

Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very glad to address everyone who answered our call and to thank you for being here today. This meeting is about "EUROPEAN STANDARD FOR SERVICES OF REAL ESTATE AGENTS – EN 15733 ADOPTION OF THE STANDARD IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND DIFFICULTIES" which for reasons well-known to you is already an historic encounter in our sector.

A very warm welcome to all participants of this conference. Today we are representatives from 18 countries. When we started the CEN-process more than three years ago, we all wished that at the end of the road we would have a common standard for real estate agents in Europe. Today we are at the end of this road. I would like to honour all participants in this project. First of all the Austrian Secretariat of the CEN, which has been lead nearly until the end of the process by Dr. Peter Jonas, who is here today. Secondly to the chairman of the CEN process, Mr. Andre Groot from VBO and from the Netherlands, who chairs this conference today as well. CEPI and CEI were very active observers of the process and sent a lot of participants from their associations to the negotiations. Frans Burgering as the former CEPI president is here today. Frans, thanks for the support during the process. Finally all participants in the several meetings of the technical committee in CEN, who brought in their perspectives and were negotiating very intensely.

Europe is also all of us citizens of the Member States of the European Union, naturally including all professionals in the real estate sector. So, we too must contribute to building our own European Union.

That is what we did when we moved to standardise the procedures that should govern our activity as real estate mediators across Europe, finding a minimum common denominator for the quality of the services we provide to all who come to us. The standard has its basis in the EU Services Directive. For all professions, that are not clearly regulated in the whole of Europe, the Services Directive supports and motivates associations like CEI and CEPI to start a standardisation process.

This minimum common denominator for excellence in our services is naturally only minimum at the start, but clearly aims to extend to the thresholds of the more demanding countries in this sphere or even to go further as is our intention.

The European Union's requirements of quality imposed on those proposing to serve the public are the signs that make the positive difference and help cement societies that are based on the rule of law, freedom and a market economy.

No-one in Europe doubts this inevitability but no-one so far knows (or knew) what we can really rely on in all Member States of the European Union when completing any real estate deal mediated by sector professionals. That minimum is the starting point for the European rule on real estate that we now suggest. We naturally expect that it will become a directive to be followed by all Member States.

As I have said at various venues which I attend, such as for instance the recent NAR convention, the association of North American professionals, our western European look on cities is particularly important in these times of crisis, which is stronger in some economies than in others, but affects us all.

This perspective that seeks to consider the activity of European real estate mediation from its technical, economic and educational point of view is essential to organise a realistic and positive response to the new problems raised by the market.

The construction of this model cannot have one route only or excessively strict rules and it must be achieved by making use of the virtualities of the whole.

Organising the European Norm, respecting the specific conditions, constraints and aspirations of each Member State advises us under these circumstances to articulate the functions and actions of that whole to create forms, rhythms and integration modes through progressive approaches, excluding no-one.

In my view this should be the essential matrix of a stable framework involving Europe as a whole.

Once again in Europe we are testing new paradigms for construction and real estate that contemplate the need felt by more conscientious members of the public to make their own houses environmentally friendly or at least harmoniously integrated in the environment.

We also know that our solutions are exportable and very often exported, as I in fact witnessed in San Diego, California, where I was a guest at the 2009 NAR Convention. That is why this meeting now is so important.

I do not wish to end without a word of thanks for the presence of representatives of CEPI, EPAG and CERAN... who honour us with their presence and which is a clear sign that in decisive issues concerning our activity we walk together on parallel paths.

Together with our friends from CEPI we founded a working group for evaluating the standard and making proposals to improve the basic level of the standard. The conference, we have initiated today, also has the one and only aim to make the standard a success and to revise the perspective to the standard. We see the conference today as a follow-up meeting of the several meetings of the technical committee. So you are all invited to discuss in the same intensity and in the same mood of bringing good results for all real estate agents in Europe.

Although not intending to stand as owners of the truth I will say that the path which we started long ago is achieving by moving forward and that this reflection is one of the important moments of our journey, and one we hope will reach a safe harbour.

Good work and thank you for your participation

Manuel Negrão,

CEI President

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