

Recognition of professional qualifications

2002/0061(COD) - 07/03/2002 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to simplify the rules relating to the recognition of professional qualifications. CONTENT : the European Commission has put forward a proposal for a Directive to clarify and simplify the rules in order to facilitate the free movement of qualified people between the Member States, particularly in view of an enlarged European Union. The proposed Directive would replace fifteen existing Directives in the field of the recognition of professional qualifications. The proposal constitutes the first comprehensive modernisation of the Community system since it was conceived forty years ago. A number of changes are proposed compared with the existing rules, including greater liberalisation of the provision of services, more automatic recognition of qualifications and increased flexibility in the procedures for updating the Directive. The Commission also proposes to develop its co-operation with the Member States in order to keep citizens better informed about their rights and give them more help in getting their qualifications recognised. The proposal for a Directive takes account of the results of a process of consulting interested circles launched by the Commission in June 2001. It maintains the safeguards that the various existing recognition systems offer to migrating professionals, and even strengthens them with a number of new rules. With regard to the liberalisation of cross-border services, the proposal is in line with the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council and the Internal Market Strategy for Services. It establishes the principle of the free provision of services under the original professional title, subject to certain conditions with a view to protecting consumers. Under the general system for the recognition of qualifications, the Commission's proposal will introduce a more flexible and automatic procedure based on common platforms established by professional associations at European level, stemming from increased co-operation between the public and private sectors. The proposal for a Directive also involves a simplification of the management and updating of the rules, particularly as regards adapting them to scientific and technological progress. In addition, the proposal provides for developing co-operation amongst national administrations and between them and the Commission, with a view to informing citizens of their rights and resolving any difficulties they might encounter with regard to recognition of their professional qualifications.