



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Professional qualifications: EC proposal is going too far on many aspects

UEAPME supports EU Card, concerned with general rules for establishment, "partial access" and "temporary mobility"

Brussels, 19 December 2011 – Today's proposals by the European Commission to modernise the EU system for the recognition of professional qualifications is going too far on many important aspects, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation. On the positive side, the organisation welcomed the increased compulsory use of online means to provide information to professionals and to citizens. It also supported keeping the current 5 levels of qualification in place but expressed concerns on the deletion of important criteria for measuring the differences of qualifications and defining compensation measures. On the "European Professional Card" introduced today, UEAPME stressed that this "smart card" can indeed simplify the current procedures, but it should not replace the declaration to be made in advance by service providers under the current directive. On the negative side, UEAPME criticised the introduction of "partial access", by which Member States must allow the partial uptake of a profession in their territory under certain conditions. Moreover, the association spoke against the deletion of the requirement to prove at least 2 years of relevant professional experience for service providers accompanying service recipients outside their Member State of residence. This will pave the way to unfair competition, warned UEAPME.

"We understand the need to bring the current EU rules on the recognition of professional requirements in line with the needs of the labour market for higher intra-EU mobility, as well as to boost growth in the single market at this time of economic crisis. However is not obvious if the simplification measures proposed by the European Commission today can help in this respect, as the directive goes too far on several key aspects. Lower qualification requirements could endanger the quality of services for consumers and companies and create unfair competition for SMEs", said **Liliane Volozinskis**, Director for Social Affairs and Employment Policy at UEAPME.

The "European Professional Card" can be a useful tool for simplification and to enhance mutual trust between professionals and their clients, explained Ms Volozinskis. However, contrary to today's European Commission proposal, this "smart card" cannot replace the declaration to be made in advance by service providers under the current directive, she warned. The reinforcement of administrative cooperation between Member States through e-governance and the compulsory use of the Internal Market Information System (IMI) is another positive development, she continued, as well as the creation by Member States of an online portal with centralised, detailed, up to date information for professionals and for citizens.

Also on the positive side, the European Commission decided to keep the existing five levels of qualifications in the text. While welcoming this decision, UEAPME expressed concerns on the impact of the deletion of three main criteria: the reference to the nearest lower level (N-1), the requirement for 2 years' professional experience and the differences in terms of duration of training to compare and recognise qualifications cross-border.

Furthermore, on the negative side, the Commission introduced among its proposals the "partial access" principle, by which Member States must allow the partial taking-up of a profession in their territory under certain conditions. *"We do not see any need to modify the existing rules in this respect. The introduction of 'partial access' would be very difficult to assess and to put in practice effectively",* stressed Ms Volozinskis. UEAPME also heavily criticised the proposal on "temporary mobility": service providers accompanying service recipients outside their Member State of residence will not have to prove their qualifications and have at least two years of relevant professional experience, as it is the case at the moment.

"This will pave the way to unfair competition and remove the current level playing field between national service providers and those coming from another Member State. We understand that the current rules can pose a problem for a very limited number of professions, such as tourist guides, but generalising this principle risks putting local craftsmen and SMEs at a competitive disadvantage. We hope that Parliament and Council will improve the EC proposal", concluded Ms Volozinskis.

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 84 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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