

Dear Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished Guests,

First of all, and on behalf of all the CEPI member associations, I would like to thank you for this very kind invitation to say some words at the occasion of the publication of the CEN standards for services of real estate agents to their clients

The Conseil européen des Professions immobilières (CEPI) was created in 1990 as a representation of real estate professionals at the European institutions. It has two members: the Confédération européenne des Administrateurs de Biens (CEAB) representing the property managers, and EPAG (European Property Agents Group) which is European association for estate agents. Together they gather 44 national associations in 27 EU and EFTA countries. CEPI so represents over 250,000 affiliates.

Today, CEPI is more than a representation of the real estate professions to the European institutions. It is a full European network that is able to respond to important and complicated developments of the real estate environment, initiate consistent action and contribute to clarifying and directing the evolution of real estate services and markets. Its mission is to support real estate transactions in Europe, by enhancing the duties and actions of real estate professionals, in the interest of the consumer. It supports working relationships between professionals, improve knowledge of the markets, but above all strengthen professional practice and ethics. Policy is a key strategy to get there, but education and business related communication also becomes increasingly important.

You invited me to say some words about the newly adopted CEN standards for services of estate agents to their clients.

1. We know that the European regulation of the real estate professions remains few as it is considered that the Member States have the authority and responsibility over property transactions and decide on conditions and modalities to access their respective real estate markets. We also know that there is a tendency to link a liberalisation of the market to a deregulation of many professions.

Just half of the EU Member States currently regulate the real estate professions

Nevertheless, it is my assumption and my personal conviction that regulation as well as self regulation are key to provide a environment whereby clients know what to expect from a professional and whereby professionals can understand each other and collaborate, not just compete.

**Regulation and self regulation even call on each other and need each other.**

Current EU regulation on services mainly sets the frame to ensure free movement of services, while self regulation initiatives such as codes of conduct aim to add quality to the services. More generally, regulation sets out a common legal and administrative frame that needs to be filled in and detailed by the professionals at work. On the other hand, self regulating initiatives need support and incentives from public authorities to call upon a significant and representative number of professionals. It is no surprise that professional associations are best organised in countries that regulate or previously regulated the professions. And it is no surprise

that most of the codes of conduct and other self regulation initiatives can be found in the same countries.

In a context of increasing deregulation of the professions, the Directive on Services explicitly refers to the importance of self regulating initiatives by representative professional bodies, be it codes of conduct, qualification and service standards, standards relating to E-commerce and others, and so present and gradually implement a coherent set of self regulating measures. Such coherence is the main asset of professional associations that want to set up clear expectations to professionals, facilitate collaboration and fair competition between them, and create a reference and rallying point. This way, self regulation initiatives can add quality to free movement of services.

It is therefore a real merit to now have a set of standards that, in the area of real estate professions, can feed professionals in all EU countries, firstly and mainly in those countries where no regulation has been developed yet and where professionals need recognition for their work and competences.

At the same time, it is key for professionals in the services sector, and therefore also for the real estate professionals to call for a minimum harmonisation of the rules of the game at European level. Self regulation will be efficient as far as harmonised regulation allows it to be. That's the reason why CEPI is now answering an invitation to revisit the Directive on Recognition of the Professional Qualifications, to monitor the implementation of the Services Directive, to fine tune the Recast of the Directive on Energy Performance and so on. With the crisis, even the ECFIN Directorate General is currently exploring the Real Estate sector and asking for information.

2. My second point is about education and training: standards try to set or reflect a real level of competence. A call for recognition goes hand in hand with a willingness to deliver quality service. Education and life long training are meant to add quality to services. That is the reason why, for years now, CEPI puts this strategy very high on its agenda. And it will continue to do so in the coming years.

Today, education from universities and professional training institutes in most EU countries educate our future professionals. This is why CEPI set up "**Eureduc**", a minimum education programme for real estate agents and property managers. This programme aims to offer a minimum and common competence level and therefore a possibility for professionals to better understand each other in future. Over 300 certificates are being distributed to graduate and the number increases quickly.

Of course, we have to recognise that quite a lot of professionals learned their profession by doing At their request and with a view to give them necessary support, CEPI is also putting more emphasis on lifelong learning initiatives. They are increasingly challenged by complex legislation, new management tools, new services and new competitors. These challenges can be even stronger in regions where real estate transactions are increasingly done by foreign agents and managers.

**If the CEN standards want to give recognition to professionals, they'll have to be accompanied by well thought training packages.** CEPI and EPAG are working on this and initiatives are being developed to work out specific training packages.

3. My third and last point is **about collaboration**. CEPI and CEI seek common professional rules of the game for estate agents in Europe. A priority for both associations is to establish clearly defined and accepted standards for professionals. The purpose of the rules is to ensure legal security, ensure quality service and facilitate business.

We all know that CEI took the lead in asking CEN for standards for services of estate agents, so answering a request from its member associations. CEPI is rather capitalising on its own standards as well as on the self regulation initiatives of its members in countries with regulatory obligations. Nevertheless, we also know that our respective members can profit from each others initiatives and that no single association is in a position to claim to represent the interests of all the real estate professionals.

Because of necessary coherence and because we all have same objectives, CEPI took the decision to give recognition to the CEN standards, so supporting CEI in its efforts to service its professionals. At the same time, we invite CEI to give support to CEPI initiatives such as the Eureduc programme, which aims to offer to future professionals the necessary knowledge and competence to position themselves in a very competitive and increasingly technical environment.

This way, **CEI and CEPI can pave the way to joint service to their affiliates and to joint representation of their affiliates towards public authorities and stakeholders around**. We so hope to show respect and trust as well as to reach more efficiency together.

I wish you all a most interesting and productive work session.

Dipl. Arch. Jan Borůvka, CIPS  
EPAG President  
Brussels, November 26 2009