



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 2 October 2013

European Commission and Member States to assess barriers restricting access to regulated professions

The European Commission has today adopted a communication announcing the start of an evaluation of national regulations on access to professions. Regulated professions are professions to which access is conditional upon the possession of specific qualifications or for which the use of a specific title is protected, e.g. pharmacists or architects. There are very good reasons why such restrictions may exist, for example consumer protection. However, overly restrictive conditions for accessing certain professions may discourage or even prevent young people from entering the labour market. Different regulatory regimes may make it difficult for qualified professionals to apply for job vacancies in other Member States.

Improving access to professions, in particular through a more proportionate and transparent regulatory environment in Member States, would facilitate the mobility of qualified professionals in the single market and the cross-border provision of professional services. It could also have a positive impact on the employment situation and enhance economic growth, especially since professional services alone amount to around 9% of GDP in the European Union.

In order to provide a more complete picture of the barriers affecting the access to and exercise of regulated professions, a report on the findings of the peer review on legal form and shareholding requirements conducted under the [Services Directive](#) is also published today. These requirements, which often come in addition to restrictions on access to professions, may hamper the setting up of subsidiaries and multi-disciplinary practices.

Internal Market and Services Commissioner Michel Barnier said: "Despite our best efforts, mobility of professionals across the European Union is still low. Conditions for accessing certain professions can be complex, burdensome and very often vary greatly from one Member State to another. This discourages workers from seeking and finding employment in other Member States. I am convinced that Member States mapping out which professions are regulated, and then carrying out a screening and evaluation of the barriers to accessing professions will be a useful exercise. This is not about deregulating professions or sanctioning Member States but rather about ensuring better access to professional services through reviewing what entry structures best promote a simplified, proportionate, safe and transparent system."

Main elements of the communication

Today's communication implements requirements set out in the revised Professional Qualifications Directive – one of the 2011 Single Market Act I priorities. It foresees first a **transparency exercise**: each Member State will have to report the list of professions it regulates, including those at regional level. The Commission will then publish this list in the form of a European map of regulated professions that will clearly display which professions are regulated and for which countries. Thanks to this map, a professional wanting to work in another Member State should know what conditions each country requires for the job he or she would like to apply for.

Conditions for accessing professions can vary significantly between EU countries. The reasons behind those differences are often not well understood. The process launched today invites Member States in a second stage to conduct over the next two years a **mutual evaluation** of the respective barriers they have in place limiting the access to certain professions. It sets out an ambitious work plan for the Commission and the national administrations participating in the mutual evaluation. Stakeholders, particularly those representing professionals, will be fully involved during this exercise. This should also allow a dialogue between Member States using different approaches, where the impact of all types of formal and informal restrictions on the access to professional activities should be examined.

The results of the [Special Eurobarometer 'Internal Market' \(issue 398\)](#) also published today give an indication of how consumers perceive these issues. EU citizens consider, when choosing a service provider, that as well as possessing specific qualifications, reputation and professional experience are very important.

Background

Disproportionate burdens in accessing regulated professions was among the issues highlighted in the European Council conclusions of 2 March 2012, which called for the removal of unjustified regulatory barriers in the Single Market. On 14 June 2012, the European Parliament also called on the Commission to "identify areas where Member States are disproportionately blocking access to regulated professions". Major reforms are already underway in Portugal, Poland, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain to facilitate access to regulated professions. The issue was also raised in the Country Specific Recommendations of some Member States.

In its Communication "A partnership for new growth in services 2012-2015" of 8 June 2012 (see [IP/12/587](#)), the Commission highlighted the importance of modernising the regulatory framework for professional services and announced a communication on regulated professions.

Today's communication will begin the implementation of Article 59 of the revised Professional Qualifications Directive – one of the 2011 Single Market Act I priorities. This provision of the Directive - for which political agreement was reached in June (see [MEMO/13/552](#)) - requires all Member States to review all their national regulations restricting access to professions and to engage in a mutual evaluation.

This Communication also builds on the outcome of a [workshop](#) organised on 17 June 2013 with national ministries and stakeholders representing professions.

In July 2012, the European Council endorsed recommendations from the Commission to several Member States on the need to open up professional services to strengthen their economies and competitiveness. These were maintained and even extended in [2013](#) for some Member States.

See [MEMO/13/839](#)

More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/policy_developments/index_en.htm

Eurobarometer:

[2013 Special Eurobarometer 398](#)

[2011 Special Eurobarometer 363](#)

Contacts :

[Chantal Hughes](#) (+32 2 296 44 50)

[Carmel Dunne](#) (+32 2 299 88 94)

[Audrey Augier](#) (+32 2 297 16 07)