions, CEPLIS renews solidarity with all our colleagues across the globe. Keep up the good work!

New Council of Europe recommendation places education at the heart of response to AI

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Council of Europe has adopted a recommendation to the governments of its 46 member states aimed at helping pupils, students, teachers, parents, workers and citizens of all ages to understand artificial intelligence (AI), use it responsibly and recognise where it can threaten human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Adopted by the Committee of Ministers during its meeting in Monaco this week, the recommendation places education at the centre of Europe's response to AI. It gives concrete effect to Article 20 of the Framework Convention on artificial intelligence and human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which commits states parties to promoting digital literacy and skills.

The Committee of Ministers calls on governments to promote AI literacy throughout the education system and society, ensuring that it is progressively made available to all segments of the population. It specifically calls for providing education, training and continuous professional development on AI literacy for public officials and other relevant professionals, with particular attention to education professionals.

AI is a sociotechnical phenomenon

The recommendation defines AI not simply as a technology but as a sociotechnical phenomenon: the systems themselves, as well as the people, institutions, policies, and social practices that shape how they are designed and used. AI literacy, therefore, means understanding AI's effects on society, not just knowing how the tools work.

This sets the recommendation apart from other AI-literacy frameworks, which mainly focus on technical skills and reflects the Council of Europe's long-standing conviction that education is one of the pillars of democracy.

The human dimension of AI

The recommendation offers member states a coherent framework of 22 guiding principles, organised around four themes: foundational understanding of AI; human rights and human dignity; democracy and the rule of law; and social agency and critical thinking. These rest on a three-dimensional model of AI literacy that encompasses the human, technological, and practical dimensions of AI.

Particular weight is given to the human dimension: human dignity, social agency, privacy, autonomy, equity and non-discrimination, together with AI's wider implications for well-being, social justice, sustainable development and the environment.

Six operational recommendations, grouped under governance, curricula, teaching and assessment, professional development, higher education and research, and public awareness, aim to guide member states in translating these principles into policy and practice in classrooms, universities, and society at large.

EESC's European Day of the Liberal Professions 2026: Putting Professional Expertise at the Heart of Europe's Preparedness

Brussels, 30 September 2026 — How prepared is Europe for the next crisis? And what role can professional expertise play in helping European societies anticipate risks, respond effectively and recover?

These questions were at the centre of yesterday's **10th edition of the European Economic and Social Committee's (EESC) Liberal Professions Day**, held in Brussels on 29 September under the theme **"Preparedness in the EU: the role of the liberal professions."** Bringing together policymakers, representatives of the liberal professions and experts from across Europe, the event examined how professional expertise can contribute to a more resilient European Union.

The discussions came at a time when preparedness has become an increasingly broad concept. Europe faces a combination of geopolitical uncertainty, climate-related risks, pressure on critical infrastructure, public-health challenges and rapidly evolving digital threats. Against this backdrop, the EESC's Liberal Professions Category used its annual conference to look beyond crisis response itself and focus on the structures, skills and professional services needed to prepare for disruption before it occurs.

From crisis response to preparedness

Opening the conference, **Martin Böhme, EESC Member and spokesperson for the Liberal Professions Category**, set the scene for a discussion centred on the need for a new level of preparedness.

The programme also featured a keynote by **Dr Karin Hahne**, Vice-President of the German Federal Association of Liberal Professions, on the role of liberal professions as pillars of a resilient Europe. The opening session established one of the event's central themes: resilience depends not only on public institutions, but also on the expertise, independence and responsibility of professionals working across society. This perspective is particularly important because liberal professionals often operate at the point where public policy meets citizens, businesses and essential services. Lawyers, engineers, architects, healthcare professionals, accountants and other specialists provide expertise that can be crucial when institutions and communities are confronted with uncertainty.

The EESC therefore placed particular emphasis on **coordination, appropriate regulation, professional independence and accountability** as elements of effective preparedness.

Building resilience into European policy

The first panel turned to the policy dimension of preparedness, examining European priorities, coordination and regulation.

Contributions included those of **Grégory Allione**, Member of the European Parliament and Co-Chair of the Intergroup on Resilience, **Alessandro Carrotta** of the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, and **Alison Hunter**, Director of Economic and Public Policy Consultancy and Senior Adviser at the European Policy Centre.

The discussion highlighted the importance of moving from fragmented responses towards a more structural approach to preparedness. EU policy and funding frameworks need to take account of the expertise available within professional communities and ensure that those who provide essential services can continue to operate during periods of disruption.

For the liberal professions, preparedness also raises questions about the regulatory environment in which professionals work. Independence, professional standards and accountability remain important safeguards, particularly when decisions have direct consequences for citizens and the public interest.

Preparedness by design

The second panel moved from policy to practice, focusing on **prevention, continuity and public health**. Among the speakers were **Dr.-Ing. Heinrich Bökamp**, President of the German Federal Chamber of Engineers, **Daniel Fügenschuh**, President of the Architects' Council of Europe, and **Professor Mary Codd** of University College Dublin.

For the architectural profession in particular, the concept of preparedness was translated into the built environment. Speaking after the event, Daniel Fügenschuh argued that resilience should be incorporated into design from the outset, rather than treated as an additional consideration once a crisis has already occurred. He pointed to the role of buildings and public spaces in protecting communities against challenges such as extreme heat and flooding.

This approach illustrates the wider contribution of liberal professions to prevention. Engineers, architects and other specialists can help ensure that infrastructure, buildings and services are designed not simply for normal conditions, but also for the disruptions that Europe may face in the future.

Preparedness, in this sense, becomes part of everyday professional practice.

Digitalisation, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence

The afternoon session turned to another increasingly important dimension of resilience: **digital preparedness**.

The panel examined cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and new ways of working, with contributions from **Elsa Veloso**, CEO of DPO Consulting and Board Member of the Portuguese National Association of Liberal Professions; **Dr Anna Maria Bardone**, Vice-President of the Permanent Unified Committee of Professional Orders and Colleges; and **Dr Helena Donato**, Director of the Scientific Documentation and Information Service at ULS Coimbra. **Our President of Honour, Rudolf Kolbe, Vice-president of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group, and former spokesperson for the Liberal Professions Category**, also played a prominent role in this year's event, moderating the afternoon panel on digital preparedness. His involvement was particularly relevant to the discussion on artificial intelligence and the transformation of professional services, areas in which he continues to contribute to the EESC's work.

The discussion reflected the growing dependence of professional services on digital systems. Cybersecurity is no longer an issue confined to technology companies or public authorities. Lawyers, healthcare professionals, accountants, architects and other professionals increasingly handle sensitive information and rely on digital infrastructure to deliver essential services.

Artificial intelligence adds another layer to this transformation. While AI can offer significant opportunities to improve professional services, the programme highlighted the continuing importance of **human oversight, transparency and accountability**. For professional organisations, this means preparing not only for technological change but also for the new ethical, legal and professional responsibilities that accompany it.

Liberal professions as part of Europe's resilience

One of the strongest messages emerging from the event was that preparedness should not be understood solely as an emergency-management issue. It is also about **maintaining trust, expertise and continuity**. The EESC's programme identified a broad range of ways in which liberal professions contribute to the public interest: resilient infrastructure, trusted health systems, support for businesses and citizens, reliable information, and the ability to provide specialised expertise when normal systems are under pressure.

This makes professional independence particularly relevant. In a crisis, citizens and institutions need access to reliable expertise and advice. Maintaining professional standards and the ability of professionals to act independently and responsibly is therefore part of building resilient societies. The event also demonstrated the diversity of the liberal professions themselves. Different sectors face different risks, but they share a common responsibility: ensuring that professional knowledge remains available, trustworthy and adaptable when society needs it most.

Looking ahead

The 10th Liberal Professions Day provided an opportunity not only to examine current vulnerabilities but also to consider how Europe can strengthen its capacity to anticipate and manage future challenges. From **resilient infrastructure and public health to cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and professional regulation**, the discussions showed that preparedness

cuts across professional disciplines and policy areas.

The conclusion is therefore broader than simply asking whether Europe is prepared for the next crisis. A resilient Europe also requires resilient professions — professionals equipped with the knowledge, independence, digital capabilities and ethical frameworks necessary to continue serving citizens and the public interest in changing circumstances.

As Europe prepares for an increasingly uncertain future, the expertise of its liberal professions will remain an important part of that preparedness.



CEPLIS Family Photo at the event:

From left to right: Ms Elena Cordoba (UP), President Mr Klaus Thurriedl (EESC), Vice-President, Michael Van Gompel (UNPLIB), President of UNPLIB, Mr Bernard Jacquemin, Ms Elsa Veloso (ANPL), UNPLIB Vice-President, Mr Jean Ruwet, Professor Dr Theodoros Koutroubas, CEPLIS Director-General, Mr Orlando Monteiro, EESC Member, CEPLIS President of Honour & EESC's Civil Society Organisation's Group Vice-President, Mr Rudolf Kolbe, Mr Brookly Beli (CEPLIS Policy Advisor), Ms Susana Pisano (Confprofessioni)

News From Our Members: UNPLIB Hosts Colloquium on AI and the Liberal Professions



On Tuesday the 22nd of September, *Union Nationale des Professions Libérales et Intellectuelles de Belgique* (UNPLIB) celebrated its 65th Anniversary by hosting a colloquium on the development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of liberal professions.



UNPLIB Executive Board with the Minister for Middle Classes, SMEs & Independents: Eléonore Simonet

Of particular note, the Belgian Minister for Middle Classes, Independent Workers and SMEs, **Ms Eléonore Simonet**, addressed the participants on the actions of the Belgian Federal Government regarding the strengthening of the positions of Independents, SMEs and liberal professions in the face of the changes that AI is bringing. Ms Simonet underlined that whilst much progress had been made, continued dialogue and collaboration between the Belgian government and UNPLIB is of the upmost importance in order to respond effectively to the continued spread of AI in our work and daily lives.

The second guest speaker, **Mr Adam Krings** – founder of OCREA – gave a talk on how AI can be used to improve healthcare, focusing on efficiency and access. **Mr Krings demonstrated that with proper use, AI can radically improve the care of patients and simplify the work of healthcare professionals. For example, AI has been used to overcome language barriers between the professional and patient, which allows for more accurate diagnoses and putting the patient at ease by improving their understanding.**

Following Mr Krings was **Mr Michel Mathieu**, an MP of Belgium's Federal Parliament, and former Secretary of State for Digitalisation with the subject of digital sovereignty, a topic of significant concern globally.

Further guest speakers included the partners of the event from Howden which outlined the dangers posed by AI regarding the insurance sector and the need for strict national regulation and internal policies for insurance brokers to mitigate the more pernicious effects, and **Dr Jean-Michel Longneaux** who ended the event with a lecture on the potential loss of self for the liberal professions as AI becomes more widely adopted.

UNPLIB's colloquium gathering Ministers, MPs and experts in the field of AI comes at a crucial time where intense debates surround this new technology, above all the effect it is having on liberal professions, their services and clients not just in Belgium but all over the world. This and other colloquia are the building blocks of a united response to the challenges and opportunities that have arisen from this tool, and CEPLIS would like to offer its great thanks for UNPLIB's invitation to this stimulating meeting of minds.



Ms Simonet giving a speech on AI and the Liberal Professions