

Recognition of professional qualifications

2002/0061(COD) - 11/05/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

In adopting the report by Stefano ZAPPALÀ's (EPP-ED, IT), the European Parliament approved the common position. The text adopted is the result of a compromise with the Council. This agreement will, without doubt, allow conciliation to be avoided.

MEPs spelt out that professions linked to the exercise of public authority, in particular notaries, are to be excluded from scope of the directive. In this regard, the adopted amendment makes direct reference to specific provisions of the Treaty which provide explicitly the possible exceptions which apply, on the one hand, to employed workers and, on the other hand, to liberal professions, in order to exclude any confusion.

Parliament also insists on including a definition of liberal professions in the directive and it stresses that it will apply to people wishing to practise a regulated profession "including those belonging to the liberal professions". MEPs maintain the automatic recognition of medical and dental specialisations common to at least two Member States, which conflicts with the Council position but is in line with existing EU law.

An EU national wishing to have access to a regulated profession will be subject to the same conditions, in terms of qualifications, as nationals of the host country. This rule applies, for example, to the certificates of competence or the training qualifications required. The individuals concerned must meet a number of conditions, for example they must show evidence of having a level of training at least equivalent to the level immediately below that required in the host Member State.

The directive lays down a number of reference levels reflecting levels of education and training, which in turn enable equivalences to be established between levels of qualifications in different Member States. MEPs propose to increase the number of reference levels to five (instead of the four proposed by the Council), but without attaching any number, letter or other sign indicating a hierarchy. Parliament is redefining certain levels in order to better respond to the reality of training cycles in the different Member States. The professions affected by these measures are listed, by level, in the annexes. The annexes also contain the naming designation of professions in the official languages of the EU.

In a number of amendments, MEPs focus on the role played by professional bodies in the procedure for recognising qualifications. To streamline the management of the various recognition regimes set up by different sectoral directives and the general system, a single committee for the recognition of professional qualifications will be created to replace the existing bodies. It will be composed of representatives from the Member States and presided over by a representative from the Commission. Given the differing national systems and the number of qualifications, professions and skills, MEPs want experts of the professional categories concerned to take part in this committee. To smooth freedom of movement and professional mobility, Parliament is proposing the introduction of an individual professional card. This would contain information on the worker's career (training, experience and any penalties imposed relating to his profession) and would speed up the exchange of information between the country of origin and the host country. The cards would be issued by the agencies and professional associations.